

# Integrating Assessment in a College-Level Korean Heritage Curriculum in the United States

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## Abstract

유영미, 전희정. 2015. 12. 31. 미국 대학의 계승어 학습자를 위한 교과과정 통합형 배치 전략 연구. *이중언어학* 61. 163-189. 현재 미국 대학의 한국어 학습자의 대부분은 계승어 화자이나 이들을 위한 효과적인 교수 방안에 대한 연구는 제 2 언어나 외국어로서의 한국어 교육 분야의 연구에 비해 부족한 실정이다. 특히, 이들을 각 대학의 교과 과정 안에 수용하기 위한 배치 시험을 개발하고 운영할 필요성은 끊임없이 제기되어 왔다. 그러나 이에 부합하는 배치 전략에 대한 체계적인 연구는 거의 전무하다고 할 수 있다. 이에 본고는 한국어 계승어 학습자들의 특성에 대해 논의하고 현재 미국 내 주요 대학에서 사용하고 있는 배치 시험을 비교 분석하여, 이를 토대로 효율적인 배치를 위한 평가 도구를 개발하는 전략을 제안하는 데 그 목적이 있다. 또한, 이러한 평가의 도구를 교과 과정상에 통합할 수 있는 방안을 보이고자 한다. (Rutgers University)

**【Key words】** 한국어 계승어 학습자 (Korean heritage learner), 미국 대학 교과과정 (U.S. college level curriculum), 배치 시험 (placement test), 배치 전략 (placement strategies), 평가 도구 (evaluation tools)

## 1. Introduction

In contrast to the teaching of second and foreign languages, the teaching of heritage languages is less informed by theories and practices

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specific to heritage language acquisition, and has yet to be grounded in the curriculum guidelines of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (ACTFL, 2006). Although more than two decades have passed since the pioneers in the field of Korean language education in the U.S. acknowledged the need for heritage learning pedagogy, no systematic attempts have been made to design placement tests and incorporate them within the overall heritage curriculum, as has been advised for other heritage languages (Brown, Hudson and Clark 2004). However, the somewhat chaotic situation today not only calls for an evaluation of current practices of heritage assessment but also shows the need for a proposal for ways to specifically design diagnostic assessment to fine-tune current heritage curriculums. It is still the case that the majority of students in Korean language courses in most U.S. universities are heritage learners even though the percentage has decreased markedly over the years (Wang, 2015)<sup>1)</sup>. Moreover, we are witnessing a new emphasis on college-level educators by the U.S. federal government to produce students who are equipped for advanced proficiency in the “critical languages”<sup>2)</sup> for special purposes. The National Security Language Initiative (NSLI)

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1) Heritage enrollment still takes up more than 60% in many institutions. There are more non-heritage students in lower levels (e.g. 66% non-heritage students vs. 34% heritage students at Rutgers University) but in upper levels, the reverse is true (e.g. 90% heritage students vs. 10% non-heritage students at Rutgers University).

2) In 2006 Korean was designated as one of the languages (along with Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Farsi and so on) that are “strategically critical” to the United States, and the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) was launched to strengthen the nation’s security and prosperity in the 21st century through strategic language learning. The NSLI has expanded opportunities to learn the critical languages from kindergarten through university-level study and beyond (*National Standards for Korean Learning*, 2012:525).

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This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we will provide background information on salient characteristics of heritage learners and argue for the need for heritage-specific placement/assessment. Section 3 will review placement strategies that are currently in use and evaluate their efficacy. Section 4 will focus on proposing effective heritage placement strategies, and Section 5 will conclude the paper.

## **2. Background and Literature Review**

Heritage learners, quite distinct from non-heritage learners, show a much wider range of proficiencies and their individual proficiency tends to

vary markedly according to situation, context, task, register, mode, and other variables due to the characteristics of their differing paths of acquisition (Lee & Kim, 2008). As a result, it is widely accepted that, in order to minimize learner diversity in language classes, the language teacher should have a better understanding of heritage learners' linguistic profiles. Although there has been a surge of interest in recent Korean as Heritage Language (KHL) in recent years (Kwon & Polinsky 2005, Lee & Kim 2008, Kim 2010, Kang 2015) there is not enough research on Korean heritage speakers, compared to better studied languages such as Spanish, Chinese and others. For Spanish heritage learners, for instance, eight types have been identified according to the binary values of the following criteria: 1) the amount of time they have spent in the U.S., 2) whether they speak a prestige or stigmatized variety of Spanish, 3) their level of proficiency in this variety, and 4) their academic skills in both Spanish and English (Valdes 1997).

