

Analysis of International Students' Adaptation to Korean Language Environment*

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Choi, Jin-Sook. (2023). Analysis of international students' adaptation to Korean language environment. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 31(1), 65-83. This study investigates how well international students adapt to the Korean language environment, and analyzes how adaptation differs according to the Korean proficiency presented when entering university. For this study, 45 international students at Y University participated in a questionnaire survey and 6 in-depth interviews. The results of the questionnaire survey are as follows; their Korean proficiency improved from the grades presented at admission, the exposure to Korean was generally high, attitudes toward Korean were positive, and most of the participants had part-time jobs. However, as a result of analyzing by Korean proficiency at the time of admission, the higher the Korean proficiency, the higher the current Korean proficiency. The previous semester's academic achievement was also higher for students with higher Korean proficiency. It is also revealed that the group with higher Korean proficiency had higher exposure to Korean culture, and more favorable attitudes toward Korean and Korean culture, and higher rate of part-time work. Furthermore, the in-depth interview results showed consistency with the questionnaire quantitative survey. Therefore, this study suggests that Korean proficiency of international students can be an important variable to adapt to Korean language environment.

Key Words: international students, adaptation, Korean language

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1. Research Background and Purpose

The number of international students coming to Korea to study has slowed down for a while due to COVID-19 and is increasing again. According to KESS (Korean Educational Statistics Service), there are currently 166,892 international students in Korea. However, it has been consistently reported that international students have many difficulties adjusting to Korean language environment (Yoon, 2013, Min, 2014, Shin & Yoo, 2014, Jang & Han, 2020, Joo, 2010). If international students fail to adapt to the Korean language environment, their satisfaction with the Korean education market will decrease. Local universities, which absolutely lack domestic student resources, are currently doing their best to attract international students, recognizing that it is the only way to survive in the future. In this situation, it is necessary to create a virtuous cycle in which more international students can come to Korea, by successfully returning to their country after studying in Korea and promoting Korean local universities. Therefore, in order to increase satisfaction of international students, it is time to find out what the problem is, and pay attention to how international students are adapting to the Korean language environment.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the degree of adaptation of international students who entered Y University. And it is to analyze how their adaptation differs by their Korean proficiency at the time of admission, in order to verify how much Korean proficiency affects their adaptation to Korean environment. Furthermore, it is to create and establish reliable factors for measuring adaptation of international students through this study. In fact, although many international students are coming in, research that can accurately measure the adaptation of international students is insufficient. Korean universities also seem to need a system that can measure and manage the adaptation of international students in order to expand the overseas market in the future. As everyone perceives, it is a natural duty of the university as an educational provider to help international students adapt well to the new language situation and achieve their dreams in Korea. The researcher believes that the results of this study can provide reliable data and information to help international students adapt and be used to study the adaptation of international students in other fields.

2. Adaptation to Korean Language Environment

2.1. Definition of the Degree of Adaptation

In general, 'adaptation' is 'a process in which a person fits together or an individual conforms to a certain case' as a dictionary meaning. In this study, the first factor to measure the degree of adaptation is 1) Korean language proficiency (hereafter 'KP') of international students. KP will be evaluated with TOPIK scores. TOPIK is a 'Test of Proficiency in Korean' for foreigners and non-native Korean speakers and divided into TOPIK I (level 1 and 2) and TOPIK II (level 3 to 6). The next measuring factors to be used in this study are 2) the degree of exposure to Korean and Koreans and 3) attitudes toward Korean language and Korean culture. Finally, this study will look at 4) whether international students have part-time job or not. This study judges that if the score is relatively high in terms of these adaptation measuring factors, the degree of adaptation is high, and if the score is relatively low, it is low.

