



## **The Learning Strategy of Third Language (L3) University Students for the Korean Language: A Study of Chinese Students**

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This study aimed to understand the language learning strategies of L3 Chinese university students who were taking a year-long university exchange programme in one of the South Korean universities and who had learning experiences with both the Chinese and English languages. Based on the constructivist learning theory, this qualitative study sought to identify the elements and factors that could influence their language learning strategies based on previous and current experiences from 72 Chinese-as-the-first language international students with interviews, focus group activities, and remarkable-item sharing. Two questions guided this study: 1) what are the major applications and strategies of language learning used by the L3 language learners of the Korean language, and 2) what elements and factors influence the language learning strategies that are based on the L3 language learners' previous and current experiences? The results indicated that interests in Korean popular culture and entertainment, contemporary teaching and learning materials, and bridge my previous knowledge with new ideas were the main themes. The study's results outline the preferred teaching and learning strategies and reveal how the participants absorb their foreign language knowledge based on their previous experiences, current experiences, and contemporary situations.

Keywords: constructivist learning, foreign language learning, international student, second language learning, third language learning, third language acquisition

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Research Background: Populations of Korean Language Learners**

South Korea has become a world-famous region since the early 2000s due to the rapid development of its entertainment and tourism industries (Dos santos, 2020; Dos Santos, 2020; Lee & Lee, 2019). Although the Korean language is not spoken as widely as English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Hindi, and Arabic are, because of South Korea's population, official status, and colonialism (Szmigiera, 2021), the Korean language has become a popular option in which language learners choose to gain proficiency as their second language (L2) or third language (L3) (Ghezlou et al., 2019). The Korean

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language's widespread use in entertainment worldwide, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, has categorised it as an important business language or lingua franca (Lee, 2018). According to an official report from the National Institute of Korean Language of the Republic of Korea (Park, 2010), approximately 77 million people use Korean as their daily spoken language. Most Korean language speakers live in South Korea (approximately 52 million), North Korea (approximately 26 million), the United States (approximately one million), Japan (approximately 63 thousand), and Guam (approximately six thousand). A recent report (Kim, 2021) has further indicated that the number of King Sejong Institutes (South Korean government-sponsored Korean language learning centres) has significantly increased, from 13 in 2007 to 213 in 2020, across 76 countries. The South Korean government aims to sponsor at least 270 King Sejong Institutes by the end of 2022.

In addition to the support from the South Korean government, a report (Kim, 2021) from the Korea Foundation further showed that higher education institutions in North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Oceania (Jee, 2018) had hosted Korean language courses based on the Korean Popular Superstar Team, the Bangtan Boys (BTS) as the main feature for their learning materials (Batoul Touhami et al., 2017). The Korean language learner's population is significantly increasing, in conjunction with the promotion of the entertainment industry and the King Sejong Institutes. In 2021, Vietnam began to reform its elementary school foreign language curriculum (Kim, 2021), which allowed their early year students to learn the Korean language as one of the options in addition to English and Chinese.

In the past decade, the size of the international student population has grown significantly in South Korea. A recent report (Yoon, 2021) outlined that in 2010, only 83.84 thousand international students came to South Korea for education. However, recently that number has increased significantly — from 123.86 thousand in 2017 to 160.17 thousand in 2019. Another recent report (Koh & Kim, 2019) revealed the international students' nationality. In 2019, 44.4% of the international students were from China, followed by 23.4% from Vietnam and 4.6% from Mongolia. Because these groups of international students tended to be adult students coming for either language school or university education, many had established their first-language (L1) proficiency and skills. In other words, the Korean language is usually considered to be those students' second language (L2) or third language (L3).

### **Research Background: Chinese Learners**

Currently, in most of the East Asian countries, particularly mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, English language education is a compulsory requirement for secondary school and university students, and it serves as one of the assessments and evaluations for graduation and admission to university (Fang, 2018). In other words, according to government policies from different countries, cities, and regions, students should learn the Chinese language as their L1 and the English language as their L2 in the Chinese school environment. Due to the students' learning behaviours and interests in a language other than English (LOTE), L3 language learning, such as Korean language learning, is not uncommon beyond the school requirements.

Learning a second language is certainly different from acquiring a third language, particularly for Chinese learners who have learnt English as their L2 during their K-12 education. Currently, in the Greater China region, including mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, English as the second language learned as a requirement in most school environments. In other words, if these students learn the Korean language, it has to be their L3 language.