Thanks to a few studies in the past decade, it is now known that Korean heritage learners possess high oral/aural proficiency but rather limited literacy skills (Sohn and Shin 2007, H-Y Lee 2010). In particular, their listening skills are much higher than non-heritage students and their cultural identities play an important role in heritage language acquisition. Moreover, a notable phenomenon in KHL is the lack of clear distinction between formal and informal registers, which is one of the defining aspects of the Korean language. In formal presentation and interview situations, heritage learners resort to colloquial forms (e.g. *침, 담, 널, 쫘, 댄, 글고, 할라 그래 가지구, 맞어, 까먹다, 인제, 하니깐, 되게, 식구들이랑* instead of *처음, 다음, 내일, 조금, 다른, 그리고, 하려고 해서, 맞아, 잊어버리다, 이제, 하니까, 매우, 가족들과*.)

To alleviate the dichotomy between the two groups of students and to address specific challenges of heritage students, many Korean programs in U.S. universities have offered a separate heritage track (often for either the first year or the first two years) since the mid-1990s to meet the special academic needs of heritage students (Beatrice & Duncar 2005, Sohn 1995, Teschner 1983). A more recent trend is the development of an accelerated format for heritage students or limiting the first year or two year instruction to non-heritage students only. More than a dozen universities (Rutgers, Yale, Princeton, Emory, Cornell, University of Illinois, UCLA, etc.) have now implemented a fast-track curriculum to cover the first two years of non-heritage instruction in one year, and they also have designed third and fourth year courses for mixed students. Such a curriculum addresses the chaotic nature of elementary language classes that accept a large number of “receptive bilinguals,” or learners who “comprehend a colloquial variety of the language but do not speak it, or have very limited speaking skills in it” (Bowles, 2011:33).

One formal way of addressing and minimizing learner diversity is through developing placement tools and facilitating the formation of “maximally homogeneous classes” (Otheguy and Toro, 2000). As suggested by Sohn and Shin (2007), there is a strong need to develop placement procedures to identify “true beginners, false beginners, and fake beginners,” and to address the gap between writing and oral skills by requiring test-takers to demonstrate a minimum level of ability in every section tested and by relying on the result of free composition questions. Sohn and Shin (2007) analyzed 110 students’ placement test results at UCLA where between 800 and 1,000 students annually enroll in Korean language courses. UCLA has offered a two-track curriculum for the

Korean program since 1994 so that heritage learners and non-heritage learners are separated in different tracks for the first two years of instruction. It has been shown that the pace of these two tracks does not differ very much when the students merge at the third year courses. The UCLA placement test is comprised of (1) a multiple choice section divided into Listening, Grammar and Reading and (2) a composition section. The results of the two-part test showed that the first section failed to distinguish between students of varying proficiency levels, while the second section demonstrated wider variability in the distribution of scores. Sohn and Shin (2007) conclude that it is crucial “to define performance standards clearly, to focus on cognitive academic language ability, to deduce false positive errors, and to conduct a diagnostic oral interview test” in order to successfully place students at appropriate levels.

Cho et al. (2002) constitutes an early attempt at developing a placement test for Korean language learners at Yonsei University. Unfortunately, the study did not consider the possibility that students would show diverse sub-areas of proficiency depending on where and how they studied Korean. Instead, the placement tests dealt with student variability by adjusting student proficiency levels strictly in terms of Yonsei’s curriculum, syllabi, and textbooks, and failed to consider many heritage students’ unique characteristics in language learning. As a result, it is hard to adapt the Yonsei findings for U.S. heritage language courses.

More recently, Lee and Kim (2012) have advocated for the necessity of developing online Korean proficiency test as “an efficient diagnostic tool to place” students from different institutions on a massive scale. They propose an overall framework of an internet-based test that comprises five sections (Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading, Listening and Writing) to cover

beginning-level students through high-advanced level students. As acknowledged by the authors, such an ambitious project cannot be successful until a large number of test items (1,200 items suggested in the paper) are developed, tested and established in the test-item bank, and a secure and stable online system is provided to all test-takers.<sup>3)</sup>

Heritage student placement is even more problematic. Most of the available placement tests are strictly based on the textbooks used in the curriculum, and the test items are devised specifically to test written language forms, school-related vocabularies and reading comprehension skills, all of which are considered weaknesses of heritage students. As a result, placement tests tend to underestimate heritage learners' language proficiency and lead to misplacement in lower level classes (Kim 2013, Polinsky & Kagan 2007).

