

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Developing Business Korean Curriculum for Advanced Learners in an American University**

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#### **1 Introduction**

Students' needs in regards to Korean for Business Purposes at Rutgers University have grown during the last decade. Most of the curriculum that was designed for the class, however, has been based on each instructor's individual judgment alone, including the topics, reading texts, tasks to include, and syllabus. As a result, the quality and content of the class, as well as the learning objectives and desired language proficiency level for the class, have highly relied on and fluctuated with instructor's experience and belief on the subject matter. Thus, this proposal aims to revise, fine-tune, and update our current two-semester long curriculum for a business Korean course based on a sound theoretical background and previous students' feedback.

#### **1.1 Institutional Background**

The Korean Studies program at Rutgers University began in spring 1992 in response to the need for Korean courses from Rutgers students, and it is currently housed in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures in the School of Arts and Sciences. The Department offers an undergraduate minor and a graduate certificate in Korean Studies. Eight to nine courses per semester are offered, including 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year Korean courses, a translation course, a literature course, and a business Korean course, to more than 150 students per semester.

The Korean for Business purposes course is a branch of language for specific purposes (LSP). LSP has most of its history detailed in terms of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Strevens (1997) has previously categorized ESP into two different fields; English for Academic Purpose (EAP) and English for Occupational Purpose (EOP). Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) subdivided EOP into English for Professional Purposes (EPP) and English for Vocational Purpose (EVP) and subcategorized each field into another two subfields: EPP into English for Medical Purpose and English for Business Purposes; and EVP into Pre-Vocational English and Vocational English. According to Boyd (2002), Business English is a “general term for a multifaceted global movement in ESP with roots in both the academic and the commercial worlds and can be defined as a subfield that focuses on the development of communicative competence for business settings” (p. 41). Along with definitions for Business English, Lee (2003) has defined Korean for Business Purpose (Business Korean) as a subfield that focuses on the language which is required to get a job, to communicate in spoken and written form in Korean business setting, and to engage in casual conversations with co-workers in Korean-spoken environment. Chang (2014) also described Business Korean as communication skills required in formal and informal business settings in Korea. Business Korean class, therefore,

should deliver a set of vocabulary and expressions that are useful in Korean business settings and introduce the most up-to-date and authentic business culture of Korea.

At Rutgers University, *Advanced Korean for Business 1* and *2* are offered for students who want to learn business Korean. The courses are each one semester long, non-sequential, and three credits each. Students meet twice a week for 80 minutes each for 15 weeks. The courses are 300 level, aimed at students who show advanced proficiency in Korean and, therefore, require at least two years of Korean class or equivalent prior to enrollment. Usually content experts whose native language is Korean teach the course, and these instructors have experience in Korean companies or knowledge from their academic field (e.g., Ph.D. students in business tracks). Until 2008, the course was taught by one instructor with the necessary background, and typically more than 20 students enrolled each semester. Business Korean courses were some of the most popular courses among the program at this time. However, after the main instructor's resignation, each semester a different instructor has taught the course, and, as a result, the course has become highly reliant on each instructor's individual experience and belief in regards to the subject matter. As a result, satisfaction with the course has lowered and from Fall 2012 to Spring 2014, the course was offered only once, being canceled due to insufficient enrollment.

## **2 Needs Analysis**

According to Lee (2003), unlike English, which is considered and utilized as an official language in a large number of business fields, the amount and type of Korean language required for business settings may vary depending on language speakers' geographical location and field of business. Through a need analysis, she found that workers in education fields and office

workers have different needs and concluded that the curriculum development should also be different based on each learner groups' needs. Therefore, it is important to understand the characteristics of potential business Korean students and design the curriculum accordingly.

Fortunately, Rutgers University has offered the course for several years and it is possible to know the students' profile of the course through this past experience. The majority of former students were heritage students who already had a certain amount of knowledge and background in Korean culture, and their Korean proficiency level was mostly intermediate-mid to advanced-low. Occasionally, heritage students with advanced-high proficiency in Korean and non-heritage students with only minimal experience in Korean took the course, and as a result fulfilling both student groups' needs has been one of the biggest challenges that past instructors have encountered. Students who have taken the course have indicated that their intention to take the course was to get familiar with Korean companies' hiring processes, to learn detailed information about Korean business culture and issues, and to fine-tune their language skills suitable for business settings.

Based on this information, a follow-up need analysis will continue by reviewing course evaluations and students' casual comments from prior semesters. In-depth interviews with past students will be also conducted to gather their opinions. Below are some example questions designed for the interviews:

- Why did you take *Advanced Korean for Business 1 and 2*?
- Did the course meet your expectations?
- Do you believe the course can be helpful getting a job or working in Korean business setting?

