

# Motivations of Learning Korean and Their Influence on Cultural Content

: Korean (Popular/K-pop) Culture for Beginner  
Korean Learners

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## I. Introduction

*Hallyu*, known as the Korean Wave, is the phenomena of influx of Korean popular culture. While it originally impacted Asian countries, it has now spread globally. As the phenomena reached further parts of the globe, the image of Korea improved. The Republic of Korea has often been depicted as experiencing labour unrest and conflict and tension between North and South, and having hard-working labourers. Yet *Hallyu* has helped change, to some extent, stereotyped images of Korea and has contributed to portrayals of Korea as a great nation (Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange<sup>1</sup> 2013: 42). This study aims to investigate how students' motivations of learning Korean language have influenced cultural content keeping pace with the popularity of the Korean Wave.

Research has found that the more foreigners prefer to watch Korean dramas, the more positive image of Korea they had (very strong positive correlation), and that there is a moderate positive correlation between their preferences for Korean fashion products and the brand image of Korea (Yang Wei-dong, 2010: 35). Foreigners express-

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter KFICE.

ing higher consumption of *Hallyu* showed higher purchase numbers of Korean brand products. Yang Wei-dong (2010: 1) and Lee Jae-duk (2013: 8) pointed out that as *Hallyu* spreads globally, there has been an increase in numbers of foreigners who seek out to purchase the commercial products depicted in the Korean films and dramas, and show strong interest in Korean fashion and food, cultural products, accessories, cosmetics, medical fields, hair and fashion styles, and this has resulted in more travellers visiting South Korea. Accordingly, KFICE (2013) says that *Hallyu* not only affected the areas mentioned above, but the Korean language as well. Due to *Hallyu*, the number of students taking Korean language classes has increased remarkably in China (Ju Shi-dong, 2012: 12-13) and Japan (Jeong Hye-Kyeong, 2005), as well as among non-Asian students in North America (Jung Young-a, 2011: 86-87). It is not uncommon to see students in beginners' Korean classes who have already learnt the Korean characters by themselves.

As there are many students taking Korean language who are motivated by Korean popular culture, including K-pop, it seems essential to reflect on such students' interest and needs in the content of textbooks. Jung Young-a (2011: 86-87) stressed the need for further research to identify what part of *Hallyu* impacted their motivation for taking Korean language. The aim of this project is therefore to investigate what aspects of Korean (popular) culture beginning learners of Korean want to learn in their textbooks, and what their motivations for learning the Korean language are (Yang Wei-dong, 2010: 1) and how these affect their preferences in learning Korean culture and popular culture. For this study, I have conducted 155 surveys and interviews with 30 students enrolled in the beginners' level Korean course at the University of Queensland in 2014.

## II. Background

### 1. Theoretical perspectives

#### 1) The definition of Culture and its types

Language and culture are inseparable. We cannot teach language without culture and vice versa; they must be integrated from the beginners' stage (Lee, 1996: 17; Liu et al., 2014: 40) to all levels. Learning Korean culture is crucial for students to interact with native Korean speakers appropriately. Scholars such as Omaggio (1986), and Irimia (2012) categorised culture into 'Big-C culture' and 'small-c culture.' The former denotes products of culture: "factual knowledge about the fine arts such as literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, theater, and film." The latter, on the other hand, involves "a large variety of aspects, such as attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, social relationships, customs, celebrations, rituals, politeness conventions, patterns of interaction and discourse organization, the use of physical space and body language" (Irimia, 2012: 325). This categorizations of 'Big-C' and 'small-c' culture are close to those suggested by Korean scholars such as Cho Hang-rok, who classified culture into two groups, 'everyday culture' and 'products of culture' (2002: 452-453). The former includes all behaviours happening in daily lives among Koreans, including linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours, beliefs, values, attitude, while the latter encompasses literature, arts, dances, traditional music, architecture, and etc. Another scholar, Park Young-soon (2003) categorised culture into six aspects: mental, linguistic, behavioural, arts, institutional, and science and technological. Regardless, cultural behaviours (or entity) can be presented to students if instructors use popular culture. Many students spend a significant amount of time engaging in products of popular culture, for example, YouTube and Twitter. Although scholars such as Irimia (2012) included popular culture in 'Big-C culture', using contempo-

rary popular culture, instructors can teach students ‘small-c’ culture, daily social interactions, and cultural change over time.