In this context, we gathered data on current placement strategies for Korean heritage students from six U.S. universities and examined the effectiveness of current practices by demonstrating how the standard placement tests (whether developed by outside agencies or self-produced) often fail to place heritage learners effectively within a program.

### **3. Currently Used Placement Strategies**

#### **3.1. Substituting a Standardized Test as Placement**

A few Korean language programs in U.S. universities use such publicly

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3) It is also noted in other languages why lumping together heritage learners and L2 students is problematic as there is no "one-size-fits-all" in language placement (Potowski, Parada and Morgan-Short 2012).

available standard proficiency tests as SAT II Korean with Listening and The Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK), either to place students within the program or to place out students in the fulfillment of their language requirement.

The number of SAT II Korean with Listening test-takers has fluctuated over the past 15 years (2539 test-takers in 1997 when it was first administered) (Cho, Chung, & Peterson, 2006). In 2012, the total number of SAT II Korean with Listening takers was 3,552. However, according to the 2012 Total Group Profile Report published by the College Board, there is a decrease to 2,110 test-takers. What is notable about the test-taker profile is that, 80% of the students who took SAT II Korean with Listening were heritage Korean students in 2009/2010.

SAT II Korean with Listening consists of 80 multiple-choice questions in the three sections of Listening Comprehension, Usage, and Reading Comprehension (Listening Comprehension 35%, Usage 30%, and Reading Comprehension 35%). Listening Comprehension and Reading Comprehension Sections are all multiple-choice questions, and students are required to select one answer from four options. Whereas the texts (both listening and written) are in Korean, the stems and stimuli as well as the answer options are given in English. In the Listening Comprehension Section, students are required to listen to and understand relatively short dialogues and narratives in Korean as shown in Figure 1 based on every day topics.



[안내 말씀을 드리겠습니다.  
 오늘 새로 개통된 지하철 5호선이  
 기계 고장으로 오후 2시부터  
 운행이 일시 중단되었습니다. 현재  
 고치고 있사오니 3시간 후면 다시  
 운행될 예정입니다. 5호선을  
 이용하실 분은 4호선을 이용해  
 주시기 바랍니다.  
 거듭 사과 말씀을 드립니다.]

(Narrator) [ Question 3. What is being announced? ]  
 (16 seconds)  
 3. (A) That service is not affected.  
 (B) That service will be restored.  
 (C) That a new line will open on the following day.  
 (D) That there will be no service at 3 o'clock.

<Figure 1> SAT II Korean Listening Sample Question from ‘Getting Ready for the SAT Subject Tests practice booklet’<sup>4)</sup>

As shown in figure 2, the Usage Section is entirely in Korean, including the questions and answer options. Only the rubric, explaining the question type and giving directions, is given in English. Students are required to complete Korean sentences or phrases using explicit knowledge in vocabulary, honorifics and grammatical structure.

<b>Directions</b>	
This section consists of a number of incomplete statements, each of which has four suggested completions. Select the word or words that best complete the sentence structurally and logically and fill in the corresponding circle on the answer sheet.	6. 우리 언니는 오늘 숙제를 _____ 가는 바람에 학교에 _____ 다시 집에 돌아왔어요. (A) 잊어버리고.....가다가 (B) 잊어버리고.....가면서 (C) 잃어버리고.....가는데 (D) 잃어버리고.....가지만

<Figure 2> SAT II Korean Usage Sample Question from ‘Getting Ready for the SAT Subject Tests practice booklet’

In the Reading Comprehension Section, students are required to read and understand Korean passages as Figure 3; here most questions are

4) <http://sat.collegeboard.org/SAT/public/pdf/getting-ready-for-the-sat-subj-tests.pdf>

designed to assess basic understanding of a given passage while a few inference questions may have been added.

미국에 온 지 벌써 사 개월이 되었다.  
 여기 생활에 익숙해질 때까지 적어도  
 일 년쯤은 걸리지 않겠나 생각을 했는데,  
 미국 사람들이 몹시 친절하고 또 우리 학교  
 유학생 클럽에서 매주 한 번씩 미국 문화에  
 대한 세미나가 있기 때문에, 지금은 여기  
 생활에 조금도 불편을 느끼지 않을 정도가  
 되었다. 미국에는 여러 민족이 함께 살기  
 때문에, 다양한 문화를 이해하고 받아들이는  
 것도 대단히 중요하다. 미국에 오기 전에  
 사람들에게 영어를 꽤 관습적으로 한다는 정견도  
 받아서 이 정도면 미국에 가서 큰 어려움은  
 없지 않을까 생각했는데, 잘못된 생각이었다.  
 역시 외국어는 그 나라 사람들과 직접  
 같이 생활하면서 늘 써 보기 전에는 자신을  
 가질 수가 없다는 것을 알게 되었다.  
 외국어를 배운다는 것은 그 나라 말만  
 배우는 것이 아니라 사고방식, 문화까지  
 다 포용한다는 것을 깨달았다.