However, when individuals learn and understand the language structure of an L2, many can transfer, apply, and acquire the L3 structures on the basis of their L1 and L2 knowledge and background (Aribaş & Cele, 2021). In fact, L3 language acquisition is uncommon in many parts of the world because foreign language skills are not required for career development and university admission. Some studies have investigated students' L3 learning behaviours, but most of those studies examined the situations and behaviours in West Asia (Aribaş & Cele, 2021), Europe (Kartushina & Martin, 2019; Santana-Quintana, 2018), and Southeast Asia (Machart, 2017). Although a recent study (Chen, 2019) asserted that many Chinese residents decided to go to South Korea for entertainment-industry training, the results tended to outline the learning motivations and fans' behaviours instead of their strategies for learning a foreign language.

#### **Theoretical Framework: Constructivist Learning Theory**

Bruner (1973) argued that learning is an active behaviour wherein the learning process can establish new ideas, strategies, behaviours, and actions based on the learners' previous and current knowledge and situation. The cognitive structure is the psychological procedure that provides the background from which the learners understand, handle, arrange, and organise an experience and make sense of their new knowledge (Bruner, 1973). Such cognitive structures allow the learners to employ their previous and current knowledge to construct their new knowledge. Four factors have been categorised in the constructivist learning theory: 1) the teaching strategy should focus on the connection between the previous and current experiences of the learners in order to build the new knowledge, 2) the teaching strategy should focus on the experiences and language backgrounds that increase the motivation of the learners, 3) the learners should be able to handle, understand, and organise their teaching and learning strategies with no difficult procedures, and 4) the teaching strategy and goal should go beyond the learners' previous and current knowledge, in order to fill in information gaps (Bruner, 1973). Figure 1 outlines the Constructivist Learning Theory.

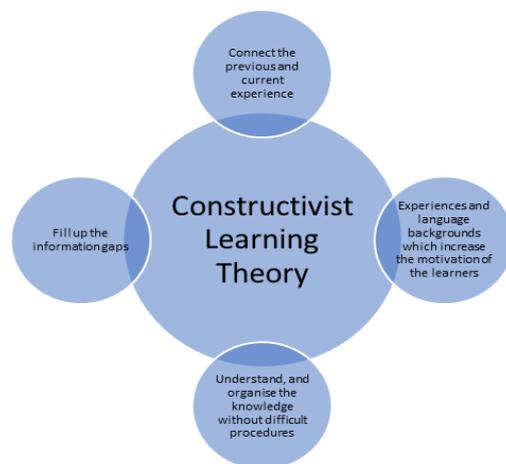


Figure 1  
Constructivist learning theory

### Purpose of the Study

Based on the research background and the current situation in South Korea, the aims of this study was to understand the language learning strategies of L3 mainland Chinese, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students who were taking a year-long university exchange programme in one of the South Korean universities and who had learning experiences with both the Chinese and English languages.

Based on the constructivist learning theory (Bruner, 1973), this qualitative study sought to identify the elements and factors that could influence their language learning strategies that were based on previous and current experiences. In short, two research questions guided this study:

What are the major applications and strategies of language learning used by the L3 language learning of the Korean Language? Why?

What elements and factors influence the language learning strategies that are based on the L3 language learners' previous and current experiences? Why and how?

### Definition of Terms

BTS: Bangtan Boys (방탄소년단) is a seven-member South Korean superstar singing group. Recently, the South Korean government established a series of Korean language teaching and learning materials that were based on the singing group's image and promotion.

L1: First language, native language, or mother tongue.

L2: Second language.

L3: Third language.

L3 language acquisition: The process and strategy of learning a new language after a person has gained knowledge and understanding of a first language and a second language.

LOTE: Language other than English.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The phenomenology (Giorgi, 1985) with the interpretivism (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) was employed as the means for the methodology. The phenomenology was useful because the purpose of this study covered the general situation in the language learning arena. Not only one school or university is facing this problem, but all educational institutions have a similar issue for language learning. Therefore, with the wider methodological design, the researcher could capture sharings and lived stories from a larger population.