## 2) The role of popular culture in a language classroom

Popular culture is often defined in a dichotomous relationship with ‘high’ (elite) culture, which is acclaimed for artistic and aesthetic excellence, while popular culture is positioned as inferior or commercial. However, Pettid (2007) argues, high and popular cultures are related to a political division, without creating a distinction in an intellectual or an aesthetic manner. This could be due to products of elitism that considers high culture as superior to popular culture (Hur Ju-won, 2012: 7-8). The ‘small-c’ culture (everyday culture), is embedded in the popular culture such as; films and dramas, which are considered ‘Big-C’ culture. The important point is how target culture is going to be taught appropriately, in order for students to become culturally competent. It is difficult for overseas KFL learners to experience the real life Korean culture, unlike the KSL learners in South Korea. Utilizing the popular culture (containing everyday ‘small-c’ culture) will be beneficial as it provides the cultural context and situation in which Kramsch (1993) insists students should learn the target language.

Kim Hun-tae (2013: 149-150), who researched the impact of using materials from Korean popular culture such as sitcoms and ballads, discovered that students’ interest and understanding of contemporary Korean culture (149-150) and live language expressions increased (143) when using Korean popular culture. Choi In-ja (2004) also insists that using Korean dramas can provide diverse and authentic Korean language and culture. Studying the use of Korean music videos in Korean language instruction, Kim Kyeong-suk and Ra Hyea-min (2011: 478-479) found that music videos centred on dramas help students to learn diverse information about Korean culture and non-verbal language as well as cultural values, norms, viewpoints of life and current Korean society, reducing the tiredness of the language classroom. Considering the different levels of formality, and the issue of

politeness in the Korean language, using materials from Korean popular culture seems to provide good opportunities for Korean learners to learn target culture and language. Many scholars, such as Choi In-ja (2004) and Kim Hun-tae (2013) have pointed out the advantages of using materials from Korean popular culture. However, despite this strong global interest in Korean popular culture, Ao (2011: 76) points out that Korean textbooks fail to integrate Korean popular culture.

### 3) Integration of Korean culture in beginners' language courses

Kim Jeong-suk (1997) argues that for beginners' students, instructors must teach them content that is related to every day culture. Only then students should be gradually exposed to more complex areas in intellectual, cultural, and scientific topics. Standing on similar ground, Wu-In-hye (2004) insists that beginners need to learn more about everyday culture, whereas traditional culture needs to be taught at a later stage. Researching Korean language textbooks published for foreigners, Kim Jeong-eun (2006: 383) also points out that textbooks include more traditional culture, but exhibit a lack of content related to contemporary Korean culture, daily life, and youth culture.

Scholars such as Cho Hang-rok (2000) have specified what Korean beginners need to learn about Korean culture: greetings and basic etiquette of Korean society and language, clothing, housing, food, Korean geography (seasons, weather), tour sites/famous places to visit, public services/facilities traffics, banking, accommodation, hobbies/leisure, everyday lives, work/economy, and education. Cho Eun-hee (2003) and Lee Dong-bae (2007) added areas including festivals of Korea, national/public holidays, body language, and currency (banking). Both Cho and Lee also included traditional culture embedded in contemporary Korean culture. In addition, Lee Dong-bae (2007) insisted that Korean FL teachers need to teach youth culture on top of contemporary Korean popular culture. Yet actual integration of culture in the current textbooks is different. Analyzing five tertiary level

Korean language textbooks for beginners, Kang Ah-young (2010: 26)<sup>2</sup> found the common cultural content to be the following: behavioral, language, arts and the social culture. Hobbies/leisure, work/economy, festivals, national/public holidays, popular culture and youth culture are omitted in Kang's analysis. Yet her analysis of the textbooks shows that they introduce clothing and housing, but only in relation to Korean traditional costumes and houses.

Ju Shi-dong (2012) investigated the needs of beginner Chinese students' learning the Korean culture and found that students wanted to learn about Korean language, greetings at different level, titles, the geography of Korea, Korean popular culture, internet culture, housing, clothes, shopping, food, festivals, transportation, leisure/hobbies, travelling in Korea, Korean education (school culture), and part-time jobs. In reality, the students' preferences are therefore different from what scholars such as Cho Hang-ro (2000) and Cho Eun-hee (2003) insisted that students need to learn. Ju Shi-dong (2012) discovered that students want to learn about Korean popular culture and the internet culture.

