



Difficulties in Learning Ukrainian as Foreign Language by the Korean Students on the Intermediate Level

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ABSTRACT

The given article highlights certain aspects of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language to Korean students. Observations and conclusions are made from the author's own experience. The paper provides answers to significant and topical questions that arise in the learning process; in particular, the author analyzes phonetic, lexical and grammatical difficulties the Korean students face on the intermediate level of learning Ukrainian. The article describes problems and obstacles a teacher and a student has, determines reasons for misuse of language patterns and suggests fresh teaching ideas and ways of their implementation.

Key words: Ukrainian as a foreign language, a mistake, phonetic, lexical and grammatical difficulties, Korean students.

INTRODUCTION

The success of teaching foreign students largely depends on the level of their linguistic development. Because of poor fluency the learners find it hard to express themselves, give logical answers to questions, coherently retell what they have read etc. It has a negative impact on other aspects of the foreign students' language behaviour, they often lose interest in learning, cannot concentrate on the task, work slowly, and have insufficient observation skills and low linguistic performance.

Studying the kinds of speech activity seems to be a topical task for modern Ukrainian linguodidactics, which started developing in the 1950-ies, and continued its intensive growth in the 1990-ies and 2000-s. As I. Kochan mentions it, "when Ukraine became independent, Ukrainian got its status as an official language and its functions spread on every sphere of life and relationships ... The experience of teaching Ukrainian in Ukraine and, undoubtedly, abroad gave a powerful boost for the development of Ukrainian linguodidactics which aimed at teaching a second language to foreigners" [4].

Ukrainian studies in Korea started in 2009 when the Department of Ukrainian studies was established in the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies [18]. Learning any foreign language inevitably leads to a number of difficulties, but learning Ukrainian as a foreign language in this Far Eastern territory has its specificity. First of all, Korean and Ukrainian educational systems have considerable differences, which are immediately reflected on the syllabi, division into semesters and knowledge assessment system. Secondly, processes of writing textbooks as well as developing methods of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language for this category of students are still on their initial stages. Thirdly, like the Korean society in general, the Korean educational system appears to be largely influenced by the Confucian philosophy that determines major methods and ways of teaching and learning, relationships between a professor and a student etc. [7, 3].

Numerous attempts to summarize methods of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language can be traced in a row of scholarly papers. The majority of them have been written by scholars and methodologists who work abroad and wish to share their experience of teaching, achievements and perspectives with the Ukrainian colleagues. According to H. D. Shvets "Ukrainian studies in Bulgaria have been analyzed in the works by I. Ohiyenko, L. Hlushchenko has explored the state of Ukrainian studies in Greece, K. Brunner and V. Makovska – in Germany, O. Baranivska, M. Kavetska, S. Romanyuk and A. Khranyuk – in Poland, H. Lyesna – in Russia, V. Lendelova – in the Czech Republic, Ye. Baran – in Hungary, N. Shevchenko – in France, I. Namakshtanska – in Sweden etc." [14]. A survey of textbooks for foreigners and analysis of the problems concerning methods and terminology of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language can be found in the works by Ukrainian linguists L. Bey, O. Trostynska (2008), I. Kochan (2012), O. Turkevych (2009) and others. However, Ukrainian studies in Korea have not been highlighted yet.

Before moving on to the central issue of the given research I have to underline how much the language structure of the Korean language differs from the Ukrainian language. Primarily, the Koreans use Hangeul while the Ukrainians have the alphabet. Besides that, the Korean language lacks gender, declension and stress. Moreover, the differences between these two languages include sounds, the structure of the sentence and other grammatical categories.

In Korean universities students choose subjects by themselves (however, there are compulsory subjects, especially on the 1st and 2nd year), and rather frequently they start learning a compulsory subject not in the first, but in their second semester. All the above-mentioned courses are compulsory for the 2nd year, but the students determine the order to study them on their own. Another specificity of being a 2nd-year student in Korea lies in the fact that young men come back to university after completing a two-year-long service in the army. All the afore-mentioned facts directly or indirectly cause problems and difficulties for Korean students in their education overall and learning Ukrainian in particular.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on the researches into theory and practice of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language, scientific articles as well as tests written by Korean students at the Department for Ukrainian studies in HUFS. These students have chosen Ukrainian studies as their major. The experiment involved more than 40 students of the 2nd and 3rd year of the Faculty for Ukrainian studies within such courses as *Intermediate Ukrainian Conversation* (17), *Intermediate Ukrainian Grammar* (12) and *Intermediate Ukrainian Composition* (11) throughout the first and second semester of 2018 academic year¹.