### **Participants and Recruitment**

The purposive and snowball sampling strategies (Merriam, 2009) were employed to recruit potential participants for this study. Based on the personal network, the researcher orally invited three potential participants to this study. All three participants agreed with the arrangement. Therefore, the researcher formally sent the consent form, data collection arrangement, risk statement, protocol, and related information to the participant. The researcher arranged the data collection procedure, such as interview room in a community centre and public library. After the first interview session, the participants should try their best to refer at least one potential participant for this study. After several rounds of referral, 72 participants were willing to join. The participants should meet all of the following points:

Chinese, Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan residents;

Come to South Korea as an international exchange university student;

Taking at least one Korean language course;

Korean language as their third language;

Chinese as their first language;

At least 18 years old

### **Data Collection**

Four data collection tools were employed, including two interview sessions, focus group activities, remarkable-item sharing, and member checking interview sessions. First, according to Seidman (Seidman, 2013), qualitative researchers should try their best to conduct at least two interview sessions for each participant in order to enrich the data. Therefore, the researcher designed two semi-structured, private, and one-on-one interview sessions per participant. The first interview session concerned with the

motivations of Korean language learning and their current living experiences in South Korea as exchange students. The second interview session concerned the problems about language learning strategies, language learning experiences from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and South Korea, and the activations of L3 learning. Each interview session was hosted from 90 to 147 minutes.

After the participants completed their interview sessions, the researcher invited all participants for the focus group activities. Because the participants live in different locations in South Korea, the researcher needed to arrange the virtual-based focus group activities in order to meet the timetable for all participants. Six participants were arranged in one focus group activity. In other words, 12 sessions of focus group activities were conducted. Each focus group activity hosted from 123 to 183 minutes with two ten-minute breaks.

During the interview sessions and focus group activities, all participants were encouraged to show some of the remarkable items related to the purpose of this study. The participants might explain the meaning of the items and tell the stories to the researcher and the fellow participants.

After all data collection procedures were completed, the researcher categorised the data based on each participant. The researcher sent the related data to each participant for the member checking procedure. A follow-up member checking interview via virtual-based cellphone application was conducted for each participant. All participants confirmed their own data. The member checking interview was hosted from 45 to 62 minutes.

Please note, the researcher employed the digital recorder to record the voiced messages from the interview sessions, focus group activities, and member checking interview sessions. Only voices could be recorded. All participants agreed with the arrangement.

### **Data Analysis**

After the researchers collected the data from the participants, the researchers transcribed the voiced information into written transcripts. The researcher re-read the materials multiple times for the potential themes and subthemes. First, the researcher used the open-coding technique to categorise the massive information to different groups as the first-level themes. Second, based on the first-level themes, the researcher employed the axial-coding technique for further developments. As a result, three themes and five sub-themes were yielded (Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Tang & Dos Santos, 2017).

### **Human Subject Protection**

Privacy is the most important part of this study. The researcher kept the signed consent forms, personal information, university information, contact information, voiced messages, written transcripts, computer, and related materials in a password-protected cabinet. Only the researcher could read the information. After the researcher completed the study, the researcher deleted and destroyed the materials immediately for protection. The study received support from the Woosong University Academic Research Funding 2022 (2019-2021/01-06), (2019-2021/01-05) and (2019-2021/01-04).

**FINDINGS**

After the researcher collected data from 144 semi-structured interview sessions, 12 focus group activities, and remarkable-item sharings with the participants, the researcher categorised the information gained into three themes and five subthemes based on the data. Although few of the students belonged to the same Chinese universities and cities of origin, many shared some similar experiences, expectations, and interests from their Korean language learning background and voyage during their year-long exchange programme in South Korea. Table 1 outlines the themes and subthemes.

Table 1

**Themes and subthemes**

Themes and Subthemes
Interests in Korean popular culture and entertainment
Cultures, practices, and geographic locations: Traditional cultures
The influence of TV dramas, superstars, and YouTubers
Contemporary teaching and learning materials
The BTS and other superstars’ textbook materials
Conversations from the TV dramas and superstars
Grammatical and structural differences between textbook knowledge and daily conversations and practices: Slang expressions
Bridge my previous knowledge with new ideas: My academic major knowledge

**Interests in Korean Culture and Entertainment**

Based on the sharings from 70 participants, the researcher confirmed that all of them had received at least three exchange programme offers but that all had decided to take the Korean exchange programme as their first choice. First of all, a large group of participants reported that the recent romantic TV dramas increased their motivations and decisions for language learning (i.e., coming to South Korea for the exchange). The researcher captured two stories. Please note that the English phrases in the quotation marks were spoken in English:

*...I watched the TV drama (Descendants of the Sun or the 태양의 후예)...the romantic conversations in the drama...made me want to understand how to speak it...I want to say “I love you”, “I do”, “you are so handsome”, “you are the best man” in the Korean language...I can speak it in Chinese and English...but if I can speak them in Korean...it is so cool...(Participant #3, Female, Interview)*

*... “older brother” (오빠), “I want to marry you”, “you are always in my heart” ...I listened to these sentences every day in TV dramas and in the songs...I want to learn that and say it to my boyfriend...I can learn it in South Korea, which greatly increased my learning interests...(Participant #7, Female, Interview)*

*Cultures, Practices, and Geographic Locations: Traditional Cultures*

Another group of participants argued that the Korean culture is very similar to their home countries and home regions. Therefore, coming to South Korea might not cause significant cultural shock and misunderstanding due to the similar East Asian background. Therefore, based on this factor, many argued that South Korea provided them to easier start, said:

*...because Korea followed the Chinese culture as a small region in the East Asian areas...many practices and conducts are very similar to China...I think I can have an easier start in this place...many people can speak Chinese too...I think it could be better...at least I can understand the culture... (Participant #68, Female, Interview)*

Besides the traditional cultural practices, many believed that the geographic locations with the Korean practices also significantly influenced their decision-making process. For example, nearly all people advocated that coming to South Korea from their home cities and regions was close. In other words, instead of taking at least 12 hours to another country, participants might arrive in South Korea within five hours. The short duration due to the geographic location also increased their motivations, said:

*...I can go back to my home city every month without any problems...South Korea is very close because it is a part of the East Asian region...if I don't want to stay in Korea, I can just go back to my home in five hours...I want to learn Korean language and enjoy the unique culture...but I miss my family too... (Participant #54, Female, Interview)*

#### *The Influence of Television Dramas, Superstars, and YouTubers*

Many indicated that although L3 language learning was more difficult than L2 acquisition, all were willing to pay the special attention needed. One story was captured:

*...the Super Junior, EXO, and NCT...are some of the great team...many of the singers went to South Korea for the singers' training...I can see they speak nice Korean language...and I want to understand what they are saying...I captured the sentences from the songs and the conversations from the entertainment news...I read that, and I learnt that now...I could listen and understand what they are talking about... (Participant #12, Female, Focus Group and Remarkable-Item Sharing)*

In addition to the influence from the superstars, a large number of participants asserted that they wanted to learn the Korean language and come to South Korea for the musical concerts. Currently, most Korean songs are sung in the Korean language. Before the participants had learnt the Korean language, none could understand any of the lyrics of the songs. However, all showed a handbook with the translations in Chinese and English for some of their famous songs and conversations of the superstars and singers. The researcher marked down some notes from a participant's handbook, as follows:

*눈물이 차올라서 고개를 흐르지 못하게 또 살짝 웃어  
泪流满面，抬起头，不让泪掉下来，我微微一笑*

*Tears are filling up, so I raise my head. I smile a little again, so it doesn't flow*  
 -A song from IU, a Korean female singer  
 (Participant #20, Female, Remarkable-Item Sharing)

Almost all participants wrote down some keywords and conversations from their previous and current experiences (e.g., entertainment news, TV dramas, and songs).

### **Contemporary Teaching and Learning Materials**

Many participants reported positive experiences about the connections between the current knowledge and textbook exercises that could connect to their previous knowledge bases in Chinese and English (L1 and L2). Two said:

*...my English textbooks in China were very boring...only black and white pictures with a lot of charts...the texture of the textbooks was like the newspaper...you don't want to read it...but we have to read and learn the knowledge because of the exams...I passed the English exam with good grades...but the knowledge is not useful...but the current Korean textbooks are very useful because it is well designed for foreign language learners...just like me...the knowledge can connect my English language knowledge...very refreshing... (Participant #1, Male, Interview)*

*...perhaps the Korean book publishers and textbook writers learnt some strategies from the American and British publishers...the textbooks and videos are nice and clean...many textbooks are using magazine-like papers...with nice colours...also, the textbooks employed a lot of grammatical examples in English too...many Korean language learners can compare the exercises in both Korean and English...very good and smart start... (Participant #49, Male, Focus Group)*

