E-Korean Language and Culture Learning: A Virtual Tour

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to introduce the courseware of Korean language and culture learning, 한국의 명절들- - A Virtual Tour, integrated with a variety of features of web-based instruction (WBI) such as authenticity, cost-effectiveness, interactiveness, and learner-centeredness. This web-based courseware consists of four main Korean seasonal festivals that can be incorporated into high intermediate or advanced Korean language instruction to help Korean as foreign language (KFL) learners to broaden their understanding of Korean, the target language, and cultural awareness of Korea simultaneously. The pedagogical purpose of this courseware is twofold. For communicative language learners, its focus is mainly on enhancing incidental vocabulary learning and reading comprehension skills via a hypermedia-based glossary. It is highly applicable to interactive games, individual exercises, and a collaborative group project in terms of learner-centeredness. For various language instructors, it suggests its potential benefits to integrating "simplicity and usability" to create web-based teaching materials through user-friendly and free or affordable software

Introduction

As the use of cutting-edge technology in the field of language education continues to expand across the nations, English as a second language (ESL), Spanish as a foreign language (SFL), German as a foreign language (GFL) and other foreign language disciplines in the United States have been taking technology-based instruction, through online and computerized reading texts, into serious consideration over the past two decades (Gonzalez & Gonzalez, 2003; Chapelle, 1999, 2000; Chun & Plass, 1996; Robin, 2007; Smidt & Hegelheimer, 2004; Rogers, 1995; Rogers, 2000; Khan, 1997). Since various foreign language learners have been routinely exposed to authentic online and computerized texts such as E-textbooks, E-newspapers, and magazines rather than paper-based texts, it seems almost compulsory to develop technology-based instruction and motivate the learners to be involved in language learning via technology. For communicative and practical needs, moreover, language learners are now more self-motivated and eager to use computer-mediated communication (CMC) more often than ever on a daily base. On the other hand, most of the courseware or web-based instructional modules developed by commercial software companies and technology specialists have been somewhat questionable in terms of high prices, non-usability in the classroom, and CD-ROM-based linear types of drills and practices (Beatty, 2003).

On the side of Korean as a foreign language (KFL), for example, technology integration and the development of materials in the classroom seem pretty rudimentary,

so that there is a lack of research on technology or web-based courses or instruction of KFL so far. More crucially, it seems evident that the critical awareness of technology integration in KFL instruction is scarce in the minds of KFL practitioners as well as researchers. Even if KFL instructional software or courseware (CD-ROM) had been recently developed by a few universities (e.g., the University of Hawaii at Manoa) in the United States, it seems also clear that the applications of web-based courseware have been very narrowly implemented in specific language environments for limited purposes only, in terms of instructional topics and authenticity.

Accordingly, it is introduced that this simple, user-friendly, cost-effective, authentic culture-embedded and web-based courseware offers current language teachers as well as KFL instructors a practical example of so-called "Do-It-Yourself (DIY) of creating web-based courseware," focusing on culture-embedded authentic activities and a hypermedia-based glossary.

Literature Review

In terms of extensive or free voluntary reading (Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 1993), language learners are also exposed to more authentic reading texts and can enjoy a variety of extensive web-based reading materials, depending on their reading interests and purposes. The notion of extensive reading in second language education has been widely proposed as an ideal way for language learners to be independent and lifelong readers in the large body of literature (Palmer, 1969; Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 1991; Simensen, 1987; Krashen, 1993, 2004).

However, the selection of appropriate, interesting, and authentic reading materials, and constructing extensive reading libraries inside the classroom or school has caused such problems as infrastructure, funding, and time issues in reality. In addition, the dictionary use is discouraged as Day & Bamford (1998) argued that reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up words makes fluent reading difficult (p. 8). Even though the "look-up behavior" in the dictionary or glossary is considered a crucial part of extensive reading skills, it might be burdensome for language learners every time they encounter difficult or unknown words in the paper-based text while reading. A number of research studies have focused on the issue of the effectiveness of a dictionary or glossary use (Sakar, & Ercetin, 2004; Chun, & Plass, 1996; Yoshii, 2006; Nagata, 1999; Martinez-Lage, 1997; LeLoup, & Ponterio, 2005). To reduce this burdensome behavior and focus more on meaning in reading, applying an extensive reading program to current curricula and reading education could be made possible by providing online authentic reading materials with hypermedia-based glossaries. That is, it can allow language learners to take full advantage of extensive reading while the learners explore and enjoy interesting reading materials at their level and pace. With the aid of hypermedia-based glossaries, consisting of multimedia such as text, images, sound and video, language learners seem to be more capable of conquering the main obstacles such as a "lookup behavior" and vocabulary difficulties by clicking a mouse, which allows them to have extra freedom to "focus on meaning."

