

Prospects of Literature Courses for Overseas Korean Learners

Focusing on Korean Learners in Indian Universities as a subject

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Abstract : This study analyzes the current status and quality of Korean literature education within major Indian universities, with a focus on aligning undergraduate and graduate Korean language programs with TOPIK (Test of Proficiency in Korean) levels. Through a cross-institutional review of program structures at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), Manipur University, the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) in Hyderabad, and the Central University of Jharkhand (CUJ), the research maps the integration of literature courses into Korean language curricula and examines textbook and online course offerings (K-MOOC) used by foreign learners. Findings indicate that literature components typically appear from the second year, advancing to modern and classical literature in later years and culminating in graduate studies that emphasize literary history and contemporary studies. Textbooks are generally tailored to TOPIK levels 3–5, while K-MOOC courses provide complementary pathways from beginner to advanced levels. However, challenges persist, including a shortage of localized Indian-context literature, reliance on dispatched faculty, and policy gaps in secondary education that disrupt long-term progression. The study argues for a paradigm shift: treating literature education as an autonomous academic discipline and cultural practice, not merely a tool for language acquisition. Recommendations include: developing level-specific, research-oriented textbooks; designing tasks that foster literary appreciation; strengthening integration between K-MOOC and formal curricula; and investing in instructor training and collaborative textbook development. The findings suggest significant potential for expanding and enriching Korean literature education in India through systematic curriculum development and policy support.

Key words: Korean Language education, literature education, language acquisition, curriculum development, Test of Proficiency in Korean.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Global Expansion of Korean Language Education and the Indian Context

In the 21st century, Korean language education has rapidly expanded worldwide, largely driven by the Korean Wave (Hallyu). This phenomenon has significantly increased interest in Korean culture, language, and media across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. India, with its vast population and a high proportion of youth, has emerged as a promising hub for Korean language education. The growing economic and cultural exchanges between Korea and India have further reinforced the necessity for Korean language proficiency.

1.2 Institutional Background of Korean Language Education in Indian Universities

Korean language education in India is primarily conducted through university-level programs. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) pioneered Korean studies in the 1970s and continues to be a leading institution in this field. Following JNU's lead, other universities such as Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), Manipur University, the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) in Hyderabad, and the Central University of Jharkhand (CUJ) have established Korean language departments. Recent revisions to India's National Education Policy (NEP) have included Korean as a second foreign language option, thereby expanding its reach into secondary education.

1.3 Student Numbers and Current Status

As of 2022, approximately 2,342 Indian students were enrolled in Korean language courses, and this number increased to around 2,500 in 2023. Currently, about 20 schools in India offer formal Korean language classes, while 25 schools provide Korean as a hobby or extracurricular subject. At the university level, Korean is offered as a major in BA (Hons), MA, and integrated MA programs. Literature courses are typically introduced from the second year onward, allowing students to build foundational language skills before engaging with literary texts.

1.4 Current Status and Challenges of Literature Education in Korean Language Programs

Korean language education in Indian universities is characterized by two key features. First, literature courses are systematically integrated into the curriculum. Undergraduate programs include introductory courses such as 'Introduction to Korean Literature', while graduate programs offer advanced courses like 'History of Korean Literature' and 'Contemporary Korean Literature Studies'. Second, instructional materials are differentiated by learner proficiency. Textbooks such as 'History of Korean Literature for Foreign Learners' and 'Understanding Korean Literature for International Students' are tailored to various TOPIK

levels. Additionally, K-MOOC courses provide structured learning paths from beginner to advanced levels.

Despite these advancements, several challenges persist. There is a lack of localized Korean literature textbooks that consider the cultural context of Indian learners. Moreover, there is a shortage of qualified faculty; many programs rely heavily on professors dispatched from Korea. Lastly, the discontinuity in Korean language education at the secondary level—due to policy restrictions beyond Grade 8—hinders long-term learning progression.

1.5 Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study aims to analyze the current status of Korean literature courses in major Indian universities, evaluate the suitability of textbooks and K-MOOC courses for foreign learners, and assess their alignment with TOPIK proficiency levels. By doing so, it seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of Korean literature education in India and offer foundational insights for future curriculum development and pedagogical strategies.

Chapter 2.

2.1 Current Status of Korean Literature Courses in Major Indian Universities

The following table shows the year-by-year status of literature courses offered in Korean language programs at major Indian universities:

University	Program	Year/Semester	Literature Course
JNU	BA(Hons) Korean	2nd year	Introduction to Korean Literature
	BA(Hons) Korean	3rd year	Modern Korean Literature, Classical Korean Literature
	MA Korean	1st year	History of Korean Literature
	MA Korean	2nd year	Contemporary Korean Literature Studies
JMI	BA(Hons) Korean	2nd year	Korean Modern Literature (Intro)
	BA(Hons) Korean	3rd–4th year	Korean Classical Literature, Comparative Literature
Manipur Univ.	BA(Hons) Korean	2nd year	Korean Literature (Introductory)
	BA(Hons) Korean	3rd year	Modern & Classical Korean Literature
	Integrated MA	4th–5th year	Korean Literary History, Translation & Literature
EFLU Hyderabad	BA Korean Hons	2nd year	Introduction to Korean Literature
	BA Korean Hons	3rd–4th year	Modern Korean Literature, Classical Korean Literature
CUJ	BA(Hons) Korean	2nd year	Korean Literature (Intro)
	MA Korean	1st–2nd year	Korean Literary History, Contemporary Korean Literature

Indian Korean language education is evolving beyond simple language acquisition, aiming to foster higher-order thinking and cultural identity formation through literature. The establishment of literature courses reflects each university’s educational philosophy and academic orientation.

