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## Integrating peace and unification concepts in a Korean language class in the graduate school

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### ABSTRACT

Complex and diverse as it may seem, peace education in a nutshell can be viewed as an approach that embeds theory, practice, and research of numerous fields of study that serve as off-shot for interests on respect for tolerance, understanding diversity, and respect for human rights. With this research, it could be noted that the context could also be employed as a vehicle in advancing socio-cultural trends and issues regarding the country under study. It provides opportunities for meaningful interaction and discourse beyond language, grammar, and vocabulary. The main purpose of the study is to describe the experiences and perspectives of Filipino graduate students regarding learning Korean as a foreign language with emphasis on peace and unification concepts. The present study was conducted using qualitative research case study through content analysis. This case study involved Filipino graduate students in a Korean language class as the participants. The results showed that foreign, diplomatic, and political issues have reached the classrooms. The students did not just consume theories, but the practice of these concepts was highly sought. Topics focusing on peace and unification were seen to be critical and crucial for the contemporary era as well for the future of humanity. The present study concludes how peace and unification can be aimed at nurturing students that mindset that cultivate values and attitudes towards tolerance, understanding, and sensitivity.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Upholding the advancement of peace, preventing the occurrence of conflict, and resolving misunderstanding are at the core of human values. Peace education champions the desire that encompasses attitudes geared towards nonviolence and social justice and equity. Peace education is one aspect that contributes to the conflict resolution competencies of the students (Turk, 2018). Peace education builds the foundation as an approach towards overarching domain, including international understanding.

Peace education goes beyond age, gender, race, settings, and contexts. Efforts to mainstream peace in the education curriculum can be felt at local, national, regional, and international levels. Zembylas and Bekerman (2018) also provided certain conditions in which peace education operates as “transformative moral education.” The active involvement of stakeholders creates a synergy in bringing together ideas and perspectives related to peace. The praxis and attitude towards conflict and violence and the aspiration vis-à-vis peaceful environment can commence at the very own classroom. Velez (2021) noted the role of the young in advocating peace, and these roles have been steadily acknowledged accordingly.

The weaving of peace and education in the classroom involves translation of theories and processes of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that launch values and norms related to peace. Institutionalizing the study and teaching about peace and for peace contribute to molding students’ perception and practice of strategies to prevent conflict, as these individuals eventually become agents towards upholding peace values even have advocated a model of critical peace education at the context of higher education. On the other hand, Ratu et al. (2019) developed an approach to peace education by utilizing the community’s indigenous knowledge. Peace education has also been anchored to humor to generate positive results (Basman-Mor, 2021).

Complex and diverse as it may seem, peace education in a nutshell can be viewed as an approach that embeds theory, practice, and research of numerous fields of study that serve as off-shot for interests on respect for tolerance, understanding diversity, and respect for human rights. Kurian and Kester (2018) noted that there is a “dearth of studies featuring the personal narratives of peace educator. Interests among students have also been seen as a challenge to successful implementation of peace education (Khairuddin et al., 2019). As numerous conflicts the occur in national and international scales have resulted in social and economic catastrophe, it is high time to look at mechanisms that put premium on peace education as an advocacy through students’ skills, behavior, and values.

In relation to the presently experiences COVID-19 pandemic, Velez and Gerstein (2021) called for advocates to build and maintain peace owing to conflicts brought about by the pandemic. Unification as a concept in this study refers to approaches, experiences, and perceptions pertaining to the process of being united and unified amidst differences and diverse background. It is interesting to note that as Korean language is discussed in the classroom, learners are also involved in nurturing and enhancing their thoughts on a unified Korea. Nelson (2021) suggested three streams in which peace education efforts could respond: “intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup.”

Respect, tolerance, and understanding are highlighted by courses covering language and global issues (Rothman & Sanderson, 2018). The teaching of foreign languages encompasses a

complex scenario in the contemporary age (Tulgar, 2017). As Korean language is being studied, culture and society become central to interests of the learners, to which the North-South Korea issues could be covered. Learners and teachers of foreign and second languages carry crucial roles in advancing peace (as explained by Oxford in the book entitled *Innovative practices in language teacher education* in 2017). Inviting students to be part of the unification scenario even at the classroom level is a meaningful academic pursuit one can discover. Engaging and empowering the students, being members of the academic community could lead to “ripple effects” (Parkhouse et al., 2021; Pinzon-Salcedo & Torres-Cuello, 2018).