However few scholars have conducted research on the needs of the learners of Korean culture and popular culture in Oceania. Thus this research aims to investigate what motivates students to take Korean language and what culture students actually want integrated in their textbooks. This also looks into whether there are correlations between the cultural content, which scholars insist students must learn at the beginner's level, with Korean popular culture, and whether Korean popular culture has any impact on their preferences on

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2 Kang Ah-young (2010: 26) found that there are behavioural (Korean traditional costumes, Korean food and Korean set menus, the traditional Korean house and traditional heating system, basic greeting, dining manners, and Korean hot-spas), language culture (the Korean alphabet, King Sejong, basic greeting expressions, arts culture *Arirang*, *Samulnoli*, palaces [cultural assets]), and social culture (administrative district, major tour sites, the unique products of each region, currency, and traffic/transportation).

cultural content. In addition, the type of Korean popular culture the students want integrated in the textbooks will be examined. Finally, if the learners do want to integrate Korean popular culture, what is their ultimate purpose?

### III. Research Method

In order to research the above questions, a survey was administered to 155 students in April of 2014 at the University of Queensland, and oral interviews were conducted in August and September 2014. In the oral interviews, I further elaborated on the survey questions.

When designing the questionnaire, I intentionally combined the content of Korean culture and Korean popular culture so that their impressions (their preference in one area) would not affect their choice. In the survey I included not only Korean popular culture, K-pop, and related areas, but also the cultural content areas which scholars such as Cho Hang-rok (2000), Cho Eun-hee (2003), and Lee Dong-bae (2007) insist learners need to learn. I did this because pedagogically we cannot teach only Korean popular culture in the Korean language classroom; we need to teach Korean culture too. Additionally, this would provide options for learners who want to learn Korean target culture but are not interested in Korean popular culture and K-pop. Specifically, Section A asks what motivated the learners to learn Korean. This is important to ascertain in order to investigate the needs of students. Section B asks their nationalities, and Section C delivers the content of Korean culture and popular culture (see appendix 1). The content consists of 27 items and the preference scale ranges from 1 to 6 (1 strongly disagree, 6 strongly agree).

Among Korean popular culture, I added ‘Korean popular culture’, ‘K-pop’<sup>3</sup> and additionally ‘Korean celebrities’, who played major roles

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<sup>3</sup> I also added ‘K-pop’, which propelled *Hallyu* to the global stage beyond Asia. For

in Korean popular culture and K-pop. Furthermore, I included 'Korean digital culture/Internet culture',<sup>4</sup> and 'Korean youth culture', the consumers of Korean popular culture. *Hallyu* attracts 'Fashion', 'Shopping in Seoul',<sup>5</sup> 'Korean food/cooking', 'Beauty/skin care', 'Famous places and tour sites' (the DMZ), and 'Travelling/currency'<sup>6</sup> (Lee Jae-Duk, 2013: 8), which are consequently included. I also included 'Korean traditional culture',<sup>7</sup> 'Korean history'<sup>8</sup> and 'Temple stay and Korean traditional home stay' to further investigate the learners' preferences.

Apart from these areas mentioned above, Lee Dong-bae (2007), Cho Eun-hee (2003), and Kim Jung-seop et al. (2010) all pointed out that Korean 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society and language' and 'Business manners/etiquettes'<sup>9</sup> are highly recommended,<sup>10</sup> and thus I added them as well. In addition I added 'Body language and facial expressions',<sup>11</sup> 'Housing',<sup>12</sup> 'Festivals of Korea', 'National/public holidays/school holidays', 'Hobbies/leisure life/recreational activities',<sup>13</sup> 'Working culture' 'Daily life in Korean society', and Socializing.<sup>14</sup> Further-

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example, through K-pop's successful performance in Europe in Le Zenith de Paris, it is evident that K-pop's popularity has hit Europe (KFICE, 2013: 18-19), and its impact also seems strong in Australia.

- 4 KFICE (2013: 20) stresses that one of the reasons for the success of *Hallyu* was the rapid development of SNS such as Facebook or Twitter and YouTube.
- 5 Hereafter 'Shopping.'
- 6 Hereafter 'Travelling.'
- 7 Lee Dong-bae (2007: 280) discovered that students want to learn Korean traditional culture from the beginners' level, contrary to Wu In-hye (2004)'s belief.
- 8 Brooks-Lewis (2010) argues that teaching history promotes cultural and intercultural awareness for language learners.
- 9 Hereafter 'Business manners.'
- 10 Korean language consists different honorifics, therefore students need to learn the essential mannerism even at the early stage of learning.
- 11 Hereafter 'Body language.'
- 12 Food and clothes (fashion) are usually introduced with housing but as they were introduced previously with Korean popular culture, I added housing as a separate item.
- 13 Hereafter 'Hobbies/leisure.'
- 14 Cho Hang-rok (2000), Lee Dong-bae (2007) and Cho Eun-hee (2003) insist that beginner students should learn the following: 'Body language and facial expressions', 'Housing', 'Festivals of Korea', 'National/public holidays/school holidays', 'Hobbies/

more, I added 'Korean Sports'<sup>15</sup> and 'Korean hot-spa.'<sup>16</sup>

## IV. Findings

155 students participated in this survey, and not all participants completed all questions of the survey. Table 1 shows the overall distribution of students' nationalities and motivations.