The subject of this paper is spelling mistakes of Korean students on the intermediate level of learning Ukrainian as a foreign language.

Spelling mistakes which were made by the 2nd and 3rd year students at the exams in *Intermediate Ukrainian Conversation*, *Intermediate Ukrainian Grammar* and *Intermediate Ukrainian Composition* after their first and second semesters constitute the object of the given research.

The aim of the article is to analyze and summarize the author's own experience of teaching Korean students in the Republic of Korea and Ukraine. Besides that, I intend to single out major

¹ In Korea the academic year coincides with the calendar year, thus the first semester starts in March and the second one begins in September.

problems that arise in the process of learning Ukrainian phonetics, grammar and vocabulary as well as to provide certain recommendations that will hopefully improve the learning process for the given category of students.

In order to implement the given goal I have used the following methods: analysis, description, observation and typological method.

RESULTS

Having analyzed students' papers I can determine various types of mistakes, their number in the first and second semester as well as the general picture of difficulties that the Korean students have while learning Ukrainian on the intermediate level (see **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). Classification of errors depends on the type of exam questions. The exam in each course includes tasks on different skills, but, naturally, a speaking exam focuses on speaking skills, a grammar exam concentrates on grammar forms, patterns and phenomena, while a writing test examines students' writing skills.

We all know that teachers of a foreign language traditionally single out four major language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. However, these types of speech activity do not exist separately, as far as they prove to be connected psychologically and physiologically. "Language skills tend to be interconnected throughout their use in real-life communication. This can be vividly observed in typical everyday life situations". That is how a Polish scholar describes "the real character of natural communication" and explains how important it is to implement the interconnection of language skills into the language-learning process [5]. Thus, on any level of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language to the Korean students a teacher should consider the above-mentioned difficulties that are typical of such learners. If necessary, a language instructor has to correct mistakes, explain certain material and include various types of exercises for developing different language skills within the course.

Thus, let us explore phonetic, lexical and grammatical difficulties that the Korean students face while learning Ukrainian on the intermediate level.

Figure 1. Spelling mistakes made by Korean students in the exams after first semester

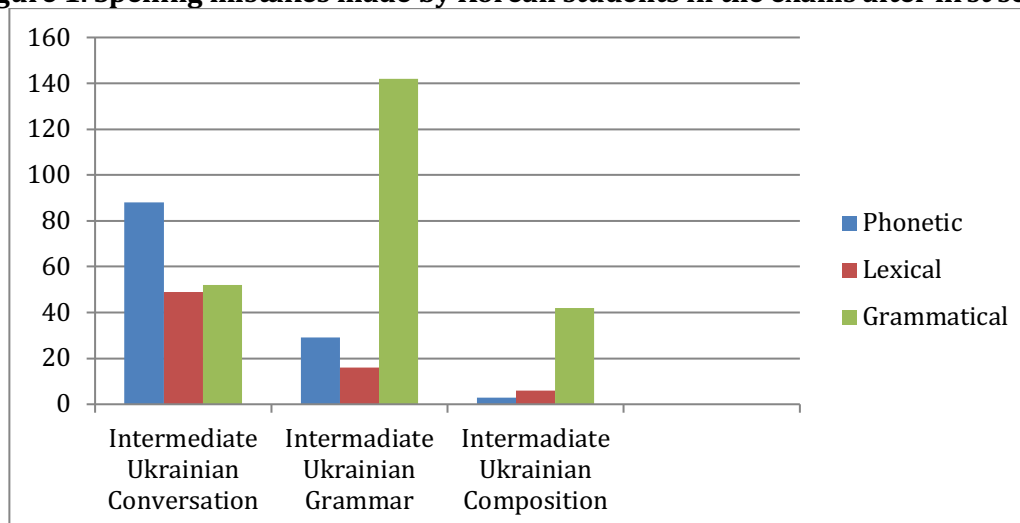
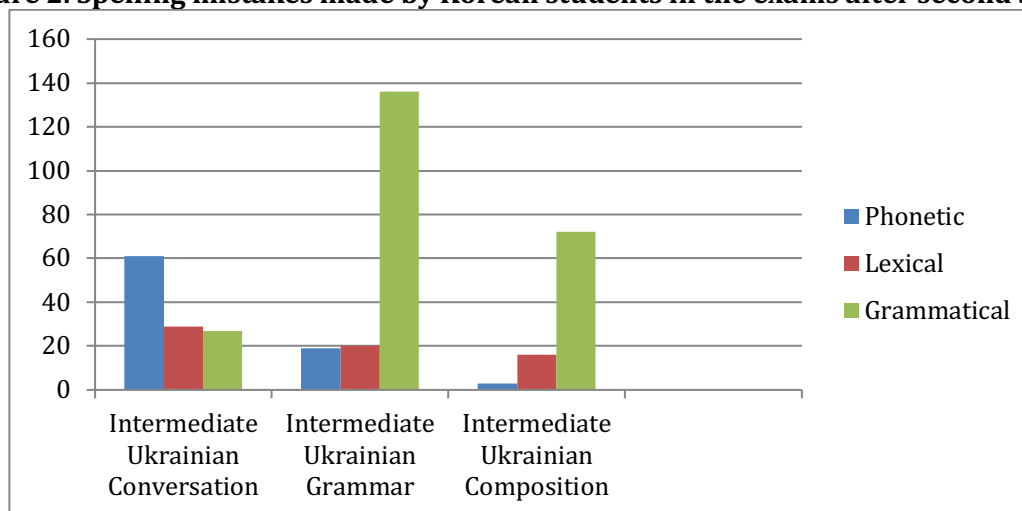