2.2. Measuring Factors of Adaptation to Korean Language Environment

2.2.1. Language Proficiency

The most important factor to measure adaptation in a particular language environment may be the language use ability (Min, 2014, Jang & Han, 2020, Jung, 2010, Shin & Yoo, 2014). Therefore, to find out how well international students in Korean language environment (hereafter 'KLE') are adjusting, their KP can first be measured. In other words, it means that the higher their KP, the better they are adapting to KLE, which can be judged by their KP.

Recently, it has been reported that the reason why international students are unable to adapt to the Korean language environment is due to their lack of KP. According to a research by Jang & Han (2020), lack of KP leads to the fact that most international students are not only unable to keep up with Korean classes, but also have no Korean friends on campus. Joo (2010) also reported that Korean students are reluctant to form a team with international students, and international students are therefore alienated from team project classes. Furthermore, there is a report that more than half of the undergraduates of international students have less than 60% understanding of Korean language lectures (Yoon, 2013).

In addition, according to a study by Min (2014), IS are having difficulties not only in studying but also in social relationships. Under these circumstances, international students with low KP have entered Korean universities, which make it more difficult to adapt to KLE (Min, 2014, Shin & Yoo, 2014). In Jung's (2010) study, it revealed that the higher the KP of international students, the better they adapt to Korean culture, and their KP was the most important factor in academic performance. Another study published on the adaptation of international students (e.g., Kim H. & Kim Y., 2015) also emphasized that the problem of adaptation in the KLE is due to the lack of Korean. Looking at Ju & Kang's (2022) study analyzed the adaptation of IS, IS' KP is most strong factor to determine their adaptation to Korea. Summarizing all the studies reviewed above, it seems that lack of KP is an obstacle to adaptation to KLE, and Korean skills are key to successfully adapt to Korean universities.

Furthermore, in Sociolinguistics, Knuver and Brandsma's (1993) study shows that foreign language skills are likely to be related to academic performance, which might be meaningful to review here. They had 212 English-speaking elementary school students learning Dutch for two years, and found that students who were active and positive about Dutch learning showed excellent academic performance. In other words, their study proved that academic achievement is closely related to language ability. If this relationship is valid, it is possible to determine the adaptation to KLE by looking at academic achievement of international students. Based on the above references, it is considered appropriate to apply KP as a measuring factor of adaptation in this study. In addition, if international students have high academic achievement, this study will judge that they are more adaptable to KLE.

2.2.2. Exposure to a Particular Language

This study will use the degree of exposure to Korean as the second measuring factor to identify adaptation, assuming that exposure to a particular language in a particular language environment will help improve the language skills. In fact, many studies (e.g., Cenoz, Garcia & Maria, 1999, Loulid, 1990, Miller, 2000, Choi, 2019) have consistently reported that exposure to a particular language is closely related to the ability of a particular language. Most of these studies have proved that the higher the exposure to a specific language in language acquisition, the higher the achievement of the language. For example, Choi (2019) allowed IS to take Korean classes for one semester and conducted a questionnaire survey before and after class. As a result, the students who were exposed

to Korean classes showed more interest in learning Korean and favorable attitudes toward Korean, compared to those who did not participate in the Korean classes. Furthermore, in her study, as the degree of exposure to Korean by using Korean language increased, the degree of exposure to Korean culture also increased. Therefore, the study concluded that exposure to Korean makes IS more familiar with the Korean environment and interested in Korean culture.

There are many forms of exposure to a particular language; direct interaction with native speakers (Cenoz et al., 1999, Choi, 2011), use of a particular language (Bettoni, 1989), frequent access to media in a particular language (Sohrabi, 1997), and various cultural experiences (Stagich, 1998). Any form of exposure helps improve language skills and understand the language culture. This is because exposure to a particular language and culture eliminates prejudice and fear in the language. In the Mantle-Bromley (1995) study, it was also confirmed that language ability can be improved just by understanding culture. Based on the above studies, exposure to Korean language and Korean culture seems to be an important key for IS who have to adapt to the KLE.