Another group of participants also expressed that the current Korean language textbook could connect their Chinese and English language knowledge, using applicable examples and exercises that were based on real-life experiences and situations in Korean communities. The participants said:

*...unlike English and Chinese...with the subject-verb-object structure...Korean uses the subject-object-verb structure...but students could read it clearly with the connections from good examples with pictures, videos, and online game exercises...you just cannot miss the exercises and examples with these strong learning designs...it will match your mother tongue and my English language knowledge from my secondary school experiences... (Participant #31, Male, Interview)*

*...some textbooks were designed for Chinese language learners...some books are for English language learners...it is very good because I can refresh my Korean language learning with my Chinese knowledge...I don't need to think about it because the textbooks connect my previous Chinese knowledge with the current Korean grammatical structure... (Participant #39, Female, Interview)*

*The BTS and other Superstars' Textbook Materials*

Although the participants in this study did not use those pre-made materials because the materials had been so recently published, their own language instructors created many materials using the backgrounds of the Korean superstars and TV dramas to connect the students' interests with contemporary issues in the Korean communities. For example, all expressed that their lessons usually employed many news articles about the superstars and singers' behaviours. That updated news significantly connected the learners' previous and current knowledge bases with contemporary news. Two relevant stories were captured:

*...I always read the superstars' news from the Chinese and the English social media...but I could not read Korean before I came to South Korea...in our classes, our instructors gave us the in-class reading about the lovely superstars...for our homework, we don't do the exercises from the textbooks...our teachers gave us the self-designed exercises about the TV drama stars with the grammatical exercises...(Participant #33, Male, Interview and Remarkable Item Sharing)*

*...it is super useful because I learnt a lot of Korean news from the entertainment industry...I learned many things from the TV dramas and the Korean societies from the BTS and other singers...now, my teacher designed a lot of exercises based on the news from the BTS and some super singers...I could connect my previous ideas and confirm some ideas with the current exercises...(Participant #35, Female, Interview and Remarkable-Item Sharing)*

#### *Conversations from the TV Dramas and Superstars*

The language instructors' specially created writings with the reflections significantly increased the overall training materials simultaneously, particularly those with TV dramas and popular stars who could increase the participants' motivation for learning. Two groups of materials were categorised for their teaching and learning strategies. First, one of the teachers who had created exercises with the popular cultural elements said:

*...from the lower-intermediate level, we used the textbook examples and the keywords from the movies...some sentences from the male and female protagonists...for the first and second levels, we learnt the keywords...from the intermediate level, some whole sentences from the movies...because there are many ways to say that...only just the standardised Korean from the books...(Participant #11, Male, Interview)*

*...songs are important in learning...many students, including my teachers...do not like the materials from the book...the exercises from the books are good for learning...but they are very outdated and boring...our teachers always take some interesting sentences and stories from the movies and songs...we learnt it from this way...it works perfectly with the good popular culture...(Participant #21, Female, Interview)*

Another group of participants asserted that they brought interactive peer sharing and reflections from their own notes to the classrooms for discussion and sharing, including

in the form of presentations and homework. With the flipped classroom teaching and learning strategies in the Korean language classroom environment (Kim et al., 2017), that interactive material allowed the students to find points beyond what the textbooks and their teachers provided. Two said:

*...we need to have our presentation learning date every two weeks...so students would be the teacher during that time...many of our classmates brought song lyrics and conversations from the movies for the learning...we were the teacher and we taught other classmates...interesting!... (Participant #18, Female, Focus Group)*

*...perhaps this is the American ways of teaching...we have to bring the questions to the classroom and students would host the classroom teaching environment for at least once per week...so all students need to teach a part of the lesson over the semester...I have to learn the knowledge and read all the materials because I don't want to teach the wrong ideas...at the same time, I combined my previous knowledge with the new chapters...excellent way of teaching...the American way... (Participant #41, Male, Focus Group)*

#### *Grammatical and Structural Differences between Textbook Knowledge and Daily Conversations and Practices: Slang Expressions*

Many participants expressed confusion about the applications between the proper Korean knowledge from textbooks and the usage of the Korean language in daily life. Therefore, all believed that mixed combinations from the textbooks and contemporary materials were essential. Based on those sharings, the researcher captured two stories:

*...the textbooks do not have any slang and causal sentences...the textbooks could only teach us the traditional ways of speaking...I do not want to learn the grandparents' conversation...it is good to know for the exam...but I am not here for the standardised language exam...I want to learn the language for my personal uses in this society... (Participant #14, Male, Interview)*