What if Korean language learning integrates peace and unification ideas? How can these concepts be introduced and at the same time integrated in the course? How can international understanding be achieved by initially integrating peace and unification concepts in the course? These inquiries are the initial enabling questions that direct the proponent of the study to pursue this research.

This study places its importance in strengthening approaches to Korean as a foreign language in the graduate school. One stereotypical note on a foreign language class is that it is entirely focused on language and grammar topics. With this research, it could be advocated that the context could also be employed as a vehicle in advancing socio-cultural trends and issues regarding the country under study. It provides opportunities for meaningful interaction and discourse beyond language, grammar, and vocabulary. Zemblylas and Loukaidis (2021) stated that in the context of peace education, the “teachers’ affective practices” need to be acknowledged and given emphasis. Moreover, a study by Olivero and Oxford in the book entitled *Handbook of Research on Promoting Peace Through Practice* in 2019) revealed how activities related to peace serve as transformational for students learning the language and to the participants.

The main purpose of the study is to describe the experiences and perspectives of Filipino graduate students regarding learning Korean as a foreign language with emphasis on peace and unification concepts. The overall process is intended to contribute to ‘international understanding’ pursuits as reflected in CHED Memorandum Order 23, s. 2010

The present study highlights the following core constructs: peace, unification, Korean as foreign language, experience, and perspectives. Through the interplay of these concepts, it is assumed that integrating peace and unification concepts in a Korean language class will be achieved towards international understanding (see Fig. 1).

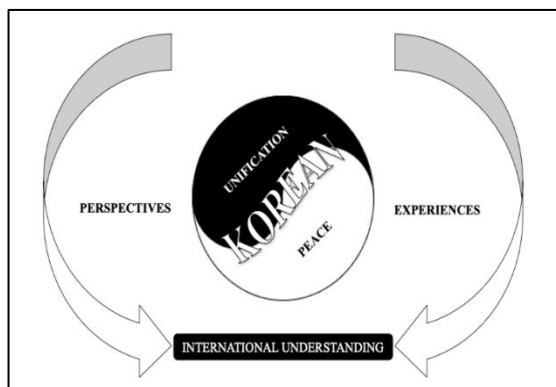


Fig. 1 - Conceptual Framework of The study.

Korean as a foreign language is at the core of the present study, being introduced together with peace and unification concepts. On a macro-level, these are being shaped by the learners' experiences and perspectives. Overall, these concepts operate to contribute and eventually achieve the ultimate goal of international understanding.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted using qualitative research case study through content analysis. The rationale for choosing the research design centered on the premise to capture the experiences and perceptions of the participants regarding the integration of peace and unification concepts in a Korean language class in the graduate school. Case study method is employed since the research problems deals with the descriptive narrative of a group (Filipino graduate students in a Korean language class) in relation to the integration of peace and unification concepts. The demographic information of the participants involved in the study is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Profile of the participants**

Demographics	Length of Stay in the Graduate School			Program Cluster		
	1-3 Academic Terms	4-6 Academic Terms	7 and above Academic Terms	Behavioral and Social Sciences	Education Sciences	Science and Math
Frequency	3	10	3	1	13	2
Percentage	18.8%	62.5%	18.8%	6.3%	81.3%	12.5%
Total	100%			100%		

The participants of the study are those who have completed both the Korean 1 and Korean 2 courses as their foreign language classes in the graduate school. There were 16 responses from the participants which were analyzed and interpreted by the researcher. The survey was facilitated through Google forms. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> Term of School year 2020 – 2021, 16 graduate students enrolled in the Korean 2 class, as shown in Table 1, equivalent to 89% response rate.

Due to the currently implemented protocol because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire data gathering procedure was done online. The link to the online survey was sent to the participants through class messenger group chat. With the instrument written in the English language, it took approximately 10 – 15 minutes to finish answering the survey. The following are the sample items from the finalized instrument:

1. *How did the Korean language class impact your perspectives/ ideas about Korea? Did it change? Were your initial impressions strengthened? Please explain.*
2. *What aspects of Korean language class could 'peace' and 'unification' be introduced to students? By doing so, do you think this could help them reinforce their foreign language learning experience?*

3. *By integrating 'peace' and 'unification' concepts in a Korean language class, do you think the overall goal of international understanding through foreign language learning could be achieved? Why do you think so?*

A response number was tagged for each response of the participants, then classified according to category, and listed according to the inquiries of the study. Great consideration was given for responses that have overlapped and repeated. Once analyzed, the responses were interpreted into paragraphs and eventually discussed accordingly, with the integration of direct quotations to give way for the presentation of authentic data.