2.2.3. Attitudes Toward a Particular Language

Furthermore, this study will use 'attitudes toward Korean language' as an important measuring factor of adaptation. In Sociolinguistics, 'attitudes toward a particular language' have been reported to be closely related to its language ability (e.g., Choi, 2011, 2012, 2017, Knuver & Brandsma, 1993; Trembley, Goldberg & Gardner, 1995), which enables to predict the improvement of the language ability by looking at attitudes toward a particular language. In addition, in the above studies, feelings about a particular language, necessity of and interest in learning the language, and favorability about particular language's culture and speakers who use that language were discussed when measuring language attitudes for a particular language (Choi, 2011).

Choi (2017) studied the correlation between attitudes toward a particular language and achievement of that language for IS. In her study, international students' attitudes toward English after exposing to English classes for one semester were investigated, and as a result, international students with high English achievement showed more favorable and positive attitudes toward English. More interesting findings in the study were that their attitudes have a very close relationship with KP. In other words, international students who showed more interest in English classes and more favorable attitude toward English were comparatively good at Korean language. Therefore, the study suggests not only the

possibility of high achievement of a particular language, but also relationship with other foreign language skills, if attitudes toward a particular language are favorable.

Another study supporting the above research results was carried out by Tremblay, Goldberg and Gardner (1995). They found that Canadian students' attitudes toward Hebrew were highly related to Hebrew language achievement. In other words, students with higher Hebrew language skills showed more positive attitudes toward the language. Furthermore, the study implied the possibility that the attitude toward a particular language which learners had before learning the language could have a strong influence on the language's achievement. Choi's (2012) study also support the above results. Choi (2012) divided into 5 groups according to TOEIC score and their attitudes toward English was measured. As a result, the higher the English grade group, the more positive attitude toward English was measured. In addition, it was found that the higher the English grade group, the lower the fear of learning English compared to the lower English grade group. Therefore, the study concluded that attitudes toward English and English ability have a close relationship with each other. Based on the above studies, if IS' attitudes toward Korean are positive, this study will judge that their KP is likely to be improved and to adapt to the KLE.

2.2.4. Part-Time Work

Finally, the measuring factor to be used to identify IS' adaptation in this study is 'part-time work'. The reason why IS chose Korea was that it has a relatively safe social system compared to other countries, relatively low tuition fees, and relatively high scholarship benefits, and most of all, it was easy to find a part-time job (Kim & Lee, 2011). In fact, as the researcher observes many IS who are working part-time, it seems clear that they chose Korea because of the merit of being able to study and work part-time at the same time. Choi (2015) analyzed the KP for 102 IS; 46 students worked part-time for 6 months and 56 students who did not work part-time. As a result, it was found that IS working part-time had better Korean language skills and faster improvement than students not working part-time. In addition, although it was not known whether part-time work was first or Korean ability was first, but students worked part-time had excellent Korean skills, more positive attitude toward Korean and better feelings toward Koreans. The reason why their KP is higher than that of students who did not work part-time was that the degree of exposure to Korean is different. It can be said that the students who work part-time were exposed to Korean and Korean culture during they are working.

In addition, the part-time work of international students might be able to provide various cultural experiences in Korean. As already mentioned in the above 2.2.2., Stagich (1998) emphasized that cultural experiences can greatly help understand the culture of a particular language. The study of Mantle-Bromley (1995) also confirmed that language ability was improved due to cultural understanding. If part time work can increase opportunities to experience Korean culture, it may lead them to understand Korean culture, which will increase the adaptation of international students in Korea. Therefore, in order to find out the adaptation of IS to KLE, this study will investigate whether international students work part time or not.

3. Research Method

3.1. Participants

Forty five international students participated in the questionnaire survey. The participants of the study are second-year students who are currently studying at the department of Global studies in Y university in Busan, South Korea. Their nationality consists of China, Indonesia, Uzbekistan and Vietnam, of which 12 participants had TOPIK level 2 when they entered the university, 23 participants entered with TOPIK level 3 and 10 students entered with the level 4. In-depth interviews were attended by six international students (2 in TOPIK level 2, 2 in level 3 and 2 in level 4 at the time of admission) who did not participate in the questionnaire survey. These 6 in-depth interviewees from China, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam are also studying at the department of Global studies.