**Table 1.** Distribution of students' nationalities and motivations

Nationality	Number of respondents	Motivation	Number of respondents
Australia	55	Job	30
		K-pop	28
		Korean popular culture	33
		others	18
China	50	Job	12
		K-pop	26
		Korean popular culture	19
		others	13
Others	50	Job	21
		K-pop	32
		Korean popular culture	35
		others	10
Total	155	Job	63
		K-pop	86
		Korean popular culture	87
		others	41

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leisure', 'Working culture', 'Daily life in Korean society', and 'Socializing.'

15 Pettid (2007: 285) added 'Korean Sports' must be included in contemporary Korean culture.

16 Kang Ah-young (2010) identified that 'Korean hot-spa' was frequently integrated in the beginners' level textbooks.

The questions that were unanswered have been identified. The data were processed using SPSS version 21. The case p-value less than 0.05 was considered to be significant.

On the survey, Section A is about the motivation of learning Korean language, and students were allowed to choose more than one item. Answers of questions in Section C asking for the respondents' agreement with statements ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Overall, students showed high preferences in the areas 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.35<sup>17</sup>), 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society and language' (5.23),<sup>18</sup> 'Korean popular culture' (5.12), 'Korean food/cooking'<sup>19</sup> (5.21), 'Socializing' (5.08), and 'Travelling' (5.04), while showing low interest in 'Housing' (3.84), 'Temple stay and Traditional home stay'<sup>20</sup> (3.92), 'National/public holidays/school holidays' (4.08),<sup>21</sup> 'Korean sports' (4.14), 'DMZ' (4.14), 'Beauty/skin care'<sup>22</sup> (4.14), and 'Fashion' (4.17). Although the students want to learn 'Korean popular culture', their preference in this was ranked as third and the average score of 'K-pop' was 4.68, lower than expected.

63 out of 155 students expressed their motivation for learning Korean language as related to Future job prospects. They showed high preferences for learning 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.48), 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.41), 'Business manners' (5.29), 'Korean food' (5.11), 'Working culture' (5.11), 'Socializing' (5.08), 'Festivals of Korea' (5.06), and 'Korean traditional culture' (5.05), while exhibiting lower interest in areas such as 'Fashion' (3.79), 'Beauty' (3.76), 'Korean hot-spa' (3.80), 'Housing' (3.98), and 'Korean sports' (4.21). Therefore, 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society', 'Daily life

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17 (5.34) shows students' preference mean score; the levels range from 1-6 (1 is not agree at all, 6 is strongly agree).

18 Hereafter 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society.'

19 Hereafter 'Korean food.'

20 Hereafter 'Temple stay.'

21 Hereafter 'National/public holidays.'

22 Hereafter 'Beauty.'

in Korean society', 'Business manners', and 'Working culture' seem to be related to job prospects. For example, one student said in an interview:

I would like to learn how to interact with Koreans for my future job career. So I would like to learn their etiquette and manners, and daily life which occur in Korean society, and I might work in Korean company, so I need to know their working culture as well.

I wondered why students had less interest in learning about 'Fashion', 'Beauty', 'Housing', 'Korean sports' or 'Korean hot spa'. One student answered:

We are not very keen to learning areas like fashion, beauty, housing, and Korean sports which do not seem to be related to my future jobs. I also think I would not go to Korean hot-spa with Koreans for business purposes.

Students who select Future job prospects as their motivation also think learning about 'Korean food' is important and want to learn dining manners. One student stated:

I found that Korean food looks different from our food here, when I actually tasted it was really yummy, so I want to learn Korean food/cooking, but I want to know their dining manners as well.

In terms of nationalities, 30 out of 63 Australian students, expressed high preferences for learning 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.70), 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.60), 'Business manners' (5.52), 'Korean traditional culture' (5.27), 'Korean popular culture' (5.23), while they showed lower interest in 'Beauty' (3.10), 'Korean hot-spa' (3.47), 'Fashion' (3.52), 'Housing' (4.03), 'Korean celebrities' (4.03), 'Korean sports' (4.03), and 'Temple stay' (4.13).