Many studies have been conducted to support the use of images in a variety of ways. Using visual images is effective because images help build learners' background knowledge and schemata appropriate to the target text and facilitate the contextualization of what is being read (Omaggio, 1979; Markham, 2001). Pictorial cues can also increase comprehension of a reading passage, in particular with low proficiency learners (Hudson, 1982). As a reading theory, Paivio (1986) suggests a "Dual Coding Theory (DCT)" which explains two coding systems in our brain: visual and verbal. If we provide salient and comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) with both visual and verbal representations to readers simultaneously, they are more likely to remember and retain the input rather than text-only input in the long term memory (LTM). That is, to help students better understand reading texts and vocabulary, and retain that information in LTM, relevant written (verbal) and pictorial (visual) information should be given to facilitate their brain activity which consists of two separate but interrelated codes for processing information. As a result, the comprehensible input "intaken" in LTM might better facilitate language learners to produce more comprehensible output (Swain, 1985).

In summation, the results of previous studies indicate that hypermedia-based glosses based on DCT (Paivio, 1986) facilitate language learners' incidental vocabulary learning and reading comprehension in the online or computerized text (Chun & Plass, 1996; Richards, 2000; Smidt, 2004; Martinez-Lage, 1997). Accordingly, it implies that hypermedia-based extensive reading, providing explanations and definitions with pictorial representations as well as text simultaneously, is more effective for language learners' vocabulary learning and reading comprehension.

Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that the culture-embedded interactive courseware, 한국의 명절들 - A Virtual Tour, with the use of a hypermedia-based glossary can offer a basis to help free KFL learners' cognitive workload of extensive reading and burdensome look-up behavior, make them focus more on reading itself and, eventually, lead to improved reading comprehension as well as vocabulary learning as independent and lifelong readers.

Courseware - A Virtual Tour

Sequences

This courseware introduces high intermediate or advanced KFL learners to main four Korean seasonal festivals: Hansik, Dano, Chuseok, and Solnal (Appendix 1). For each main seasonal festival, this courseware consists of one instructional page and four different activities with a separate page of a hypermedia-based glossary.

1. Hansik – Spring

   It has one instructional page and two interactive activities: how to wear Hanbok and how to bow "deeply". First, the instructional page (Figure 1.1) which is used as an in-class material is a pre-reading requisite for the Korean language learners to understand the traditional foods and activities of Hansik.

Figure 1.1

Second, the first mixing activity of how to wear Hanbok will give the learners a clear idea that Hanbok has been considered a very crucial custom when Koreans celebrate on Hansik (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2

Third, the second mixing activity of a "big bow" shows how Koreans bow and respect their ancestors deeply with linked web pages (The National Folk Museum). (Figure 1.3)

Figure 1.3

2. Dano – Summer

It has one instructional page and four interactive activities: Quiz, making a hand fan, a cyber Danoje field-trip plan, and multimedia-based listening comprehension check-ups. The purpose of the instructional page (Figure 2.1) is the same as above.

Figure 2.1

First, this quiz is in multiple-choice format, and is a basic check-up activity for the KFL learners' overall understanding about the history and cultural background of Dano. Second, the activity of making a hand fan (adopted from http://hanok.jeonju.go.kr/OverKids/OverKidsContent.aspx?menuID=167&tabID

=3) is an interactive and fun activity to learn how to make a Korean hand fan. (Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2