3.2. Survey Questionnaire

In order to find out the degree of adaptation of the participants, which is the purpose of this study, the design of the questionnaire began based on the studies discussed in the above previous studies. The questions were produced in relation to the measuring factors (Korean proficiency, the degree of exposure to Korean, attitudes toward Korean, and whether participants work part-time) of adaptation to Korean language environment. In addition, by referring to the studies (Choi, 2019, 2017) which conducted questionnaire surveys to international students, it was redesigned more elaborately and objectively to

suit the purpose of this study. When the first questionnaire was created, a pilot survey was conducted on three international students. Then, the final version of the questionnaire was made by revising the difficult questions to understand.

The researcher of this study conducted a questionnaire survey herself, which might be able to strengthen the validity and reliability of the survey results. In the questionnaire survey, the researcher explained the purpose of the survey and announced that the information obtained as a result of the questionnaire survey will be used only for the research. Since the participants in this questionnaire survey are foreigners, if they do not fully understand the questions made in Korean, the reliability and validity of the survey results might be in doubt. Therefore the researcher explained each question in Korean slowly and clearly and induced them to answer with sufficient understanding.

The Part I of the questionnaire was first made up of social background questions and was asked to write the answers directly; gender, major, nationality, grade, residential period in Korea, current TOPIK scores, previous semester's GPA (Grade Point Average), part-time work status and average hours of part-time work per week. In Part II, the questions asking the degree of exposure to Korea and Korean people followed: 1) How often do you use Korean? 2) How often do you meet Korean people? 3) How often do you contact Korean culture (movies, dramas, music, fashion, food, etc.)? Final Part III consisted of questions asking their attitudes toward Korean and Korean culture: 4) How do you feel about Korean? 5) How useful is Korean to your future? 6) How much are you interested in learning Korean? 7) How much easy is learning Korean to you? 8) How much do you like Korean culture (e.g., movies, dramas, fashion, food and etc.,)? 9) How much are you satisfied with studying in Korea? 10) How strongly do you want to recommend studying in Korea? Part II & III were to be answered on a 5-point scale, and the questionnaire survey was conducted in September 2022.

3.3. In-Depth Interview

In general, adding qualitative survey to support the results of the quantitative research can increase the validity and reliability of the research. The advantage of in-depth interviews as a qualitative survey is that if the interviewer comfortably creates an atmosphere, he/she can find out the true inside of the interviewees. This is because it is difficult to draw the deep inner side of the participants from the quantitative survey. Therefore, in this study, in-depth interviews were conducted to increase the reliability of

the results of the questionnaire survey.

Six international students participated in face-to-face interviews and the researcher carried out these interviews herself one by one in her office. They were selected on the basis of their TOPIK level (2 participants in TOPIK level 2, 2 in level 3, and 2 in level 4 at the time of admission). The in-depth interview was started based on the questions used in the above questionnaire survey, and it took about 15 to 20 minutes per interviewee. As already mentioned, the interviewees were those who did not participate in the above questionnaire survey. This is because the participants of the two surveys (quantitative & qualitative) must be different to see the consistency of the results of the two surveys. In-depth interviews were conducted in September 2022.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results of Questionnaire Survey

First of all, as the results of the questionnaire survey, the average TOPIK score of 45 participants was 2.96 at the time of admission (hereafter 'TA'), but the current topic score was 3.73. Overall, it can be seen that the score has risen by about 0.77 points after entering the university. Their previous semester's GPA averaged 3.67 (full mark: 4.50), 38 Ps were currently working part-time, and only 7 participants were not working part-time.