14. How long did the writer think it would take to get used to American life?
- (A) About four months
  - (B) About four years
  - (C) At least a year
  - (D) A lifetime
15. What did the writer learn is important in American society?
- (A) To accept cultural diversity
  - (B) To speak many languages
  - (C) To help international students
  - (D) To befriend many people
16. What does the writer think is the best way to become proficient in English?
- (A) Memorizing a lot of vocabulary
  - (B) Attending various seminars
  - (C) Participating in student clubs
  - (D) Learning and thinking in English

<Figure 3> SAT II Korean Reading Sample Question from ‘Getting Ready for the SAT Subject Tests practice booklet’

Now let us examine TOPIK, which is the most authoritative Korean proficiency test, available both in Korea and overseas, of those that are administrated by the National Institute for International Education, a Korean government agency that is “in charge of educating overseas Koreans, and operated directly under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.”<sup>5)</sup> As both SAT II Korean with Listening and TOPIK rely heavily on the selection response type of multiple-choice questions and measure the performance on each separate category (grammar, reading and listening), they tend to produce false positive errors in placement. We have also examined whether questions from the TOPIK Writing Section could be used to gauge heritage learners’ proficiency more accurately by

5) <http://www.topik.go.kr/>

testing their productive skills. We found, however, some questions, as illustrated in Figure 4, are too mechanically constructed to assess grammatical knowledge without a proper context.

※ [41~42] 제시된 표현을 순서대로 모두 사용해 한 문장으로 쓰십시오.  
(각 7점)

28회 (중급)

41. 친구가 찾아오다 / 이야기를 하다 / 밥을 새우다

30회 (중급)

41. 어떤 어려움이 있다 / 포기하지 않다 / 결심을 하다

<Figure 4> Writing Questions from 8<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> TOPIK(Intermediate)

In addition, we believe that the essay topics would not necessarily generate meaningful writing as they are neither diverse, as shown by examples in Table 1, nor relevant to US heritage learners’ interests, as shown on Figure 5.

<Table 1> TOPIK Beginner/Intermediate Level Essay Sample Questions

Beginner Level	Intermediate Level
여러분은 어떤 선물을 받고 싶습니까? 왜 그 선물을 받고 싶습니까? 쓰십시오. (11 <sup>th</sup> )	‘기억에 남는 선물’이라는 제목으로 글을 쓰십시오. 어떤 선물입니까? 그 선물은 누구한테서, 언제 받았습니까? 그 선물이 왜 기억에 남습니까? (21 <sup>th</sup> )
여러분은 어디에서 살고 싶습니까? 왜 그곳에서 살고 싶습니까? 그곳에 살면서 무엇을 하고 싶습니까? 여러분이 살고 싶은 곳에 대해서 쓰십시오. (26 <sup>th</sup> )	여러분이 좋아하는 도시는 어디입니까? 왜 그곳을 좋아합니까? 여러분이 좋아하는 도시나 지금 살고 있는 곳을 소개해 보십시오. 도시의 이름과 위치, 유명한 것, 소개하는 이유 (18 <sup>th</sup> )
여러분은 누구를 만나고 싶습니까? 그 사람을 왜 만나고 싶습니까? 그 사람을 만나서 무엇을 하고 싶습니까? 여러분이 만나고 싶은 사람에 대해 쓰십시오.(25 <sup>th</sup> )	‘꼭 만나보고 싶은 사람’이라는 제목으로 글을 쓰십시오. 만나고 싶은 사람 소개, 만나고 싶은 이유, 만나면 하고 싶은 말이나 일 (13 <sup>th</sup> )

<p>여러분은 어디에 여행을 가 봤습니까? 그곳에서 무엇을 했습니까? 어땠습니까? 여러분의 여행 경험에 대해 쓰십시오. (24<sup>th</sup>)</p>	<p>여러분에게 가장 기억에 남는 여행이나 소풍, 나들이는 무엇입니까? 왜 가장 기억에 남습니까? 가장 기억에 남는 여행(소풍, 나들이)은 무엇인가? 왜 가장 기억에 남는가? (26<sup>th</sup>)</p>
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Advanced level essay topics, often quite didactic, seem to be more problematic as they tend to be quite removed from the usual concerns of US college students and would discourage them from demonstrating their actual ability in production.