Figure 2. Spelling mistakes made by Korean students in the exams after second semester

Phonetic Difficulties

For foreign students phonetics plays a crucial part in forming Ukrainian-speaking competence. Understandable pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of learners' competence and it is also one of the most important features of language instruction. Good pronunciation leads to learning while bad pronunciation promotes to great difficulties in language teaching [11].

Notwithstanding the fact that the Korean students learn Ukrainian alphabet and specificity of pronunciation on their 1st year, certain problems in correct perception and pronunciation of most Ukrainian voiced and some voiceless sounds still remain throughout the entire period of learning Ukrainian. Morley [8] emphasized that learners should develop functional intelligibility, functional communicability, increased self-confidence, the speech monitoring abilities, and speech modification strategies.

For the Koreans studying Ukrainian the biggest difficulties in developing the above-mentioned skills are caused by the following aspects:

- Ukrainian consonants which the Korean phonetic system lacks, in particular [з], [дз], [ф], [в], [ш], [ж], [з], [х] ([z], [dz], [f], [v], [sh], [zh], [h], [kh]);
- replacing phonemes [б] and [в] ([b] – [v]), for example, *бідомий* instead of *відомий* (*vidomyi* – “famous”), *бітамін* instead of *вітамін* (*vitamin* – “vitamin”), *деребо* instead of *дерево* (*derevo* – “tree”). And vice versa, *врат* instead of *брат* (*brat* – “brother”), *подоваються* instead of *подобаяються* (*podobaiutsia* – “they like”), *субота* instead of *субота* (*subota* – “Saturday”), *вудинок* instead of *будинок* (*budynok* – “house”), *Бразилія* instead of *Бразилія* (*Brazyliia* – “Brazil”), *Варселона* instead of *Барселона* (*Barselona* – “Barcelona”) etc;
- articulatory closeness of such sounds as [с] and [з] ([s] – [z]), [ш] and [ж] ([sh] – [zh]), [з] and [ж] ([z] – [zh]), [дз] and [з] ([dz] – [z]), [с] and [ш] ([s] – [sh]), [з] and [х] ([h] – [kh]), [р] and [л] ([r] – [l]) (especially in closed syllables and combinations of consonants). For instance, *бересня* instead of *березня* (*bereznia* – “March”), *такош* instead of *також* (*takozh* – “also, too”), *звінок* instead of *дзвінок* (*dzvinok* – “bell”), *музей* instead of *музей* (*muzei* – “museum”), *казу* instead of *кажу* (*kazhu* – “I say”), *носу* instead of *ношу* (*noshu* – “I carry”), *лехкий* instead of *легкий* (*lehkyi* – “easy”), *голодний* instead of *холодний* (*kholodnyi* – “cold”), *доблий* instead of *добрий* (*dobryi* – “good”), *лодина* instead of *родина* (*rodyuna* – “family”);
- errors in pronunciation of groups of Ukrainian consonants. Such combinations are untypical of the Korean language, and groups of two or three consonants, which are so

common for the Ukrainian language (*текст, людство, шістнадцять*) (*tekst* – “text”, *liudstvo* – “humanity”, *shistnadtsiat'* – “sixteen”), prove to be impossible in Korean. Thus, pronunciation of such sound combinations causes considerable difficulties for Korean students. Errors that occur in articulating the given sounds may be of different character, namely:

- the sound [u] ([y]) (less frequently [o], [y] – [o], [u]) between two consonants (*одина* instead of *одна* (*одна* – “one”(female)), *відпочиноку* instead of *відпочинку* (*vidpochynku* – “rest” (Gen. case)), *гуртожиток* instead of *гуртожиток* (*hurtozhytku* – “dormitory” (Gen. case));
- in a combination of consonants one sound is left out (*кіната* instead of *кімната* (*kimnata* – “room”), *спортмен* instead of *спортсмен* (*sportsmen* – “sportsman”), *люство* instead of *людство* (*liudstvo* – “humanity”));
- voiceless consonants in front of sonorant sounds become voiced: *звим* instead of *світ* (*svit* – “world”), *звобода* instead of *свобода* (*svoboda* – “freedom”), *голодний* instead of *холодний* (*kholodnyi* – “cold”) [16–17].

That is why the Korean students do not only make mistakes in pronouncing these sounds, but also spell them incorrectly.

Lexical Difficulties

Within the framework of lexical competence, vocabulary knowledge also labeled as lexical knowledge is defined by Laufer & Goldstein [6] as “the sum of interrelated subknowledges” or “...construed as a continuum consisting of several levels of knowledge, starting with superficial familiarity with the word and ending with the ability to use the word correctly in free production”.

Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt [13] emphasizes that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language”. Nation [9] further describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge.

The bigger word stock you possess, the more fluently you can express your thoughts. However, it is not only the words that matter, it proves essential to know how exactly to use a certain word. The Korean students quite often fail to differentiate between lexical meanings of some Ukrainian words, especially those which have dissimilar stylistic shades of meaning. For instance, the following lexical units “*відкривати*”, “*відчиняти*”, “*розплющувати*”, “*розгортати*” are rendered into English as “*to open*”. However, in the Ukrainian language they have similar but not identical meanings – “*відкривати ресторан*” (to open a restaurant), “*відчиняти вікно*” (to open the window), “*розплющувати очі*” (to open your eyes) “*розгортати книжку*” (to open a book). Another pair of words includes “*іти*”, “*їхати*”, both translated as “*to go*”. The context is different here. “*Я їду додому*” means “I walk home”, whereas “*Я їду додому автобусом*” means “I go home by bus”. Therefore, vocabulary should always be taught in context.

Polysemy and homonymy deserve particular attention: the word “*дорогий*” in the phrase “*дорогий подарунок*” means “*an expensive gift*”, while in another phrase “*дорогий друг*” it already means “*a dear friend*”; the word “*мати*” (a noun) means “*mother*” – “*Моя мати – найкраща у світі*” (*My mother is the best mom in the world*) and the word “*мати*” (a verb) means “*to have*” – “*Я хочу мати великий будинок*” (*I want to have a big house*).

Another problem in teaching vocabulary lies in the interference of the foreign language, predominantly English, which a student has already mastered before. Frequently enough, certain phrases that denote a particular concept in one language mean something totally different in another one. The Korean students often use expressions like “*брати громадський транспорт*” instead of “*користуватися громадським транспортом*”, “*поставити гроші на рахунок*” instead of “*покласти гроші на рахунок*”, “*давати компліменти*” instead of “*говорити компліменти*” etc. that correspond to English expressions “to take public transport”, “to put money into the bank account”, and “to pay someone a compliment”. Therefore, while teaching Ukrainian vocabulary to the Korean students I often use definitions and translation of many words into English. Of course, this seems acceptable for elementary-level students, whereas advanced students should be given definitions in Korean.

Grammatical Difficulties

Grammatical competence appears to be an integral part of a person’s language fluency. For this reason, its formation together with lexical and phonetic fluency can be regarded as a long-run objective of the successful language-learning process.