- What are the most valuable aspects of this course?
- Did you find the course materials and readings helpful?
- What other topics would you like to take up if you take the course again?
- Can you give some constructive suggestions for making the course better?

Based on the data gathered from the student interviews, follow-up interviews with instructors from prior semesters will be conducted through e-mail to gather their opinions about students' responses.

Additionally, a survey of relevant literature related to business Korean will be conducted. The first step will be to examine the language skills, functions, and themes of business Korean raised in the literature (see Chun & Choi, 2002; Lee, 2003; Jung, 2003; Kim, 2013; and Chang 2014). Based on this information, I will compose a survey to be distributed to former students. Language skills, functions, and themes mentioned in business Korean textbooks and syllabi from other U.S. institutes' business Korean classes will be also included as a reference. A number of content experts—including prior instructors of the course, former Korean company employees, and Korean MBA students—will evaluate these language skills, functions, and themes on a 5-point scale of very adequate for the curriculum to very inadequate for the curriculum, with the opportunity to add to any of these categories that they feel should be included as a part of the curriculum. Since the course is already approved by the curriculum committee at the university and has been offered for years, the need analysis will be relatively focused on the content of the course rather than external conditions to the course, such as credits offered, time of offering, proficiency, and classroom logistics and formats. Table 1 shows an example of the survey.

Table 1

*Example Survey Format for Business Korean Needs Analysis*

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On a scale of 0-5, where 0=very inadequate and 5=very adequate, please indicate your opinion about following functions

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	Very inadequate				Very adequate	
Writing a business e-mail	0	1	2	3	4	5
Reading a business e-mail	0	1	2	3	4	5
Writing a business memorandum	0	1	2	3	4	5
Reading a business memorandum	0	1	2	3	4	5

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The results will be statistically analyzed to look at a descriptive analysis of language skills, functions, and themes; those items with high ratings will be chosen for inclusion in the course. I plan to show the survey results to foreign workers at Korean companies and Korean workers who work with foreign co-workers in Korean speaking environments to confirm whether the selection is authentic, especially in regards to the language skills and functions identified in the survey.

### 3 Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are statements describing observable and measurable skills, knowledge, and attitudes or values that students should learn and be able to demonstrate upon completing a course (Watanabe, Davis and Norris, 2012). SLOs should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound. Therefore, the need analysis has to precede the writing of SLOs.

The current course goals for business Korean courses at Rutgers are somewhat vague in the manner of their descriptions, such as: “Reading and discussion of business, culture, and society; specialized vocabulary, social skills, and practice in business correspondence”.

Consequently, the current SLOs for the course also appear to be excessively general and equivocal;

- This course aims to help students build an advanced-level speaking, vocabulary, and communication skills needed for a variety of Korean business settings
- Students will become familiar with Korean business culture through classroom activities and homework assignments
- Topics will include formal communication skills, basic business related vocabularies frequently used in formal writing, and current issues related to Korean economy, society and culture

This is partially because the students' profiles in the course were not homogeneous in terms of their Korean proficiency and quantity of pre-attained information about Korean culture in general. Unfortunately, because of limitations in resources, it is impossible to separate the students and make the class homogeneous. As a practical alternative, SLOs might have to be separated to satisfy two different student groups: heritage students and non-heritage students. Overall learning objectives and expected goals of the course for two groups may differ due to their language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and expected roles in the company. These differences will ideally be identified through the needs analysis. It is possible, however, to suppose that heritage students will be required to participate in tasks which involve an adequate level of Korean and in-depth understanding in Korean culture, while non-heritage students will be expected to utilize their Korean language to engage in simple communication among colleagues and to use their cultural knowledge in Korea as a reference to accomplish their tasks. Therefore, SLOs for this class will include specific details which describe skills, functions, and

knowledge that is expected to be acquired by each group of students. SLOs will be described using Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) as revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). SLOs may include but are not limited to following:

- Students should be able to understand and participate in work-related conversation; Non-heritage students are expected to understand simple work-related requests and talk about working environment with their coworkers; Heritage students are expected to express their opinions about their work and participate in work-related discussions
- Students should be able to produce coherent and clearly organized written texts in business settings; Non-heritage students are expected to put together work-related memos and simple e-mails; Heritage students are required to write work-related memos, e-mails and business reports

#### **4 Materials and Curriculum**

The business Korean curriculum should be designed to meet the needs of students at Rutgers and their future employers, and therefore it will highly rely on the results of the need analysis. At this current stage, the course syllabus is expected to be topic-based and will be organized by themes, functions, and skills needed in Korean business contexts. The ratio of explicit lecture in linguistic features might differ according to student profiles each semester. The instructor will conduct a first day survey to collect students' background and adjust it accordingly; for instance, if there are more students with lower proficiency in Korean, the instructor will spend more time on individual linguistic components, where with higher proficiency students the instructor will focus on more abstract components such as business culture and current socio-economic issues of Korea.