Table 1 shows the results of examining the degree of exposure to Korean and Korean culture.

Table 1. The degree of exposure to Korean and Korean culture (N=45)

Questions	Mean
How often do you use Korean?	3.55
How often do you meet Korean people?	3.68
How often do you contact Korean culture?	3.72

*5=very often, 1=never

According to Table 1, all the mean scores of three questions asking the degree of exposure are less than 4.00, and the lowest score is 3.55, which can be said to be a relatively low contact frequency score. As will be revealed in the in-depth interview below,

the place where the international students are exposed to Korean language, Korean people and Korean culture is classes at the university or one where they work part-time. In Table 1, however, it is noteworthy that contact with Korean culture was the highest, which indicates that they are likely to be easily exposed to Korean culture than Korean people.

The results of the questionnaire on the attitudes toward Korean and Korean culture are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Attitudes towards Korean and Korean culture (N=45)

Questions	Mean
How do you feel about Korean?	3.97
How useful is Korean to your future?	4.35
How much are you interested in learning Korean?	3.90
How much easy is learning Korean to you?	2.82
How much do you like Korean culture?	3.79

*5=Most positive, 1=Most negative

According to Table 2. above, overall mean score for the attitude toward Korean language and Korean culture was rated 3.77. If the rating of the question, "How much easy is learning Korean to you?", is subtracted, the overall mean scores of the four questions is 4.0 (most positive = 5). Particularly, the question, "How useful is Korean to your future?", showed the highest mean score (4.35) in the above results. This result reflects the current situation of participants learning Korean in KLE, and that most of the participants who are taking classes at universities and working part-time are aware that Korean language skills are necessary.

In the above results, another question to pay attention to is "How much easy is learning Korean to you?". While most of the mean scores were in between 3.79 and 4.35, the mean score of this question showed a very low rating (2.82). This result indicates that many Ps who are currently studying through Korean as a medium of instruction in classes feels the difficulties from Korean as a foreign language. Overall, summarizing the above results, 1) comparing at the time of admission, Ps' Korean skills are improved, 2) their previous semester's GPA is generally good, 3) 84% of the participants are working part-time, 4) their degree of exposure to Korean is generally high, and 5) their attitudes toward Korean and Korean culture were positive. Therefore, it can be said that the international students are being well adapted to KLE.

4.2. Adaptation by Korean Proficiency at the Time of Admission

4.2.1. TOPIK Scores, GPA and Part-Time Work Status by KP at TA

Although the above results shows that IS seems to be adjusting well on average, the degree of adaptation can be different according to KP. In this study, the biggest variable in 'adaptation' was KP. Therefore, this study analyzed how IS' KP at TA affects the adaptation to KLE. The results of the analysis were as follows.

Table 3. TOPIK scores, GPA and part-time work status by KP at TA (N=45)

Items	GA	GB	GC
TOPIK score at TA	2.00	3.00	4.00
Current TOPIK score	3.40	3.55	4.25
TOPIK score difference	1.40	0.55	0.25
Previous GPA	3.17	3.75	4.10
Part-time work Yes/No	8/4	20/3	10/0

GA: TOPIK level 2 group, GB: TOPIK level 3 group, GC: TOPIK level 4 group

As can be seen from Table 3. above, it shows that all groups' KP has improved compared to when they entered the university; GA: 2.00 → 3.40; GB: 3.00 → 3.55; GC: Grade 4.00 → 4.25. Despite the improvement in KP of all groups, it is clear that the higher the TOPIK score at TA, the higher the current TOPIK score (GA: 3.40, GB: 3.55, GC: 4.25). Interestingly, however, there is a difference in the improvement of KP in groups (GA: 1.40; GB: 0.55, GC: 0.25), which shows that the lower the KP at TA, the greater the improvement in KP.