Under the grammatical competence in Ukrainian as a foreign language we understand the ability to use grammatical resources of the Ukrainian language correctly. More specifically, it means choosing correct grammar structures in order to express one’s point of view, and make one’s speech formally accurate (with the help of inflections, function words, word order etc.). Put differently, grammar of a language is a competence model for confident speaker of the language, competency and proficiency of language is reflected in schools, universities and intuitions. According to Radford’s [12] view that are mentioned in his study if it properly pronounces whether any given sequence of phrases and words in a language is or is not grammatical, furthermore appropriately describes what explanations the relevant string in the sentence has. Presently, grammar has become a part of meaningful and comprehensive communication and now it is not being considered useless set of isolated rules [2]. In fact, mastering Ukrainian grammar presupposes obtaining a skill to use familiar rules in practice.

While learning Ukrainian grammar the Korean students face difficulties with certain grammatical categories. For instance, Ukrainian feminine nouns can have not only the inflections *-a* and *-я*, but also a zero ending (*радість, осінь, любов, ніч, ніч*) (*radist’ – “gladness”, osin’ – “autumn”, liubov – “love”, nich – “night”, pich – “stove”*); masculine nouns which denote people of masculine gender can end in *-o* (*батько, тато, дядько*) (*bat’ko, tato – “father”, diad’ko – “uncle”*), while the neuter gender includes not only nouns with inflections *-o*, *-e*, and *-я* (*яблуко, море, ім’я*) (*iabluko – “apple”, more – “sea”, imia – “name”*), but also some nouns that end in *-a* (*дівча, курча*) (*divcha – “small girl”, kurcha – “chick”*). Difficulties become visible when students have to combine the above-mentioned nouns with adjectives and possessive pronouns: *великий радість* instead of *велика радість* (*velyka radist’ – “great gladness”*), *темний ніч* instead of *темна ніч* (*temna nich – “dark night”*), *моє батько* instead of *мій батько* (*mii bat’ko – “my father”*), *гарна дівча* instead of *гарне дівча* (*harne divcha – “beautiful small girl”*) etc.

Quite a few mistakes occur in cases and declension:

- *-a* instead of *-y* and *-y* instead of *-a* in the genitive case of masculine nouns in singular (*урока* instead of *уроку* (*uroku – “lesson”*), *кіоска* instead of *кіоску* (*kiosku – “kiosk”*), *будинка* instead of *будинку* (*budynku – “house”*), *кінотеатра* instead of *кінотеатру* (*kinoteatru – “cinema”*));
- omission of *-o* in the genitive case of feminine nouns in plural (*дочк* instead of *дочок* (*dochok – “daughters”*), *ручк* instead of *ручок* (*ruchok – “pens”*));

- confusing inflections of adjectives belonging to different grammar groups (*сусідної* instead of *сусідньої* (*susidn'oi* – “neighbor” (Gen. case)), *третьому* instead of *третьому* (*tret'omu* – “third” (Loc. case)), *вчорашної* instead of *вчорашньої* (*vchorashn'oi* – “yesterday’s” (Gen. case)), *старшого* instead of *старшого* (*starshoho* – “elder” (Gen. case));
- confusing inflections of masculine and feminine nouns in the genitive case in plural (*вправів* instead of *вправ* (*vprav* – “exercises”), *проблемів* instead of *проблем* (*problem* – “problems”));
- -ем instead of -емо in the first person plural of the present tense (*живем* instead of *живемо* (*zhyvemo* – “we live”), *слухаєм* instead of *слухаємо* (*slukhaiemo* – “we listen”));
- alternation of *с-ш* (*s-sh*), *з-ж* (*z-zh*) in the roots of verbs in the present tense and wrong conjugation of verbs (*писаю/писаєш/писає/ ... пишуть* instead of *пишу/пишеш/пише/ ... пишуть* (*pushu/pushesh/pyshe/ ... pushut'* – “I/You/He, she, it ... They write”); *казаю/казаєш/казає/ ... казують* instead of *кажу/кажеш/каже/ ... казують* (*kazhu/kazhesh/kazhe/ ... kazhut'* – “I/You/He, she, it ... They say”);
- wrong combination of cardinal numbers and nouns (*23 років/23 рік* instead of *23 роки* (*23 roky* – “23 years”), *51 років* instead of *51 рік* (*51 rik* – “51 years”));
- wrong combination of *багато, мало, скільки* and nouns (*скільки автобуса* instead of *скільки автобусів* (*skil'ku avtobusiv* – “how many buses”), *багато люди* instead of *багато людей* (*bahato liudei* – “many people”));
- confusing personal and possessive pronouns in different cases (*вас* instead of *вам* (*vam* – “you” (Dat. case)), *про її* instead of *про неї* (*pro nei* – “about her” (Acc. case)), *її* instead of *його* (*ioho* – “him”), *ваш* instead of *наш* (*nash* – “our”), *твій* instead of *мій* (*mii* – “my”) and vice versa);
- omission of prepositions *в/у, на* in the locative case (*першому поверсі* instead of *на першому поверсі* (*na pershomu kursii* – “on the first floor”), *університеті* instead of *в університеті* (*v universyteti* – “at the university”), *вечірці* instead of *на вечірці* (*na vechirtsii* – “at the party”));
- misuse of prepositions *в/у* and *на* in the locative case (*на лікарні* instead of *у лікарні* (*u likarnii* – “at the hospital”), *у факультеті* instead of *на факультеті* (*na fakul'teti* – “at the faculty”));
- consonant interchange *к-ц* (*k-ts*), *з-з* (*h-z*) and *х-с* (*kh-s*) in nouns before -i in the locative case and for feminine nouns in the dative case (*на уроці* instead of *на уроці* (*na urotsii* – “in the lesson”), *у вухі* instead of *у вусі* (*u vusii* – “in the ear”), *подрузі* instead of *подрузі* (*podruzii* – “girlfriend”));
- specific cases of conjugation in verbs *брати, стояти, їсти* (*braty* – “to take”, *stoiaty* – “to stand”, *isty* – “to eat”) in the present tense (*браю* instead of *беру* (*beru* – “I take”), *їму* instead of *їм* (*im* – “I eat”), *стояє* instead of *стоїть* (*stoiit'* – “He, she, it is standing”)).

