Thoughts on the Importance of a Rationale for Teaching Korean as a Foreign or Second Language on Curricular Development*

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1. Introduction

Curricula occupy a curious place in foreign language education. Most teachers and researchers have an intuitive understanding of curricula because they give structure to their work. To borrow an architectural metaphor, curricula are the pillars and beams that hold buildings together, giving them structure and shape. The resulting shapes, of course, reveal the goals and ideals of the architect and the builders. Likewise, curricula reveal the goals and ideals of the institutions that create them. In so doing, curricula stand at the juncture between goals and practice, ideals and reality.

For all their importance, curricula are often overlooked or ignored in foreign language education. This is unfortunate because it shifts the focus of research in the field to how individual teachers and students deal with

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the learning task at hand. This explains why there is far more research on
issues such as methods, materials, and motivation than on curriculum
development. In this paper, I hope to raise a number of research questions
regarding curriculum development by looking at several examples of
curriculum development in action. In the conclusion, I will discuss the
relevance of the research questions to the development of KFL/KSL (Korean
as a foreign language/Korean as a second language) curricula in higher
education.

2. Elements of Curriculum Analysis

Analyzing foreign language curricula must beginning with three basic
questions:

- Why should foreign languages be taught?
- How should foreign languages be integrated into the institution?
- Who should be responsible for teaching foreign languages?

Answering these questions will offer insight into how foreign languages
fit into the overall educational goals of the institution, stated or otherwise.
As will become clear in this paper, some institutions place a high priority
on foreign language education, using it as a way to attract students to the
institution. In other institutions, foreign languages play a more peripheral
role and are treated as one of the many “academic” things that good
universities do. Institutional decisions about the role of foreign languages