Reviewing the above 2.2., language ability and academic achievement are correlated with each other. Therefore, it can be expected in advance in this study that the higher the KP, the higher the probability of receiving high GPA. As expected, the result shows that the higher the KP at TA, the higher the previous semester's GPA (GA: 3.17 GB: 3.75, GC: 4.10). Assuming that academic achievement affects adaptation, this study proves that the higher the KP at TA, the higher the likelihood of adaptation in KLE.

Next result to look at is the part-time work status. As shown in Table 3. above, 8 out of 12 (67%) were working part-time in GA. In GB group, 20 out of 23 (87%) had part-time job, while all of the participants (100%) in GC group at the highest KP at TA were working part-time. Of course, some of the participants may not be doing part-time

work because they do not want to. However, except for these cases, if referring only the above results, there is a high probability of part-time work in a group with high KP at TA.

4.2.2. The Degree of Exposure to Korean by KP at TA

The current status of Ps' exposure to Korean by their KP at TA is shown as follows.

Table 4. The degree of Exposure to Korean by KP at TA(N=45)

Item	GA	GB	GC	M
A	3.71	3.70	3.25	3.55
B	3.82	4.10	3.11	3.68
C	3.43	3.70	4.02	3.72
M	3.65	3.83	3.46	3.65

* Very often 5, Never 1

A: Frequency of Korean use B: Frequency of contact with Korean

C: Frequency of contact with Korean culture M: Mean

According to Table 4., the frequency of Korean language use was rather higher in the GA group (3.71) than in GB (3.70) and GC (3.25). This result, which showed a high 'frequency of use of Korean' in the lowest KP group, seems to be related to the highest improvement (GA: 1.40, GB: 0.55, GC: 0.25) of the participants in the GA group shown in Table 3 above. The lower the KP, the more they seem to be using Korean to improve their Korean. These results may also be due to the faster improvement of the participants at the beginner level than those at the advanced level. 'Frequency of contact with Koreans' also did not move proportionally by KP, but the frequency of GC group with the highest KP was the lowest (3.11). However, interestingly, the exposure to Korean culture was highest in the GC group (3.43-3.70-4.00). It shows that the higher the KP, the easier it is to contact Korean culture. Since it is more fun to understand Korean culture (e.g., movies and dramas) if the participants are good at Korean, there is a possibility that the participants with higher KP enjoy more Korean culture.

4.2.3. Attitudes Toward Korean by KP at TA

Now, let's find out how attitudes toward Korean differ depending on their KP at TA. The attitudes toward Korean for each group are in Table 5.

Table 5. Attitudes towards Korean by KP at TA (N=45)

	FK	NK	IK	EK	FKC	M
GA	3.71	4.09	3.86	3.10	3.57	3.67
GB	4.03	4.40	4.10	2.60	3.75	3.78
GC	4.18	4.56	3.75	2.75	4.05	3.86
M	3.97	4.35	3.90	2.82	3.79	3.77

*Most positive: 5, Most negative: 1

FK: How do you feel about Korean? NK: How useful is Korean to your future?

IK: How much are you interested in learning Korean? EK: How much easy is learning Korean to you? FKC: How much do you like Korean culture.

As can be found in Table 5. above, three out of five items, FK, NK and FKC, are moving exactly proportionally. The participants who entered with high KP have a better feeling about Korean (3.71-4.03-4.18), more strong perception that Korean is useful in the future (4.09-4.40-4.56). Furthermore, the favorability of Korean culture (e.g., movies, dramas, fashion, food) is also higher for the participants who had high TOPIK score at TA (3.57-3.75-4.05).

The most interesting result is EK, "How much easy is learning Korean to you?"; the mean score of GC group is lower than that of GA group. In general, the students who are good at Korean are likely to learn Korean easily, but the results of this study show a different result than expected. Although various factors affecting these results can exist, it can be estimated that knowing more generally makes it more difficult to learn.

A co-relational analysis was used to interrelate two variables, KP and attitudes toward Korean and Korean culture.