The course will start with skills and information required to get a job in Korea, such as searching for job opportunities related to Korea, composing their own CVs, and preparing for interviews and presentations. Students will also learn about terminology that is commonly used during the hiring process and in Korean offices regarding business manners and issues related to relationships with co-workers in Korea. Since these topics involve considerably typical expressions and skills, materials for the course will be based on business Korean textbooks and resources published for Korean job seekers. In addition to these traditional materials, multimedia resources such as dramas, movies, and television news will be incorporated into the curriculum to facilitate students' learning processes.

The latter part of the curriculum will focus on Korean business cases, which will encourage students to utilize and practice the language in business contexts. Through the case study process, students will acquire a chance to experience “narratives of authentic executive decision-making situations” (Boyd, 2002, p. 49). Most of the cases will be chosen from textbooks (e.g., Institute for Business Research & Education, 2011; Kim, 2011; Jung, 2009) that are used in Korean college for business majors and might be modified for students' proficiency levels. Students will also understand and attain skills to gather information about a particular issue related to the cases, analyze gathered information, exchange opinions with their peer, and take a stand either supporting or opposing their peer's decisions.

Furthermore, students will also discuss business trends by introducing current economic, social, and political issues. One or more guest lectures will be included in the curriculum and students themselves will take turns to function as lecturers, choosing the topic and providing other students with information related to their specific issues.

## 5 Assessment and Evaluation

Students' attainment of course outcomes will be assessed through traditional exams, mock interviews, presentations, and a final portfolio. One or two traditional exams will be given based on the linguistic components of the course material, and students will be required to participate in mock interviews and presentations which are needed to get a job in Korean business settings. The interview will require students to demonstrate appropriate language use for a given situation and sufficient language skill to discuss a given topic chosen from actual interview questions used at Korean companies. Presentations also take a significant role in the hiring process in Korea and students should show the ability to use formal language and presentation skills through this process.

A crucial part of the assessment will be based on students' final portfolio, which is a composition of their resume, statement of purposes, business writing samples, case study materials, and business trend analysis. These materials will not only function as in-class tasks to complete the course, but also are expected to be used as students' actual portfolios to be utilized during their job searching process. The portfolio assessment will facilitate students to become aware of the learning outcomes more clearly by making the learning process more visible (Kohonen, 2000).

Formal evaluations for the course will be conducted twice a semester: once in the middle of the semester as a midterm evaluation and again at the end of semester as a final evaluation. Midterm evaluations will be essential to check whether the course met students' needs and to fine-tune the course if it did not match their needs. The first evaluation will be done by

traditional means, using an anonymous paper survey, and students will be always encouraged to give comments to the instructor about the course. On the other hand, the final evaluation will be conducted through a Student Instructional Rating Survey provided by the Center for Teaching Advancement and Assessment Research at Rutgers University. Students will be asked to rate their satisfaction for the course by answering questions about the course materials, assignments, quality of lectures, and the instructor. The final evaluation will be utilized as an important resource to revise the curriculum when preparing for the next semester.

### **Conclusion**

Through the project, it was clear that the need analysis plays a key role to build a well-planned curriculum. Given the fact that language for specific purposes course are mostly offered for a practical purposes, it is even more essential to reflect on the needs and opinions of the interested parties. For this project, these stakeholders include students in a business Korean course, personnel in Korean business fields, and administrators of the program.

There do, however, remain some limitations and constraints that need consideration while designing the curriculum. First, recruiting adequate participants for the need analysis might be the biggest challenge throughout the process described above. This is especially true in regards to contacting content experts in the field who are familiar with the most up-to-date business contexts in Korea. Likewise, even after the curriculum is well developed and the course is offered, there still exist constraints related to student profiles. As mentioned above, students who took and will take the course widely differ in their proficiency in Korean. Therefore, it might be

difficult to arrange homogeneous class outcomes and therefore might require the instructor to revise the curriculum each semester.

With these limitations in mind, there are benefits of this LSP project. Most of all, for this particular context at Rutgers, the project will help us to provide students with a well-planned course constantly no matter who teaches the course. Providing good quality of education in business Korean will not only benefit individual students, but also the program as a whole. By completing the course, students will gain confidence in using the language in business settings. The course will work as a bridge to real life Korean from classroom Korean, which means it will actually help students to get a job in related fields. This practical side of the class, ideally, will also attract more students to the program.

In addition, this project will work as a model to develop other LSP courses. Offering diverse LSP courses will provide students with a chance to learn from a wide variety of fields and purposes. In the future, Korean for medical personnel will be developed based on this project.