Third, the learners will explore a real festival via the selected authentic website (http://danoje.themetour.com/), and plan their cyber field-trip with a short writing activity. Lastly, the interactive multimedia listening comprehension questions about traditional plays will facilitate the learners to learn how to differentiate traditional plays (Figure 2.3).
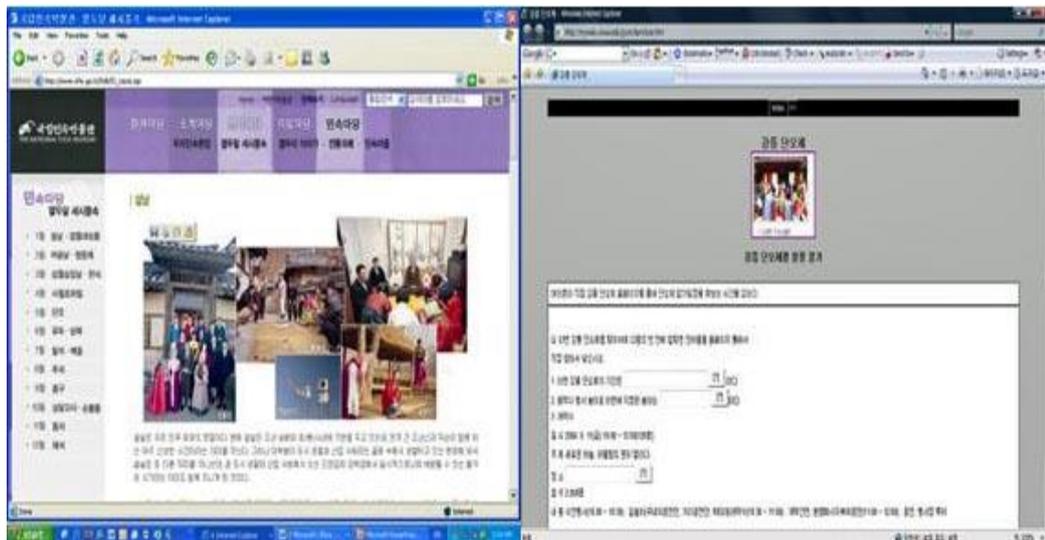

Figure 2.3

3. Chuseok – Autumn

It has an instructional page (Figure 3.1) and four activities: quiz, matching, making a Song-pyoun (ObjectMover), and cloze.

Figure 3.1

First, the quiz consists of a multiple-choice and basic check-up activity for Chuseok, its foods, and plays. Second, the matching is an activity which leads the learners to explore a variety of plays and its history (Figure 3.2).
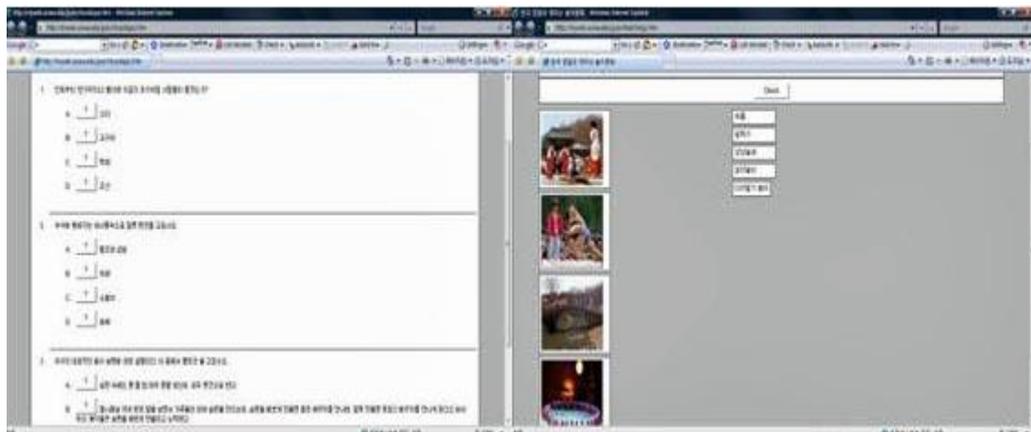

Figure 3.2

Third, making a Song-pyoun is a drag-and-drop activity for the learners to make their Korean food by themselves. Fourth, the cloze is a vocabulary activity for the learners to fill in the blanks with the words that they learned in class (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3

4. Soalnal – Winter

It has one instructional page (Figure 4.1) and four activities: Quiz, cloze, a special dining table for ancestors, and crossword.