An informed consent was sought from the students before the actual data gathering which signified that their participation to the study is voluntary. The participants were also informed that data gathered from the present research would be confidential. In the analysis and interpretation of the data, no personal information of the participants was classified.

### 3. FINDING

The results and discussion section presents the findings of the study vis-à-vis established research problems. Generally, this part is divided into three main headings according to the identified research problems. The presentation of this section is divided into three main parts: Images of Korea: Driver of International Understanding, Peace and Unification: Lessons from the Classroom, and Peace and Unification Concepts: Towards a Balanced View About North Korea.

#### 3.1 Images of Korea: Driver of International Understanding

The contemporary global landscape emphasizes cooperation and developmental efforts among nations. International understanding becomes a vehicle in advancing common good by highlighting how one sees other's culture and society. [Bajaj \(2019\)](#) has recognized the crucial role of education in advancing discourse on peace and social justice.

*"Korean language class opened different perspectives about Korea. Each lesson unfolded realities regarding culture, arts, education, leisure, etc. about Korea. The lessons are not just focused on the language itself, but on the holistic perspective of seeing Korea as a Filipino. The class made me excited and looked forward to visiting the country. This has led to understanding of how Korea affected our contemporary culture here in the Philippines." (P4M)*

The conduct of the present study uncovers how the Korean language class has created an impact on one's perspectives and ideas about Korea as a country, society, and as a field of study. The participants were asked whether these views have changes or if their initial impressions were strengthened. Capturing the images of Korea through the eyes of Filipino students would contribute to situating ideas and perspectives on Korea as a driver of international understanding.

Filipino students have affirmed how the Korean language class has strengthened the beliefs that they carry about Korea. The class served as an assertion of what they have known about the country. The experience has also been beneficial in opening new knowledge about the field of study.



*“It strengthened my curiosity about the country, especially its culture. Korean is the first foreign language I took (aside from English), and I never imagined that learning a language can also be a way of learning about the country’s culture.” (P1F)*

According to P2M, the experience served as a mechanism towards “a wider understanding on their culture and traditions”, while P5F’s ideas on the Korean language class has “strengthened my appreciation and respect of the Korean culture. Before, I love Korea because of the quality dramas and entertainment. However, learning the language has deepened my appreciation of their culture.” It is interesting to note how the foreign language class has accommodated ideas and notions held by students, thus these aspects are being strengthened during the course.

Enrolling to the class has made P9F appreciate the Korean culture more, while for P10F, it has become an instrument in learning how to accept the diversity of culture.

*“I have known South Korea for a long time, but through this class, my knowledge about the country, its language, history and culture has broadened. Due to the inclusion of culture and history in our Korean class, understanding even the whole Korean peninsula and its dealings becomes clearer since the political issues such as the reasons that the North and the South have been in dispute, have also been discussed in interactive discussions.” (P12M)*

The impact on one’s impression was not only limited to cultural and societal discussion in the Korean language class. For P13F, the main takeaway on the strengthened ideas on Korea was on “how Korean language was developed to unify the people using one common language and the use of honorifics It strengthened my impression that Korean culture is excellent and multifaceted.”

*“The Korean language class impacts my perspectives/ideas about Korea in a way that every session being done in our class gave me broader knowledge of what Korea as a country, language, customs, and traditions is all about.” (P16M)*

On the same token, the participants have also shared how the experience has changed their previously held ideas about Korea. It could be noted that with this occurrence, a foreign language class does not merely dwell on the conventional and traditional approach to learning, but rather an avenue to challenge whatever has been learned, to unlearn.