However, rules of agreement probably pose the biggest problem for the Korean learners of Ukrainian. Therefore, they have to learn a lot by heart and do many exercises until they start making correct phrases and sentences. For example, a Korean student may be absolutely fluent in grammar rules and the meaning of all the words, but he or she might find it extremely hard to complete a sentence or rearrange the words into a sentence correctly. As a rule, Korean students need a lot of time for such exercises, and mistakes usually occur. In particular, I mean the following pairs of verbs: *розповідати* (*про що? кому?*) but *розмовляти* (*з ким?*) (*rozpovidaty* (*pro shcho? komu?* – “to tell” (about what? whom?) but *rozmovliaty z kym?* – “to speak” (with whom?)), *надіслати* (*що? кому?*) but *одержати* (*що? від кого?*) (*nadislaty* (*shcho? komu?* – “to send” (what? whom?) but *oderzhaty* (*shcho? vid koho?* – “to receive” (what? from who?)), *зустрічати* (*кого?*) but *зустрічатися* (*з ким?*) (*zustrichaty* (*koho?*) – “to meet”

(whom?) but *zustrichatycia* (z kym?) – “to meet” (with whom?), *imu – nimu* (kydu? do koho?) but *bymu* (de? y koho?) (*ity – pity* (kudy? do koho? – “to go” (where? to whom?) but *buty* (de? u koho? – “to be” (where? who?)) etc.

DISCUSSION–CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, the given article underlines phonetic, lexical and grammatical mistakes and difficulties which the Korean students usually face on the intermediate level of learning Ukrainian as a foreign language. Quite a few mistakes in students’ speech occur while using certain grammar forms and patterns like in English. In other words, the so-called “translator” appears in students’ heads and causes inaccuracies that distort the meaning.

The Korean students make many efforts to learn the Ukrainian language: they read texts aloud, write dictations and short essays, do grammar tests, translate, sing songs etc.

In order to overcome the difficulties in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language to Korean students and get rid of the problem of many mistakes in students’ works, you need to:

- increase the number of hours for each subject on the intermediate level (from 2 to 6 hours per week);
- make these subjects compulsory for all 2nd year students;
- use different types of exercises in the lessons;
- cooperate with other members of the department;
- use innovative technologies in the lessons;
- communicate more with native speakers.

However, in my opinion, there is no universal way of totally getting rid of the problems that the Korean students undergo while learning Ukrainian as a foreign language. At the same time I believe that the best method of overcoming numerous difficulties presupposes being in the environment with native speakers, as well as careful observation and comparison between the mother tongue and Ukrainian. Besides that, using Ukrainian as often as possible in everyday-life situations will also prove helpful. Being constantly involved in such environment will definitely lead to the students’ acknowledgement of their own mistakes and their correction. Moreover, with time the learners might do away with “the translator” in their heads, and the need to translate thoughts or words into Korean and English will definitely disappear, as the students will start thinking in Ukrainian straight away.

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