Figure 4.1

First, the quiz is a multiple choice activity that educates the learner on the history of Soalnal. Second, the cloze is a vocabulary activity to fill in the blanks with the words that the learners learned in class (Figure 4.2).
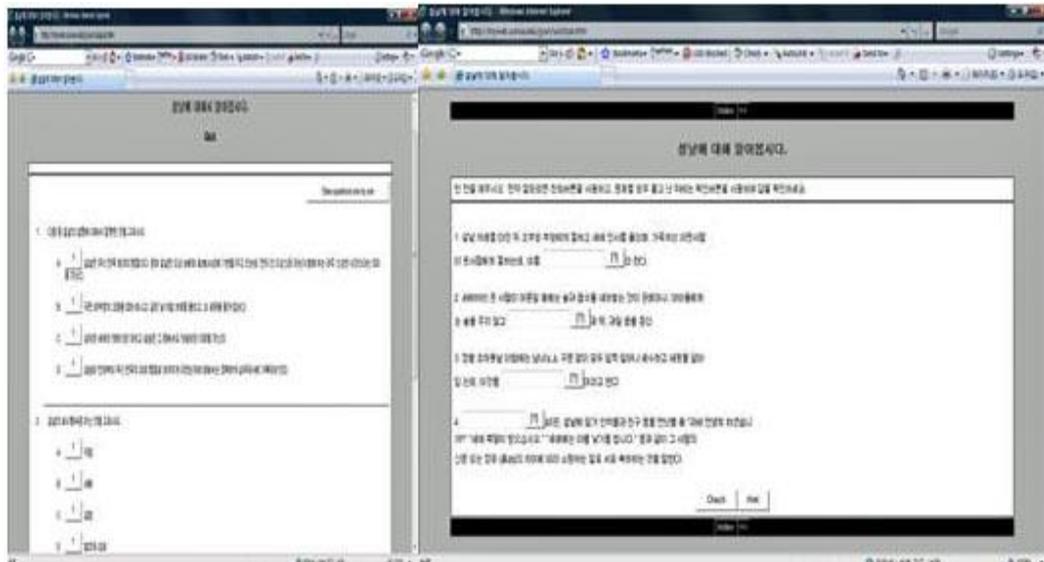
Figure 4.2

Third, 제사상 차리기, a feast to the ancestors, is a drag-and-drop activity to demonstrate how Koreans prepare special foods and set the table for their ancestors. Fourth, the crossword is a vocabulary activity with one linked web page for the hints and meanings (Figure 4.3)
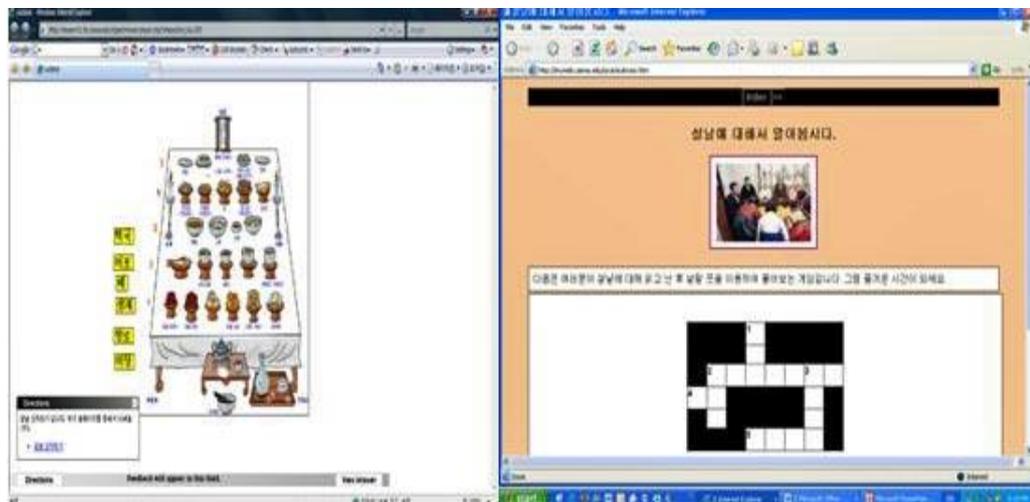

Figure 4.3

5. A Hypermedia-Based Glossary

This glossary page (Figure 5), consisting of many features such as video clips, audios, text meanings and an interactive Korean dictionary on the web for references, is linked to every main page so that motivated learners can easily access the meanings, usages and cultural issues of the vocabulary that they do not know by clicking on hypertext. So, it provides a variety of multimedia resources that a traditional linear textbook-based glossary can not do. More importantly, it

is not a linear path for every learner to look up every unknown word during the reading instruction at the same pace; however, it helps facilitate individual learners' autonomy, depending on language levels, strategies, and motivation.

Figure 5: video clips are provided from Young-geun Yun

The final fun activity is fortune-telling (Appendix 2) which can be used to tell about the year in which they were born.

Concluding Remarks and Pedagogical Implications

It is introduced that the courseware, 한국의 명절들 - A Virtual Tour, can be one web-based supplementary alternative for KFL instructors, considering technology integration in Korean teaching, to teach about Korean culture as well as the target language, Korean. The main features of this courseware are composed of instructional web-based text, a hypermedia-based glossary, and a variety of interactive culture-embedded activities. By

having high intermediate or advanced KFL learners exposed to authentic Korean culture with a hypermedia glossary, it is reasonable to say that they will better understand the whole picture of "Korean essence."