*...I do not have the motivations and interests if I can only learn the conversation and knowledge from the textbook...or the standardised or traditional ways of the Korean language...we have the native speakers...our teachers in the classroom...I really want to understand how Korean people speak in the city...I can learn the traditional ways from the teachers in China and from the textbooks... (Participant #9, Female, Interview)*

#### **Bridge my Previous Knowledge with New Ideas: My Academic Major Knowledge**

Within the participant population, a large group of learners are public health and health-related students in their home universities. Therefore, their Korean language instructors designed some teaching and learning materials in public health in order to motivate and activate their previous knowledge with the current Korean materials. First, many participants indicated that their Korean language instructors combined some targeted sentences and vocabulary in the clinical environment. With the reflection of some previous studies (Džuganová, 2019; Liu & Li, 2019), teaching foreign languages with the targeted backgrounds may significantly increase motivation and learning acquisition

as the learners could connect their previous experience in the current classroom environment. As one said:

*...I am happy that I can learn some useful sentences and conversations in my Korean classroom because my teachers designed some appropriate reading based on the academic major of our classmates...we have read some public health, management, and education-related materials...very good as I can activate my public health knowledge in the Korean language classroom...(Participant #64, Male, Interview)*

## **DISCUSSIONS**

According to some previous studies (Batoul Touhami et al., 2017; Jin, 2018; Sohn & Youn, 2016), a large number of foreign language learners, particularly learners from other East Asian regions and countries, decide to learn Korean as their foreign language in response to the influence of the entertainment industry, such as TV dramas and singing groups. From the perspective of ethnicity, South Korea is one of the East Asian regions where share the same ethnical cultures and anthropological backgrounds as other Chinese speaking countries and regions (Kim, 1996; Reiko Ogawa, 2018). Although not all learners study the Korean language as a result of the Korean popular culture and ethical consideration, the motivations of the entertainment industry have taken important roles in the Korean Wave trend (Batoul Touhami et al., 2017). In a previous study (Choi & Yi, 2012), pop culture and entertainment could significantly increase the learning motivations and interests, particularly connecting the previous knowledge to the current materials. In line with the constructivist learning theory (Bruner, 1973), the researcher confirmed that the participants' stories matched the elements identified from the theoretical framework.

In addition to the social class and honorific tenses construction in the new knowledge from the participants' knowledge bases, many reported that some Chinese citizens who had received training from the South Korean entertainment companies had found that experience to have greatly increased their motivations for Korean language and cultural learning (Chen, 2019). Judging by these sharings from the studies, it was clear that many participants could speak, handle, and organise the English language very well in their conversation. They used their L2 language proficiency and cultural knowledge to describe and construct their Korean language and cultural knowledge from previous and current experiences (e.g., TV dramas, songs, social class, and living experiences) (Mohammadi & Izadpanah, 2019). All indicated that they did not know how the social class levels in the Korean culture would influence their language uses and applications because Chinese and English do not have those vocabulary differences, such as the honorific tenses, based on social classes (Oh & Sung, 2017). More importantly, their understanding of the Korean culture also increased their learning motivations and language acquisition with their previous experiences (Dos santos, 2020; Dos Santos, 2018, 2019b).

During the past decade, many foreign language classrooms began to use technologically assisted materials and tools for enhanced learning experiences (Ruzikulovna et al., 2020). A recent study (Kwee, 2021) indicated that foreign language teaching materials

should engage contemporary knowledge and applications in an effort to increase students' motivations to learn, their experiences, and their performances. As is the case with many traditional East Asian foreign language classroom environments (Dos Santos, 2019a, 2021), all participants in this study had received intensive language training from their classroom experiences in China, particularly in terms of textbook-oriented and exercise-based learning (Liu & Li, 2019). Based on the sharings, the right textbook materials and the connections between the previous experience and current language learning (Kwee, 2021) served as the keys for their learning motivations and learning strategies. Many believed their L2 knowledge and understanding could connect to the Korean language learning as their L3. Based on the constructivist learning theory (Bruner 1973), the researcher confirmed the participants' linkage between L2 and L3 learning strategies and backgrounds.