This made me question why the students want to learn Korean traditional culture, and when I asked this in the interview, one Australian student answered:

I think Korean contemporary culture is rooted in traditional culture, so I would like to learn that traditional culture.

On the other hand, 12 Chinese students showed high preferences for learning about 'Travelling' (5.45), 'Shopping' (5.27), and 'Socializing' (5.18), while they exhibited lower interest in 'Korean history' (3.45), 'DMZ' (3.45), 'Housing' (3.55), and 'National/public holidays' (3.58), though the number is too small to generalize. In the interview, one Chinese student responded:

I would like to travel to Korea and go shopping in Seoul, but not go to the DMZ, and I am not interested in learning Korean history this is because I am not very interested in the history area.

The remaining students (21) showed higher preferences for learning 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.57), 'Korean food' (5.48), and 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.43), whereas they had lower interests in 'Fashion' (3.90) and 'Korean hot-spa' (4.00). This tendency seems similar to that of Australian students.

Also, 86 out of 155 students stated that their motivation for learning Korean is K-pop. They showed strong interest in learning 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.47), 'Korean food' (5.33), 'Korean popular culture' (5.29), 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.15), and 'Travelling' (5.11), yet their interest in the areas such as 'Housing' (3.83), 'Temple stay' (4.01), 'DMZ' (4.07) and 'Fashion' (4.18), was low. 28 out of 86 are Australian students, who showed high preferences for 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.64), 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.50), 'Korean food' (5.25), 'Business manners' (5.19), while they expressed lower interest in learning about 'Beauty' (3.32), 'Kore-

an hot-spa' (3.57), 'Fashion' (3.70), 'Korean sports' (3.82), and 'Housing' (3.93). Their preferred items were similar to those who were motivated by Future job prospects. K-pop's scored 5.00 lower than other preferred areas listed above, even though many students gave their motivation for learning Korean as K-pop. This led me to ask students about this in the interview, and one answered:

I think K-pop does not provide enough situation of Koreans' interaction, so I rather want to be exposed more to Korean popular culture which seems important for my understanding Korean society and their manners/etiquette.

Similarly, in another group, 26 out of 86 are Chinese students. They showed high preferences for learning 'Korean popular culture' (5.31), 'Korean food' (5.31), 'Daily life' (5.27), and 'Travelling' (5.24), while showing lower interest in learning about 'Housing' (3.79), 'Temple stay' (3.73), and 'DMZ' (4.00). But they did not want to learn about K-pop, even though they wanted to learn Korean popular culture. One student explained:

I want to learn Korean popular culture more in the classroom, it seems that it gives me more real information and shows me know-how how to do for my daily interaction with Koreans, so I think it is useful for us to use more Korean popular culture such as dramas.

Another student said:

Some music video which has story seems to be useful for our learning Korean culture and understanding it.

The rest, 32 students, showed strong interest in areas such as 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.47), 'Korean food' (5.41), 'Korean popular culture' (5.34), 'Socializing' (5.22) and 'Greetings/etiquettes of Ko-

rean society' (5.22), while showing lower interest in 'Housing' (3.78), 'Korean history' (3.91), 'Temple stay' (3.94), and 'DMZ' (4.03).

87 out of 155 students stated that their motivation for learning Korean was due to Korean popular culture such as drama and film excluding K-pop. They showed high preferences for learning about 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.48), 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.47), and 'Korean popular culture' (5.31), 'Korean history' (5.27) and 'Body language' (5.15), while showing low interest in the areas of 'Housing' (4.01), and 'Fashion' (4.10). The overall K-pop score was 4.75, which was lower than expected.

33 out of 87 Australian students showed high preferences for 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.58), 'Business manners' (5.42), 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.42), and 'Korean traditional culture' (5.39), while showing lower interest in the areas of 'Beauty' (3.45), 'Korean hot-spa' (3.61), 'Fashion' (3.72), 'Shopping' (3.92), and 'Korean celebrities' (3.94). I wondered whether Australian students liked Korean traditional culture more than Korean popular culture and K-pop. One student commented:

I think Australia and our values and traditions are different from those of Korea. Watching Korean popular cultural products like dramas, we can infer modern day Korean culture.