※ [45] 다음을 읽고 700~800자로 글을 쓰십시오. (30점)

45. <이 시대가 원하는 지도자>에 대한 자신의 견해를 서술하십시오. 단, 아래에 제시한 <지도자의 조건>에서 두 가지를 선택하여 쓰고 나머지 한 가지는 자신이 중요하게 생각하는 지도자의 조건을 쓰되, 선택의 근거를 논리적으로 밝히십시오.

< 지도자의 조건 >  
겸손함 / 도덕성 / 책임감 / 추진력 / 통솔력

45. '진정한 리더십'에 대한 자신의 견해를 서술하십시오. 단, 아래에 제시한 내용을 모두 포함하여 쓰되, (2)와 (3)은 그렇게 생각한 이유를 반드시 써야 합니다.

< 진정한 리더십 >

(1) 자신이 생각하는 '리더(지도자)'의 정의  
(2) 리더(지도자)로서 갖추어야 할 자질이나 덕목  
(3) 리더(지도자)가 경계해야 할 것

<Figure 5> TOPIK Advanced Level Essay Questions from 13<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> TOPIK

Aside from these concerns related to the test format and content, what is more problematic for using these standardized tests is to determine a set of criteria to place students within the curriculum using the test results. It is mainly because the actual content of the course has no bearing to the goals of these tests in terms of the skills tested. Even those language

programs that rely on standardized proficiency tests prefer their use not as a way to place student into t program but to place out qualifying students from the curriculum. In the UC Berkeley Hass Business School, the one-year foreign language requirement can be satisfied with scores higher than 590 on a SAT foreign language subject test. Also, the University of Wisconsin uses the TOPIK only to verify the proficiency of students who have finished the second year Korean courses or to grant the fulfillment of the foreign language requirement.<sup>6)</sup>

Granted that these standardized tests are carefully designed as a complete test to measure one kind of proficiency, there are serious problems when they are used as placement tests in a college curriculum. First, both SAT II Korean with Listening and TOPIK rely heavily on the selection response type of multiple-choice questions and both tests measure performance in each separate category (grammar, reading, listening, etc.), rather than providing a holistic profile for each test-taker. Due to these limiting characteristics of the assessment format of all large-scale standardized tests, it has been demonstrated (Sohn and Shin 2007) that they tend to produce false positive errors in placement. In other words, heritage students often possess uneven linguistic competency and handle comprehension questions much better than their production indicates. Unlike SAT II Korean with Listening and its focus on receptive skills, TOPIK has a section that measures productive language skills. However, the essay questions in the TOPIK Writing Section prove to be less than ideal for the purpose of heritage learners' placement.<sup>7)</sup>

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6) B. J. Lim at University of Wisconsin (personal communication. 2/9/2013)

7) Finally, as Lee (2014) notes, there are also factors such as time and cost constraints that argue against using these standardized tests for placement

### 3.2. Self-Placement Guidelines

There are universities in the U.S. that neither administer formal placement tests nor use standard proficiency tests for placement in a Korean language curriculum. Instead, self-placement guidelines are provided to assist students so that they can initially identify an appropriate course on their own. The Korean program at Duke University, for example, guides students using the five different categories based on their background, such as exposure to Korean, language used at home, and the age of migration (1) I have not studied or been exposed to Korean, 2) My parents speak Korean to me, 3) I speak Korean with my parents, 4) I was born in Korea and left the country after the age of 6, and 5) I attended secondary school in Korea.