*“My ideas about Korea were changed. It changed into a higher level of admiration to Korean country. As our class in Korean 2 progresses I learned to love their way of living. Korea’s economic development and growth, which continues through the years as I read the readings about Korea, is extraordinary and wonderful. I am equally impressed that Korea has successfully made the transition quite peacefully from a military-run, authoritarian state to a vigorous democracy.” (P15F)*

For P3F, the experience was filled with perceptions that have “shifted significantly because of my discovery of the richness of their culture. I gradually grew fond of their history, gorgeous scenery, and cuisine,” while P7F’s views have changed because of the class, saying;

*“I have been with several Korean students, but I never was interested knowing their culture. After finishing my Korean 1 course, my interest about Korean culture intensified. In fact, South Korea is now at the top of my list of international destinations to visit. Learning the language, too, boosted my confidence in visiting and knowing this country more personally.”*

Some participants were also new to everything about Korea. With this, the class serves as a crucial venue to cultivate and enrich minds who are interested to discover more about the country. The role of the teacher becomes central in achieving this goal, which according to P6F; *“Korean for me is new. Our professor does his best to give impact in the lesson.”* P8F also shared the same thoughts, saying; *“being in the Korean language class allowed me to know and appreciate their language and culture more profoundly.”*

*“At first, I was not a fan of any Korean-related matters. But my amazement to people’s reaction to Korean personalities pushes me to study Korean 1. Indeed, it draws me close to admiring Korean culture, particularly music and language.” (P11F)*

The participants of the study come from various spectrum and background. There the those who carry substantial knowledge and ideas about Korea, while some are relatively new to the subject. This scenario provides inputs to lesson planning and implementation, which can also be seen as a challenge to those teaching the foreign language.

Providing opportunities to realize the expected course outcomes will surely guide the teacher on how to go about the strategies and approaches in class. At the end of the day, a foreign language class provides meaning opportunities so students will be engaged in learning a new language, as P14M puts it;

*“Eventually I learned to love every word I uttered, every letter I drew. I learned to appreciate more the language when gradually I tried to speak simple words and short sentences. Hopefully, there would be more opportunities to study the language as I want to practice it the Korean way.”*

Aside from the usual grammar, vocabulary, and language lessons, the participants were also asked about the other aspects of the Korean language that they learned in class. In the present study, they were also asked if these approaches have helped them develop a mindset towards international understanding.

*“We had a conversation with seatmates and the professor himself in Korean. It was fun though challenging. International understanding is one of the thrusts of the country towards world peace, and learning other languages is one means to achieve it.” (P14M)*

P8F shared how the class conducted;

*“Discussions about the history and culture of Korea and this is considered an effective approach in learning the Korean language since history and culture are closely tied with language. By gaining knowledge about other countries’ history, culture, and language, we can develop our international understanding.”*

This is also similar to what has been shared by P7F, saying;

*“What I like about our Korean class, aside from language learning, is part of presentation and discussion of Korean culture. Even the discussion of North Korean culture was interesting and very informative. I also liked when the professor would ask us about our own experiences of Korean culture. This helped me lessen my prejudices and biases against Korean culture in general. This approach helped me develop a mindset of international understanding.”*

Different activities in class have made each student engaged in the discussion and at the same time contributory to the goal of creating meaningful foreign language experience. According to P4M;

*“Conversational language has been introduced and this is empowered by sharing of experiences and expectation. There might be some form of culture jealous, I thought, as I understand Korea. But this as well lead to international understanding of how the two cultures are the same and different from each other. There are wonders on both culture that each can learn substantial inputs that will break culture barriers.”*

Other strategies employed in class were also mentioned by the participants. These techniques contribute to successful and meaningful experience in learning a foreign language. According to P8F;

*“in our class, we also had discussions about the history and culture of Korea. I consider this approach effective in learning the Korean language since history and culture are closely tied with language. By gaining knowledge about other countries’ history, culture, and language, we can develop our international understanding.”*

P5F, on the other hand, shared that;

*“The class also provided us with a bit of history and culture of Korea. This led us to understand how honorifics work in a conversation. Further, the discussion of the Korean culture not only gave us an insight as to how Koreans live but also honed us a deeper sense of respect for other cultures.”*

*“I particularly enjoyed learning the culture of the country. It was an effective approach to keep the students interested in learning the language. As a student, I felt that I was not only studying the language but their culture as well, which gave me the feeling of diving not into alphabets of pen and paper, but into the lives of people of the country. It’s like Korea 101.”*  
(P1F)

Music, movies, and other multimedia platforms were also employed to effectively deliver each lesson. With the currently implemented emergency remote learning, given the asynchronous modality, these platforms serve as important ingredients in advancing competencies and outcomes when learning a foreign language.