Most universities introduce literature in the second year, combine modern and classical literature in the third and fourth years, and deepen into literary history and contemporary studies at the graduate level. This structure aligns with Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding theory, supporting cognitive and linguistic development.

University-specific features:

- JNU: Triangular structure of literary history–modern–classical literature ensures continuity and integration; graduate courses emphasize critical reading and research.
- JMI: Comparative literature fosters intercultural sensitivity and conceptual transfer.
- Manipur University: Combines translation with literature, balancing practicality and scholarship.
- EFLU Hyderabad: Literature courses are linguistically oriented, linking text analysis with discourse training.
- CUJ: Integrated BA–MA structure balances breadth and depth.

2.2 Suitability of Korean Literature Textbooks by TOPIK Level

Textbook	Features	Suitable TOPIK Level
History of Korean Literature for Foreign Learners	Focus on literary history, concise explanations of representative works, accessible to intermediate learners	TOPIK 3–4
Understanding Korean Literature for International Students	Combines literary history, text analysis, and activities; advanced vocabulary and structures	TOPIK 4–5

2.3 Suitability of K-MOOC Courses by TOPIK Level

Course	Institution	Content	Suitable TOPIK Level
Biographies of Joseon Writers	Korea University	Works and features of Joseon-era writers, classical Chinese literature explanations	TOPIK 2–3
Introduction to Korean Literature	International Cyber University	Overview of ancient–modern genres, modern poetry, fiction, drama	TOPIK 3–4
Introduction to Modern Korean Fiction	Seoul National University	Flow of modern Korean fiction, analysis of major writers and works	TOPIK 4–5

2.4 Vocabulary Difficulty Distribution

TOPIK Level	Example Vocabulary	Ratio (%)
TOPIK 3	author, work, literature, history, society, culture, expression, content	~50%
TOPIK 4	feature, commentary, translation, criticism, context, influence	~25–30%
TOPIK 5+	memorial address, epitaph, diplomatic document, rhetoric, stylistics, discourse, identity, historical source, transmission	~20–25%

Chapter 3. Conclusion

This paper has systematically compared and analyzed the current status of Korean literature courses offered in Korean language programs at major Indian universities. It also examined the pedagogical effectiveness of Korean literature textbooks and K-MOOC courses for foreign learners by evaluating their suitability based on TOPIK proficiency levels and vocabulary difficulty. The findings confirm that Korean literature education in India holds potential not only for quantitative expansion but also for qualitative enrichment.

A key observation is that a significant portion of Korean language learners in India are affiliated with higher education institutions and pursue academic objectives. These learners are expected to go beyond conversational skills and everyday communication to understand the historical context, discursive structures, and genre-specific characteristics of Korean literature. However, most currently available textbooks are introductory and vocabulary-focused, primarily designed for general foreign learners. This reflects a tendency to treat literature merely as a tool for language acquisition.

This reality reveals a limitation in fully reflecting the intrinsic value of literature education—namely, fostering human understanding, exploring identity, and deepening intercultural communication through literature. Therefore, developing literature textbooks for academic learners in India should move beyond vocabulary acquisition to emphasize experiencing literature through reading, feeling, interpreting, and enjoying. This shift calls for a paradigm change in Korean language education, recognizing literature as an independent academic subject and a cultural practice.

Educational and Policy Recommendations

1. Based on the findings, the following educational and policy recommendations are proposed:

Systematic development of level-specific literature textbooks: Textbooks should be tailored to beginner, intermediate, and advanced learners, considering their language proficiency and cognitive development. In particular, textbooks for intermediate and advanced learners should include literary history, genre-specific features, and critical discourse, and be linked to academic writing and presentation tasks.

Task design focused on literary appreciation: Tasks should go beyond plot summaries and vocabulary exercises to include psychological analysis of characters, thematic discussions, and creative reinterpretation (rescripting), enabling learners to experience literature more deeply.

Strengthening the integration of K-MOOC and formal curricula: Online courses should be linked with classroom instruction, allowing learners to explore literary content autonomously and expand it into presentations or essays.

Enhancing instructor competency and collaborative textbook development: Instructors responsible for literature education should be trained in discourse-based task design, critical discourse instruction, and intertextuality education through workshops and joint research initiatives.

In conclusion, Korean literature education in India has the potential to become a core pillar of higher education that cultivates academic identity and cultural sensitivity. To realize this potential, collaboration among universities, educators, and policymakers is essential. Continuous research and institutional support are needed to ensure that literature education functions as the 'heart' of Korean language education. Korean language education through literature should not merely teach language, but foster understanding of others' lives and deepen intercultural communication.

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