Nineteen (19) Chinese students revealed their high preferences for learning about 'Travelling' (5.68), 'Korean popular culture' (5.63), 'Korean food' (5.63), 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.53) and 'Daily life' (5.53), while they exhibited lower interest in 'Housing' (3.74), 'National/public holidays' (3.74), 'Korean history' (3.79) and 'DMZ' (3.95). One Chinese student answered in the interview:

I watched Korean dramas over 20 hours a week, I want to travel throughout Korea, and I found that there are differences in Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society between China and Korea, so I want to learn more in

these areas.

This indicates that students are aware of cultural differences while watching products of Korean popular culture such as dramas.

Jin Hwan-sang (2012: 48) has found that 92% of Chinese students in China learn Korean culture through Korean popular culture. So it seems important to integrate Korean popular culture in textbooks or teaching materials. The remaining 35 students showed high preferences for the areas of 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.51), 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.34), 'Korean food' (5.31), and 'Korean popular culture' (5.29), while showing lower interests in areas of 'Housing' (3.91) and 'Fashion' (4.00).

41 out of 155 students stated that they have other motivations for learning Korean. These students showed higher interest in learning about areas such as 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society' (5.22), 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.22) and 'Korean food' (5.20), while they showed lower interest in 'Fashion' (3.78), 'Housing' (3.78), 'Temple stay' (3.88), 'Korean celebrities' (3.95), 'Korean sports' (3.98), 'DMZ' (4.02), and 'Beauty' (3.49).

As one of the aims of this study is to look into correlation between Korean popular culture/K-pop and cultural content of Korean culture which will be integrated in the textbooks, I sought to discover whether there is a correlation between K-pop and other items. I found that there is meaningful Pearson correlation between K-pop and items 2, 8, and 19, as shown in table 2.

**Table 2.** Correlation between K-pop and Questions 2, 8, and 19.

Questions	Correlation coefficient	P values
Q2 'Fashion'	.27**	P<.001
Q8 'Shopping'	.35**	P<.001
Q19 'Korean digital/internet culture'	.23**	P=.005

Note. \*\*p<.01

Table 2 shows that there was a moderate positive correlation between 'Shopping' and 'K-pop', which indicates that the more the students watch 'K-pop', the more they want to learn about 'Shopping.' There was also weak positive correlation between 'K-pop', and 'Fashion' and 'Korean digital/Internet culture.' Similarly, I also found that there are meaningful correlations between Korean popular culture (dramas/film) and Questions 2, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, and 26 in table 3.

**Table 3.** Correlation between Korean popular culture (dramas/films) and Questions 2, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, and 26.

Questions	Correlation coefficient	P values
Q2 'Fashion'	.42**	P<.001
Q8 'Shopping'	.51**	P<.001
Q9 'Daily life in Korean society'	.35**	P<.001
Q12 'Korean youth culture'	.39**	P<.001
Q14 'Korean celebrities'	.67**	P<.001
Q15 'Korean food'	.46**	P<.001
Q16 'K-pop'	.59**	P<.001
Q17 'Socializing'	.46**	P<.001
Q21 'Hobbies/leisure'	.27**	P=.001
Q23 'Travelling'	.24**	P=.003
Q26 'Beauty'	.42**	P<.001

There were strong positive correlations between 'Korean popular culture' (Q13), and 'Fashion', 'Shopping', 'Korean celebrities', 'Korean food', 'K-pop', 'Socializing', and 'Beauty'. As 'K-pop', 'Korean popular culture' and 'Korean celebrities' are similar areas, it is understandable that such correlations exist between them. However, in order to understand the reason for correlations between 'Korean popular culture', and 'Fashion', 'Shopping', 'Korean food', 'Socializing', and 'Beauty', I interviewed the students. One student answered:

I think we can learn K-pop by ourselves, but we want to learn Korean culture such as TV drama, and reality shows like Running Man. We can learn everyday lives and real interaction which occur among Korean people.

55.6% of Australian students disagreed<sup>23</sup> that they should learn 'Fashion', while 88% Chinese students agreed that they should learn it, and 40% of Chinese students chose item 6 (strongly agree), and 68% of the rest of the students also agreed.

There were moderate positive correlations between 'Korean popular culture', and 'Daily life in Korean society' and 'Korean youth culture'. There was weak positive correlation between 'Korean popular culture', and 'Hobbies/leisure', and 'Travelling'

The role of celebrities in K-pop/Korean popular culture is important. Table 3 shows that the strongest correlation is between 'Korean popular culture' and 'Korean celebrities'. Thus I checked the survey Questions that showed correlations with 'Korean celebrities.' Table 4 shows the correlations between Question 14 'Korean celebrities' and Questions 2, 8, 12, 15, 17, 23, 26, and 27.