*“As an educational management student, it helps me understand fully the culture of diversity and inclusion. It is somewhat related to one of my subjects that I had already taken, the Intercultural Leadership.” (P2F)*

P13F noted that in class, *“various hook activities were used like singing Korean song, movie review, games, role play, and translation. It made the class more fun and interactive,”* and this is supported by P9F who noted that *“aside from language lessons, we were also provided with stories on background of Korean people, which made me appreciate cultural diversity more.”*

*“It really helped me to develop a mindset towards “international understanding” because as the virtual discussion in our Korean class went through, I learned from my professor and in our class discussions the idea of international understanding. The discussions about the issues of North and South Korea widen my knowledge about the importance of understanding between nations. It gave me the idea in a global perspective of ensuring world peace, prevent world war, promote human welfare, promote mutual understanding and interdependence.” (P15F)*

Various images of Korea that are learned, relearned, and unlearned in a foreign language class are crucial in creating directions towards international understanding. Providing the students with the opportunity to strengthen whatever that has been previously known, or introduce new concepts and learning puts premium towards considering images of Korea as inputs for international understanding.

### 3.2 Peace and Unification: Lessons from the Classroom

According to [Mishra, et al. \(2020\)](#), schools impact value formation among individuals in the midst of changing social and technological landscape. Thus, the classroom becomes a springboard in taking the first steps towards peace and unification through education.

*“Peace and unification may have been big words, but they are connected. When there is peace, there is unification. Understanding other culture helps me understand myself and how I relate to others. In my practice as a college professor, peace and unification are materialized through classroom activities. As a graduate student, I have been bringing those two concepts in my online classes.” (P4M)*

Different ideas were gathered from the participants concerning their conceptual understanding of peace and unification. The proponent of the present study deemed it necessary to unlock first ideas on these concepts to arrive at common understanding in relation to their experiences in class. Citizens need not be educated to act as agents of peace and justice even on the global scale ([Snauwaert, 2020](#)). Eventually, knowledge and understanding of these concepts were then seen in the light of their future practice.

According to P8F;

*“Peace exists in the absence of chaos when everyone is living in harmony. Unification is standing together as one towards a goal that will benefit everyone. Yes, as an educator, I need to practice peace and be in harmony with my co-educators and students for us to move together in accomplishing the mandate of education,”*

The statement above is also similar to the ideas of P15F;

*“My conceptual understanding of peace is about the vision of people, through understanding and respect for difference. Peace helps in developing an international community based on justice, non-oppression, and non-violence. Unification for me is the nation-state formation and involves bringing together several states into a single nation state.”*

It is indeed worthy to conclude how peace education contributes to community growth and development (Cromwell, 2019). These concepts have also been taken as complementing idea, which according to P3F;

*“Peace and unification mean global unity. There must be unified policies in dealing with people from different parts of the world, regardless of color, race, or standard of living. This will be useful in my future practice because who knows, maybe I’ll be teaching students from other countries. As a result, discrimination will be avoided.”*

P2M also noted that *“peace and unification can be only achieved through respecting one’s culture. I think this is the higher form of ethics and values that every future leader should possess. With respect, the context of peace and unification will never be an issue to any organization.”*

*“For me, peace and unification arrive at a common understanding or consensus towards a shared goal. As an educator, the integration of these concepts is crucial if we wish to ingrain oneness in our students especially that various conflicts arise at this time and age.” (P5F)*

Learning institutions act as significant agents in instilling peace concepts among stakeholders (Wong, et al., 2021). The influence of teaching and learning surely deepens practice and research. A discussion also led to reflecting how peace and unification concepts will play a role in their future practice as graduate of their respective education programs. The participants were able to link how their classroom practices would benefit from knowing these crucial concepts.

*“As a future curriculum expert, it is very important that I understand and that I experience the concepts of peace and unification. These are recent concepts in pedagogy but crucial in implementing the education’s goal of multiculturalism, inclusive education, and global citizenship. I believe that the school and most especially the teachers are effective driving forces to achieve the concepts of peace and unification. Teachers’ experiences are important so they can share these concepts to their students and actualize them. What a teacher does not have, she/he cannot give.” (P7F)*

Peace education integration will go a long way as contributory to peace education research (Zainal, et al., 2020). P12M shared that *“I can use these concepts by considering this in designing curriculum and supervising instruction and in leading and managing the school community in harmony within and across other learning institutions,”* while according to P13F,

*“Due to technological advances the world can become borderless, And an individual can become a global citizen. Language can be a tool to unify people and achieve peace in more ways than one. For an educator, I think these concepts should be embedded in his/her practice to get a wider perspective.”*

*“Yes, we get to travel abroad or sent abroad for academic scholarships, or simply for vacation, or any other purposes. Understanding language is one means for unity in diversity.” (P14M)*

The participants of the study were also asked if they have encountered the peace and unification concepts in their graduate classes. An inquiry was also made on their ideas and opinions in case these concepts were not integrated in class.