Table 6. 'Pearson's r (correlation coefficient) for correlations between KP and attitudes toward Korean

	FK	NK	IK	EK	FKC
KP	0.412**	0.218*	0.118	-0.112	0.236*

*p<0.05, **p<0.01 r=correlation coefficient

Looking at the Pearson's r shown in Table 6, important items show a significant correlation: FK (r=0.412, p=0.0001), NK (r=0.218, p=0.025), FKC (r=0.236, p=0.05). This significance indicates that the three items, the feeling of Korean, the perception that

Korean is useful, and the favorability of Korean culture are correlated with Korean proficiency. The evidence from this result explains why significant difference in mean scores shows as per KP in Table 5. This analysis also confirms that the participants with higher KP are likely to have favorable attitudes toward Korean and Korean culture and be easier to adapt to KLE.

4.2.4. Satisfaction and Recommendation by KP at TA

The last questions asked in the questionnaire survey was satisfaction with studying in Korea and recommendation studying in Korea.

Table 7. Satisfaction and recommendation by KP at TA

	GA	GB	GC	M
A	3.98	3.50	4.25	3.91
B	3.75	3.90	4.00	3.88
M	3.87	3.70	4.13	3.90

A: How much are you satisfied with studying in Korea?

B: How strongly do you want to recommend studying in Korea?

In accordance with Table 7 above, the results of satisfaction in KLE showed the highest score (4.25) in the GC group with high KP at TA. The answers to the questions asked if they wanted to recommend for studying in Korea were also exactly proportional by KP group; the participants with higher KP more strongly wanted to recommend studying in Korea (3.75-3.90-4.00). Regarding the satisfaction and recommendation, it may reflect the participants' experience in KLE. In summary, the results in Table 6. above implies that the higher the KP, the higher the satisfaction level.

4.3. The Results of In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted individually with the following six IS; A1 & A2 (TOPIK level 2 at TA), B1 & B2 (Level 3), and C1 & C2 (Level 4). The results of the in-depth interview are as follows. First of all, their current TOPIK score is A1: Level 3, A2: Not known (because he didn't take TOPIK test after entering the university), B1: Level 4, B2: level 4, C1 & C2: approximately Level 5 or 6 according to the result of the interviews (they haven't taken the test yet since TA). In relation to their current TOPIK

level, the improvement of KP was clear.

The interviewees' GPA for the last semester were A1:2.91, A2:1.76, B1:3.23, B2:3.61, C1:4.07, C2:3.78, and their average grades were 3.23 out of 4.50. As predicted, the participants with higher KP at TA showed higher GPA proportionally. Furthermore, among the six interviewees, A2 was the only one who did not work part-time. A2 was learning to take photos in the rest of his time while studying at university, and he seemed to have no reason to work part-time because he was financially free. Nevertheless, it draws attention to consider the relationship between part-time work and KP, as the interviewee with the lowest KP at TA and the lowest GPA among the six Ps was not working part-time.

In relation to the degree of exposure to Korean, it was found from the in-depth interviews that most of their exposure to Korean was only in part-time work and in classes. And the Korean people they met were also instructors at university, bosses at work places, or customers if they work at restaurants. In other words, there were no cases of meeting Koreans in other places. As discussed in 2.2. above, in order to improve language proficiency, it is necessary to meet native speakers of the language frequently and encounter the culture of the language. However, their exposure to Korean is limited to schools and places where they work, therefore it is judged that various contact situations and places must be expanded.

There was a difference in attitudes toward Korean among six Ps. First of all, C2, who entered with level 4, came to Korea to study, and was recommended by his mother, a Korean teacher in Uzbekistan. Since her mother is a Korean teacher, she has been exposed to Korean since she was young and enjoyed watching Korean dramas. In the in-depth interview, C2 said it is more comfortable to use Korean than Uzbek. C2, who was buried in Korean language and culture, was very satisfied with her study in KLE and planned to do business related to Korea after graduation.