**Table 4.** the correlations between Question 14 'Korean celebrities' and Questions 2, 8, 12, 15, 17, 23, 26, and 27

Questions	Correlation coefficient	P values
Q2 Fashion	.40	P<.001
Q8 Shopping	.54	P<.001
Q12 Korean youth culture	.29	P<.001
Q15 Korean food	.39	P<.001
Q17 Socializing	.44	P<.001
Q23 Travelling	.24	P<.001
Q26 Beauty	.48	P<.001
Q27 Korean hot-spa	.33	P<.001

23 I divided items into two group: items 1-3 include those students disagreed with, whereas items 4-6 are those students agreed with.

There are strong positive correlations between 'Korean celebrities' and 'Shopping', 'Socializing', 'Beauty', and 'Fashion'. One student answered in the interview:

I want to wear the clothes Korean stars are wearing, and use the cosmetics they are using, that is why I like to learn fashion, and Shopping in Seoul.

As there is the strongest correlation between 'Korean popular culture' and 'Shopping', I checked the frequencies of answers. I found that 63.6% of Australian students agreed to learn 'Shopping', and 20% of them chose item 6 (strongly agree). On the other hand, 87.8% of Chinese students (out of 50) want to learn 'Shopping', and 49% of this group chose item 6 (strongly agree). 86% of the remaining students (out of 50) agreed to learn 'Shopping', with 46% of them choosing item 6 (strongly agree). 26 out of these students are of Chinese background (from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, etc.). Chinese and Asian background students preferred to learn 'Shopping'. Yet one Australian student answered:

Their fashion is too SWAG, I think we don't need to follow their fashion, we have different styles of Australian fashion.

Another Australian student said:

Korean fashion is advanced than here, perhaps there will be a few years gap, we have to wait for that period, which is why we don't need to learn right now.

## V. Conclusion

This study produced results that help to respond to the research

questions; what motivates students to learn Korean language, and what culture content they want to learn. In regards to motivation for learning Korean, the majority of students are motivated by K-pop (86/155)<sup>24</sup> and Korean popular culture (87/155), followed by Future job prospects (63/155), and Others (41/155). Regardless of their different motivations, students across the board showed high preferences for content related to 'Daily life in Korean society', 'Greetings/etiquette of Korean society and language', while they showed lower preferences for 'Fashion' and 'Housing'. Regarding the culture students want to learn, students showed high preferences for the areas of 'Daily life in Korean society' (5.35<sup>25</sup>), 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society and language' (5.23), 'Korean popular culture' (5.12), 'Korean food/cooking' (5.21), 'Socializing' (5.08), and 'Travelling' (5.04), while showing low interest in 'Housing' (3.84), 'Temple stay and Traditional home stay' (3.92), 'National/public holidays/school holidays' (4.08), 'Korean sports' (4.14), 'DMZ' (4.14), 'Beauty/skin care' (4.14), and 'Fashion' (4.17), as shown in detail in the Appendix. There were different preferences depending on their nationalities: Australian students expressed higher preferences in 'Greetings/etiquette of Korean society and language' and 'Daily life in Korean society', while they showed lower interest in 'Beauty/skin care', 'Korean-hot spa' and 'Fashion'. On the other hand, Chinese students showed strong preferences for 'Travelling/currency', 'Shopping', 'Korean food/cooking', and 'Korean popular culture'. The rest of the students indicated higher interest in 'Daily life in Korean society', 'Korean food', and 'Greetings/etiquette of Korean society and language', but lower interest in 'Housing', 'Korean history', and 'Temple stay and Traditional home stay.' Regarding Korean popular culture and K-pop, the results show that students want to learn 'Korean popular culture' and be more exposed

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24 86 out of 155 respondents.

25 shows students' preference mean score; the levels range from 1-6 (1 is not agree at all, 6 is strongly agree).

to this than to 'K-pop' specifically. In this regard, the preference for 'K-pop' was lower than expected

Along the same lines, the Pearson correlation between K-pop and culture content was not very significant (shown in table 2). Yet the impact of Korean popular culture was discovered to be much more significant. Strong/moderate positive correlations were found between 'Korean popular culture' and other items shown in table 3. Although students want to learn 'Korean popular culture', and its related areas, the interview data reveals that they want to understand about the daily interactions of Korean people, the greetings/etiquette of Korean society and language, and cultural differences between their own culture and Korean culture, including the different values/traditions embedded in Korean popular culture. Their ultimate aim is to learn Korean target culture and real life Korean interaction and to understand etiquette for communication among Koreans. Considering the preference scores of culture content specified in the Appendix, textbooks designers should take note and integrate the students' preferences during the development of textbooks and teaching materials. Areas such as 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society and language' do not correlate to Korean popular culture/K-pop. When Korean educators integrate Korean culture and Korean popular culture, they should consider these ultimate aims, especially when designing textbooks and materials. This research focused on beginner level Korean in order to gain an understanding of the general trends of students' preferences. However, further study of intermediate/advanced level Korean learners is needed.