As pedagogical implications for various language practitioners and those who are interested in technology integration in language instruction, it is believed that one of the fundamental perspectives of integrating technology or multimedia into language education is "simplicity and usability," which can guide them to create web-based teaching materials through user-friendly and free or affordable software such as Hot Potatoes, Object-Mover and Web Authoring programs (MS Word, PowerPoint, FrontPage, Macromedia Dream weaver and Namo, etc). The programs suggested above are the ones that are simple and usable enough for various language instructors with less technical skills

The second is "cost-effectiveness" to reduce face-to-face instruction costs. Rogers (1995) argues that the initial cost and preparation time might be higher and longer than those of traditional classroom-based instruction; however, gradually, the overall cost and preparation time of WBI are beneficial to language teachers and students.

In the end, it should be revisited that technology is not far away from classroom teaching in reality. By using technology in classroom instruction, language learners can fully benefit from both language and technology literacy considered essential to succeed in their future employment. For language teachers, better language teaching through technology will ensure the role of language teachers as a facilitator and a coordinator.

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Appendix 1

The main page has Korea's four seasonal festivals: Hansik, Dano, Chuseok and Solnal.
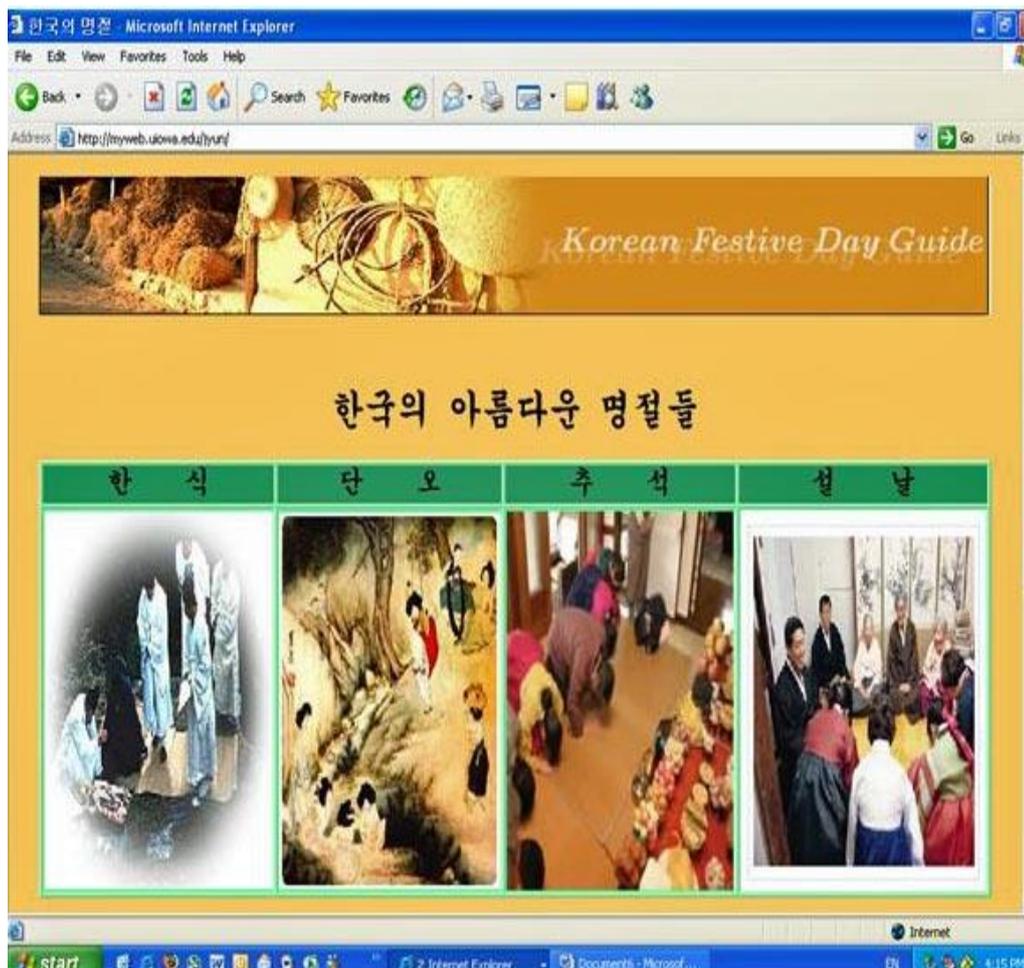
  Each page consists of four different activities that represent its characteristic aspects.

Appendix 2

A fortune-telling story (adapted from http://www.nfm.go.kr/folk/f3_1zod.jsp).