C1, another interviewee who entered with level 4, showed the highest GPA among the interviewees. As a result of the interview with the researcher, C1's Korean language skills were almost at the level of Korean native speakers, and it was found that she came to Korea from Vietnam when she was in high school. According to the researcher's observation in the class (C1 was taking the researcher's class), there was no doubt that her academic life and adaptation to Korea was perfect. Considering her attitudes toward Korean revealed in the in-depth interview, it can be said that she truly loves Korean and Korean culture.

Furthermore, it was found that B2 with TOPIK level 3 at TA has improved her KP considerably. According to the interview with B2, her KP has been improved while working part-time, and he was watching most of the latest Korean dramas on TV. B2, who came from Vietnam to study, wanted to get married and settle down in Korea rather than returning to her home country after graduation. B1, who entered the same TOPIK level and also came from Vietnam, was very interested in Korean fashion. He worked part-time three days a week for about 5~6 hours a day. According to the interview with B1, although he talks to customers in Korean at the restaurant where he works part time, the talking contents were very limited, as receiving orders only in a short sentence from customers. B1 felt that it was still difficult to communicate with Koreans, and that there were difficulties in studying. Nevertheless, he was studying hard and working part-time, and he said that the Korean language was very competitive and useful for his future.

The last two interviewees (A1 & A2) with TOPIK level 2 at TA are both Chinese students. As a result of the in-depth interview, both of them had difficulty in class, and especially A2, who had the lowest GPA among six interviewees, complained of difficulties in university life. As a result of the researcher's observation in class, it was difficult for A2 to speak and answer in Korean, although he acquired TOPIK level 3 currently. In similar with A2, A1 was also having a hard time adjusting to university life because he transferred to the current university from another university.

Summing up the results of the in-depth interview, the interviewees were generally adapting well to KLE or were trying to adapt. However, it is clear that the current degree of adaptation was very different depending on KP at TA. These results were not significantly different from the above quantitative study, but rather confirmed to be consistent with the above questionnaire results.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the adaptation of IS who entered Y University and how it differs by KP at TA and create reliable factors to measure adaptation. First, looking at the results of the questionnaire survey, the participants were generally well adapting to the current Korean environment as their KP was improved, their GPA was good, 84% of Ps were working part-time and their attitudes toward Korean were positive. However, this degree of adaptation differed by KP at TA; the

higher the KP at TA, the higher the current KP, the academic achievement and the part-time works. As for attitudes toward Korean and Korean culture, the group with high KP showed more positive attitudes. In terms of feelings about Korean, the perception of usefulness of Korean, and the favoritism about Korean culture, the group with higher KP showed a proportionally higher mean score. This correlation between KP and attitudes toward Korean and Korean culture was also proved by Pearson's r (correlation coefficient). Furthermore, satisfaction in KLE and recommendation for studying in Korea were higher in the group with high KP. The results of the in-depth interview also showed consistency with the results of the questionnaire survey. As a result of the in-depth interviews focusing on the adaptation measurement factors, it was confirmed that although the overall adaptation seemed to be positive, the KP played an important role in adapting to the Korean language environment.

According to the results of this study, the most important factor in adapting to KLE was KP. As already mentioned, local universities are making every effort to recruit international students due to the lack of domestic admission resources. However, it is desirable to grant admission to international students with a certain level of KP because international students with a low level of KP are likely to suffer in adapting to university campus and life in Korea. Nevertheless, in reality, if international students with a low level of KP should be admitted for university finance or any other reasons, separate special programs enabling them to improve their KP should be operated in the university. Then, when they become fluent in Korean enough to take classes, the university should lead them to take mainstream courses. It is because universities have responsibilities to improve the KP of international students in order to let them adapt to KLE and complete their study successfully in Korea. Finally, the researcher hopes that the measuring factors dealt in this study can be used as necessary data and information in other studies which focus on the adaptation of international students.

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