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## ABSTRACT

# Motivations of Learning Korean and Their Influence on Cultural Content

: Korean (Popular/K-pop) Culture for Beginner Korean Learners

Lee, Dongbae

This research examines what motivates students to learning Korean, and how their motivation also affects their preferences for content of Korean culture and Korean popular culture/K-pop. For this study, I conducted surveys of 155 students and interviews with 30 students enrolled in the beginners' level Korean language course at The University of Queensland in 2014. The results show that students are motivated most by 'K-pop' and 'Korean popular culture', followed by Future job prospects, and Others. Regardless of their different motivations, students commonly showed high preferences for learning content related to 'Daily life in Korean society', 'Greetings/etiquettes of Korean society and language', while they showed lower preferences for topics such as 'Fashion' and 'Housing'. The average mean score of culture content students wanted to learn for beginners' level of Korean is included in the paper. In addition, the results showed that K-pop did not significantly impact the students' preferences in cultural content, but that the influence of Korean popular culture was much more significant. There were strong/moderate positive correlations between interest in 'Korean popular culture' and culture content. However, the students' ultimate aim was not to learn Korean popular culture; rather, they want to understand the daily interactions of Korean people, greetings/etiquettes of Korean society and language, and Korean target culture including the different values and traditions embedded in Korean popular culture. This research focused on beginner level of Korean, in

order to gain an understanding of the general trends of students' motivations. Further study of intermediate/advanced Korean learners is needed.

**KEYWORDS** Motivations, Korean culture, Korean popular culture/K-pop, beginners' level Korean language

## APPENDIX

### Survey

Survey for 'Korean through K-pop: A research – based textbook'

A. What motivated you to learn Korean? (please tick the relevant point/s to you)

- 1) Future job prospects
- 2) K-Pop's influence (e.g. Psy)
- 3) Korean popular culture
- 4) Others (please specify: )

B. What nationality are you?

C. If you would like to learn about Korean culture in the language classroom/ textbooks (teaching materials), what content would you like to cover? (Tick under the box)

Content	Preference number					
	Number 1: Not agree at all					
	Number 6: strongly agree					
1. <i>Greetings/ etiquettes of Korean society and language</i> (5.23)	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. <i>Fashion</i> (clothes) (4.17)						
3. <i>Housing</i> (3.84)						
4. <i>Temple stay and Korean traditional home stay</i> (3.92)						
5. <i>Famous places/ tour sites</i> (4.64)						
6. <i>Festivals of Korea</i> (4.74)						
7. <i>National/public holidays/ school holidays</i> (4.08)						
8. <i>Shopping in Seoul</i> (4.68)						
9. <i>Daily life in Korean society</i> (5.35)						
10. <i>Korean traditional culture</i> (4.89)						
11. <i>Korean history</i> (4.31)						
12. <i>Korean Youth Culture</i> (university life, clubs, drinking culture) (4.87)						
13. <i>Korean popular culture</i> (film/TV drama) (5.12)						
14. <i>Korean celebrities</i> (4.44)						
15. <i>Korean food/cooking</i> (5.21)						

16. <i>K-pop</i> (Korean Pop songs) (4.68)					
17. <i>Socializing</i> (dating, partying, meeting/making Korean friends, etc.) (5.08)					
18. <i>Working culture</i> (part time/ full time job) (4.68)					
19. Korean digital/internet culture (4.34)					
20. <i>Body language/ facial expressions</i> (4.81)					
21. <i>Hobbies/leisure life/ recreational activities</i> (4.88)					
22. Korean sports (4.14)					
23. <i>Travelling/ currency</i> (5.04)					
24. <i>Business manners/ etiquettes</i> (4.81)					
25. DMZ (borderline of South and North Korea) (4.14)					
26. <i>Beauty/skin care</i> (4.14)					
27. <i>Korean hot-spa</i> (bathing/sauna jjimjilbang) (4.26)					

I will use the italicised words in the paper after initially introducing the items in cases of long wording.

( ) refers to average mean score.