According to a recent report (Joung, 2021), the Korean government and the King Sejong Institute created the BTS Korean language textbook materials to increase language learners' motivations and interests in learning (Dos Santos, 2020a, 2020b). Watching Korean TV dramas and videos with English subtitles increased the motivations and activated the participants' previous and current language knowledge bases (Ryu, 2017). Although no participants in this study were native English speakers, all had at least an intermediate level of English proficiency. Using technologically-assisted teaching and learning approaches with videos and visually-based materials (Pitarch, 2018), the students could learn from visually-based materials, interact with peers, and watch and listen to the videos.

With the flipped classroom teaching and learning strategies in the Korean language classroom environment (Kim et al., 2017), that interactive material allowed the students to find points beyond what the textbooks and their teachers provided. According to the sharings, the flipped classroom teaching and learning strategies became an important approach in the current foreign language classroom environments and greatly activated the participants' motivations for and interests in learning, which then could be built upon the previous and current knowledge, particularly in the Korean language classroom environment (Kim et al., 2017). According to a reflection from a previous study, many young students like to learn from popular culture, and that factor can combine favourably with their previous and current knowledge and understanding. In line with the constructivist learning theory (Bruner 1973), these strategies confirmed how the learners absorbed knowledge from their experiences.

In short, the connections and balance between textbook materials and contemporary exercises from the teachers' library have become significant teaching and learning strategies, as evidenced by the sharings from these participants. A recent study (Aribaş & Cele, 2021) advocated that it is important for L3 learners to use some exercises and materials beyond the textbooks because many wish to learn the language for their personal enhancement. More importantly, the teachers need to understand how to connect the knowledge from L2 to that for L3 to upgrade and bridge the learners' knowledge and proficiency (Kartushina & Martin, 2019). In line with the constructivist

learning theory (Bruner, 1973), those strategies confirmed how the L3 learners in this study absorbed their knowledge from their experiences.

In conclusion, in line with the constructivist learning theory (Bruner, 1973), connecting the previous experiences, targeted backgrounds, academic major understanding, and preferences may significantly motivate, activate, and upgrade the learners' learning outcomes and language acquisition. In this case, with the reflection of some previous studies (Džuganová, 2019; Liu & Li, 2019), the learners argued that the self-designed teaching and learning materials matched their preferences and expectations.

#### **LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

This study had three limitations that can be addressed in potential future research studies. First, the current study recruited a group of Chinese-as-a-first-language international students who did not have any Korean language proficiency before attending their exchange programmes in South Korea. Although Chinese-as-a-first-language international students play a significantly important role in the South Korean educational system, according to the previous statistics, other students' voices, such as Vietnamese and Mongolian students (i.e. other L3 language learners), are also important. Therefore, research studies should collect data from other international students to create teaching and learning programmes that may answer the concerns for foreign language teaching and learning strategies to other international students (Dos Santos, 2018).

Second, foreign language teachers' voices should also be collected because they are the individuals who provide the instruction in the foreign language classroom environments. Also, many foreign language teachers might receive no intensive training in L3 language teaching and learning. Therefore, based on the results from the current study, it is important to investigate the teaching and learning strategies for foreign language teachers in the L3 classroom environments.

Third, the sample for this study was university students who were enrolled as international students for a one-year exchange programme in South Korea. Although universities do not categorise students based on their L2 and L3 learning intentions and proficiencies, it is important to understand the instructional plans and teaching strategies for both L2 and L3 students. Therefore, future research studies should continue to investigate how L1 language proficiencies and expectations may influence the L2 and L3 learning process and sense-making process of the students.

Although many languages have their standardised grammatical structures and lexical sets, the contemporary situations, popular cultures, geographic locations, demographic backgrounds, social levels, genders, ages, and personal beliefs can significantly change the forms of expression that people use (Pilipei & Pyplypenko, 2020). This issue also happens in the Korean language.

#### **CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The results of this study contribute to two aspects of foreign language teaching and learning. First, in accord with the constructivist learning theory (Bruner, 1973), the study's results outline the preferred teaching and learning strategies and reveal how the

participants absorb their foreign language knowledge based on their previous experiences, current experiences, and contemporary situations, particularly in the fields of L3 language learning.

Second, the results of this study significantly outline the typical learning behaviours, and language acquisition approaches for L3 language learners. Many studies focus on L2 language acquisition because L2 is the most common new-language learning situation in many foreign language teaching and learning backgrounds. However, as many minority languages, such as Korean, become more popular in language learning, it is essential to understand and strategy for L3 language acquisition.

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