### 3.3. In-house Placement Tests

Information about in-house placement tests from six U.S. universities was gathered in order to analyze the characteristics of these tests and to determine their suitability for heritage learner placement. In 2008 Rutgers University developed a two-set placement test that comprises four sections: Listening, Vocabulary & Grammar, Reading and Writing. Each section has ten multiple-choice questions while the Writing Section has questions that require short written answers in addition to essay questions. As shown in Figure 4, the test is appropriate to assess communicative competence of


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purposes. As for the TOPIK that can take up to three hours and costs \$30 per person, only nine cities in the US run a test center, thus severely limiting students' accessibility.

non-heritage students since it requires students to understand the contents and context of question sentences or passages. However, heritage learners in general demonstrate higher competence in receptive environments, such as extracting specific meanings of a passage based on contextual cues and answering general comprehension questions, than the other areas of their competence warrant. The Rutgers test was neither specifically designed to gauge fine-grammar proficiency distinctions nor to evaluate production skills, especially among heritage learners. As we have discussed in the previous section on SAT II Korean with Listening, multiple-choice questions that are extremely efficient in evaluating a large number of placement seekers within a short time frame, are not appropriate in determining the accurate levels of proficiency in all relevant areas of the students. We have discovered that the first part of multiple-choice questions are redundant in heritage student evaluation and that the focus of heritage placement, that is, the essay section was not developed as carefully as the first part. In addition to its inadequacy as a heritage placement tool, the test was developed with the explicit purpose of placing students in any one of four courses (two elementary and two intermediate Korean courses) in the Rutgers program. Writing an essay and an oral interview are used to place heritage students into the accelerated heritage track or into advanced courses.

[12-15] Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

12. A: 버스가 조금 전에 떠났어요?  
 B: 네, \_\_\_\_\_ 갔어요. 다음 버스를 기다리세요.



① 곧      ② 방금      ③ 먼저      ④ 자주

[22-23] Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

22. 저는 다음 달에 한국에 갑니다. 아직 한국에 \_\_\_\_\_  
 이번에 처음 갑니다. 아주 재미있을 겁니다.

① 자주 나갑니다      ② 오랜만에 갑니다  
 ③ 3년 만에 갑니다      ④ 한 번도 가보지 못했습니다

23. 저는 배가 아파서 병원에 갔습니다. 의사 선생님께서 약을  
 주셨습니다. 약을 먹고 잠을 푹 잤습니다. 지금은 \_\_\_\_\_.

① 배가 아팠습니다      ② 많이 주무셨습니다  
 ③ 많이 편안아졌습니다      ④ 더 자고 싶었습니다

<Figure 4> Placement Test (Rutgers University)

The Yale placement test with the four sections offers a more elaborate test: Vocabulary & Grammar, Reading, Writing (essays and dictations), and Speaking (interviews). Except for the Writing and Speaking sections, it is on-line-based. There are two different test sets, Test I and II, that are distinguished by proficiency levels, and with these two tests students are placed from beginning to advanced levels. Test Set I, designed to place beginning and intermediate level students, focuses on vocabulary and grammar while Test set II for intermediate and advanced level learners focuses on Reading. As shown in Figure 5, one notable feature of Yale placement is that the tests include items (dictation, predicate conjugation and spelling) that are specifically designed to address heritage learner characteristics. These test items are more heavily weighed than other items for heritage student placement. Given the well-established ideas of



test-making recommendations, it might be problematic to resort to the format of mechanical dictation questions and constructing grammatically incorrect forms as multiple option stimuli, but Korean language educators find these questions very useful in determining appropriate levels of heritage students. It is better to place students according to their dictation and essay scores than to rely on their higher evaluation in Speaking. Even though many students demonstrate oral proficiency higher than Intermediate, some of them often struggle with dictation questions and their essays shows multiple errors in spelling, predicate conjugations, vocabulary, and grammar, in addition to an almost complete lack of coherent organization into paragraphs in writing.

3. 장문 좀 (                    ).  
 1) 다다 주세요 2) 달어 주세요 3) 달아 주세요 4) 다다 주세요
4. 세 시에 한국어 시험이 (                    ) 도서관에 가야겠습니다.  
 1) 잇서서 2) 있어서 3) 이써서 4) 잇써서
5. 크다: 요즘에는 (                    ) 차 보다 작은 차가 더 인기가 많습니다.  
 1) 크는 2) 권 3) 큰 4) 커는
6. 맵다: 고추장을 많이 넣으면 (                    )니까 조금만 넣으세요.  
 1) 맵 2) 맵으 3) 매우 4) 매워

<Figure 5> Yale Placement Test

Some of the unique features of the placement test at Princeton University involve the Reading and Writing sections. The Reading passages are diverse and organized in such a way that can test all levels of the program—from the first- to fourth-year courses. Chinese characters are also included in the advanced reading passages. Moreover, an

emphasis is placed on the Writing section in order to evaluate not only the mechanical aspects of writing such as orthography and predicate conjugations but also more elaborate sentence construction abilities and the holistic organization of the content material.

Emory University utilizes an on-line placement test developed and used by University of Hawaii. The test format constitutes one continuous stream with no explicit division according to skills, and has no writing or production component. The assessment includes usual sentence-matching questions and simple question/answer pairs that test vocabulary and grammar, while the reading comprehension section is organized as a steady progression from simple sentence-level to complex paragraph-level questions. Heritage placement seems to rely on other evaluations than mere test results. On the other hand, the on-line test developed at Cornell University includes on-line writing (one essay and six translation questions) and speaking (one speaking question), in addition to the usual grammar and listening sections. Writing is carefully weighed in order to provide finer distinctions among heritage students in the lower level.

The University of Illinois designed an on-line test that comprises Vocabulary & Grammar, Reading, Listening, and Speaking, with an offline component of Writing. The test is a clear example of an achievement test as it is specifically designed on the basis of the Integrated Korean textbooks series. In cases where students show a serious gap between their writing ability and other skills, they are placed at a lower level based on their writing scores. To prevent heritage learners from unintentionally benefiting from the directions in test items, the entire rubric is given in English. One can surmise that taking the entire test may not be the most efficient way of evaluating heritage students as there is

often a serious gap between speaking and writing and the results from several sections are irrelevant in placement.

From the placement tests we analyzed we can conclude that each university finds it harder to place heritage students than non-heritage students and that Korean language educators increasingly rely on writing a short essay and oral interviews for heritage placement, rather than using a traditional achievement test of grammar and usage questions. Current practices in Korean heritage placement that we have summarized above, although not quite adequate in correlating the heritage continuum with the existing curricula divisions, converge quite closely with a three-component testing procedure advocated by Polinsky and Kagan's (2007). The three components of (1) an ACTFL-like oral proficiency interview, (2) a short essay, and (3) a biographical questionnaire are essential as they measure three independent aspects of the heritage learners' knowledge: (1) spoken and aural proficiencies, (2) the degree of literacy, and (3) "information on language use in the home and the amount of input and output" (p. 33).

#### **4. Effective Placement Strategies for Heritage Learners**

In this section, a case of misplacement will be discussed to highlight the danger of using a placement test designed for non-heritage students. As shown in (1) integrated assessment procedure was designed in order to catch cases of misplacement and to correctly assess students' performance in four skills at Rutgers University. Student A in Intermediate Korean II (KOR 202) and Student B in Advanced Korean II (KOR 302), Student B participated in the assessment where all of the materials and activities were provided in Korean. Student A was placed into Beginning Korean II

(KOR 102) and has been taking Korean for three semesters while Student B was placed to Advanced Korean I (KOR 301) after our regular placement test and it was his second semester of instruction. An integrated assessment procedure was planned by the instructor in advance and administered as a class format, as shown in (1).

- (1) An Integrated Assessment Procedure (80 minutes)
  - a. Pre-reading activity
  - b. Reading text (A Photo Contest)
  - c. Short answers for comprehension
  - d. Vocabulary and grammar understanding
  - e. Oral presentations (Describing a photo of one's choice: 3 min.)
  - f. Writing about the presentation (7 min.)
  - g. Oral presentations (Explaining an award-winning photo: 3 min.)
  - h. Writing about the presentation (7 min.)
  - i. Describe and Explain, based on an authentic written text
  - j. (Evaluate, Write an essay)<sup>8)</sup>

First, the Pre-reading activity (a) was designed to brainstorm about photography in general and the students' personal experiences. Second, the participants were shown a photo with a short description, and were asked to guess the title of the photo. Then the participants' comprehension of a short text on the photo was checked by means of short-answer questions (b, c, and d), after which students were told to give an oral presentation about a photo they brought in (e). After the oral presentations, they were

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8) The last step in the procedure was designed but was not used due to the time constraint during the 80-minute evaluation period.

asked to write a short essay based on their presentation (f). Then, they were told to choose a photo submitted to a contest and to describe and explain it as if it were their own work (g), followed by an authentic text that was given for reading comprehension activity (h). As was the case with their own photo, the students gave a brief oral presentation (g) and wrote an essay based on the presentation (h). Then, the students were asked to read an authentic text-a critique of a photo - and explain and share their opinion about the text (i).

In the first four activities (a through d), there were no significant differences between Student A and B, either in understanding the text or in oral production. They exhibited about the same level of oral skills in talking about their impressions of the photo and the same level of comprehending the authentic material. However, from the next four activities (e through h), we could clearly notice significant proficiency differences in comprehensibility, fluency, and accuracy. Although Student B used more advanced vocabulary and grammar patterns that he learned in his advanced Korean courses, his level of proficiency had to be reassessed due to many instances of inaccurate spelling, conjugations and inappropriate usages. In addition, there were significant differences in the essay-writing task. During her oral presentation, Student A was able to develop a coherent presentation structure and content and wrote a coherent essay building on her oral presentation. However, Student B's oral presentation and the subsequent essay were neither organized nor coherent, clearly indicating a lack of paragraph level organization. Consistent with their performance in earlier activities, Student A and Student B also showed remarkable differences in performance for the last activity (i) that required reading comprehension and an oral summarizing skill. The

reading text for Activity (i) was a superior level authentic text—a critical review of a well-known photographer.

Despite their actual placement in second and third year courses, it is clear that the level of proficiency of Student A far exceeded that of Student B in all aspects—in receptive understanding, oral production, interactional discourse, comprehensibility, semantic density, grammatical complexity, accuracy, and reading comprehension.

We have seen that the above integrated assessment procedure works for heritage students because their receptive skills far exceed their production skills and there are areas of assessment that cannot be approached by means of multiple-choice questions on vocabulary, verbal conjugations, and other grammatical patterns. In the above procedure, it is also significant that the assessment pattern of an oral presentation followed by writing the same material (e/f and g/h) was repeated twice with more challenging material in the second round. If the assessment were based on an oral interview and a single essay writing task, it would have been harder to get a holistic proficiency landscape of the students. In such an abbreviated setting, Student B could have written a more coherent narrative on a topic that he would be comfortable with and had prepared for, using a more sophisticated vocabulary and grammar patterns than Student A.

We believe that placing students in the right class is contingent on designing and developing placement tests. For successful learning to take place, it is essential to utilize strategies for making the language class as homogeneous as possible. Since heritage students come to class with more varied language proficiencies and diverse learning goals, it is crucial to assess their linguistic profiles and to understand their learning goals. For

instance, research has revealed that beginning heritage learners with strong receptive skills but limited productive skills tend to “prioritize improving their oral fluency and acquiring the standard language” (Beautrie and Ducar 2005), while intermediate heritage learners prioritize writing, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary (Alarcon 2010) over other skills. In addition, heritage students demonstrate a wider spectrum in productive skills when such factors as semantic density, grammatical complexity, and accuracy are taken into consideration.

Upon careful consideration of existing Korean placement tests, we suggest that Korean programs should put more effort into developing and utilizing essay questions when placing heritage learners. Further research is needed to appropriately weigh such factors as orthography, predicate conjugations, sentence structure manipulation and finally the narrative organization of longer essays. Also, a variety of essay topics should be offered to reflect student interest and familiarity and to facilitate student performance. At least two or three topics at each level (rather than one at each level) should be given so that the test-takers could have a choice for better production. Finally, however difficult it might be, we have to devise ways of encouraging the test-taker to use complex grammar patterns, tense/aspectual expressions and to demonstrate other essential linguistic knowledge.

It is also important to set appropriate criteria for placing test-takers after the results are finalized. Ziegler (1981) has suggested dividing heritage students into three categories based on their problem areas: (1) students with serious problems with morphology, (2) students with serious problems with syntax but minor problems in morphology, and (3) students with serious problems in paragraph structure but only minor problems in

morphology and syntax. Finally, as Kwon and Polinsky (2005) point out, it is also important to consider their heritage language profiles when placing heritage students. It is essential to construct a database for Korean heritage learners that could point to useful correlations between heritage language proficiency and such factors as age of arrival in the U.S., total input, voluntary use of language, and voluntary exposure to heritage culture.

## 5. Conclusion

We expect that placement tests, as a diagnostic tool, should be able to place students appropriately within a language program. As we have seen in the previous sections, heritage learner assessment should be defined within a heritage language curriculum with particular goals in mind. For example, even if there is a separate heritage track in a program, the results of placement tests might not be too meaningful if there are only a small number of course options for heritage students. In this context, we strongly believe that performance-type assessment that explicitly tests productive skills should be incorporated in heritage placement. Once placement issues are adequately addressed, formative assessment that occurs during the course of instruction as well as summative assessment that evaluates learning at the end of instruction (Carreira, 2012) can be researched in a proper context. It goes without saying that assessment should be closely integrated in the context of a whole language curriculum in order to increase the validity of placement strategies and to promote continuity between placement procedures and other types of assessment and ultimately to enhance learning.



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