Majority of the respondents have affirmed the presence of peace and unification concepts in their graduate classes. Aside from Korean language class, some graduate classes identified that include these concepts are courses in Multicultural Education, Education and Development, and Integrative studies. According to P2M;

*“Yes I encountered peace and unification concepts in my classes. Evidently, students were taught to speak and express our thoughts on the matters discussed in the class. Teachers assure the level of sensitivity of each student. Aside from that, our professors are after of our safety in all aspects. The culture of familism, collaboration and achieving as one is evident.”*

*“I’m happy to say that I had this experience in my graduate classes. We come from various schools, divisions, and districts, but we were all able to find peace and unity during our class discussion and even after school hours. We assist one another in pursuing and completing the tasks that have been assigned to us.” (P3F)*

P5F noted that the concepts were discussed in the context of conflicts that arise from varying cultures, viewpoints, and contexts. P7F shared that;

*“These concepts included multiculturalism, inclusive education, peace education among others. Experience wise, it is in Korean classes that these concepts were integrated and/or experienced in a culture outside our own. Experiencing and/or studying these concepts made me realize how important these concepts are in the practice of teaching and learning and more so in the integration in the curriculum.”*

*“I encountered peace and unification concepts in Korean subjects and in CIN 608 Multicultural Education in Contemporary Society wherein we studied the importance of peace and unification concepts. Peace and unification is more effective and meaningful when it is adopted according to the social and cultural contexts and the country’s needs and aspirations. It should be enriched by its cultural and spiritual values together with the universal human values.” (P15F)*

On the other hand, some participants have reported not encountering peace and unification concepts in their graduate classes. P11F noted that any of her classes has introduced or discussed these concepts. According to P13F, *“I think not really. Its importance has only been integrated in some topics or content in terms of cultural diversity and inclusive education.”*

*“I have only encountered the concepts of peace and unification in my Korean language class as it has been included in discussing the history and politics in the Korean Peninsula. I think this is integrated in class to make us holistically understand our target lesson which Korean language and culture. I think its integration banked on the idea that language, culture, history, and politics are interconnected.” (P12M)*

The last item discussed for the second inquiry revolves around strategies that could help strengthen the discussion of peace and unification concepts in the Korean language class. As the participants have completed the required Korean language courses, it is assumed that they possess informed judgment on how the class could be planned and implemented vis-à-vis the desired outcome. The overall goal of this initiative is still reinforcing the foreign language learning experiences of the students.

*“Based on my experience in studying Korean language, learning about the culture keeps students interested about the language. It gives a feeling that we are not only studying alphabets and foreign words, but studying a whole different way of living, which enriches the experience of students. I am not sure as to where peace and unification can be introduced in the class, maybe in the first few lessons as it is also an interesting topic.” (P1F)*

P2M noted the association of learning and understanding the culture as well and that the discussions are centered on the impact of the language used in everyday lives. For P3F, basic conversation can be employed in highlighting these concepts to provide opportunity to communicate using basic Korean language.

For P4M, *“peace and unification may have been introduced across all processes of the Korean language class. The comments and discussions of the professor every after student-report and his answers in every question along the discussion of the lessons, both introduce understanding of Korea. And understanding is the foundation of peace, while P5F believed that “it could be best integrated in the discussions about culture. I think, to study one’s culture effectively, openness and respect to differences are crucial.”*

*“The concepts of peace and unification can be included in the discussion of Korean culture. Topics, such as Korean history and Phil-Korean friendship story among others, which enhance or promote these concepts could be intentionally integrated in the course. Yes, I do believe that this could help students reinforce and enjoy more their learning experience.” (P7F)*

P13F puts premium on historical development as an approach towards peace and unification discussion in class. P11F however thought of highlighting these concepts through collaboration to finish outputs and sharing one’s research about the assigned topic. Similarly, P8F opined that these concepts *“can be introduced by discussing Korean history, specifically the topic of the Korean war because it allows the students to know the reasons behind the similarities and differences between the South Korean and North Korean languages.”*

*“Focus first on the basic of the language. As I experienced it takes time to learn the language because of so many characters and courtesy to observe especially during*

*conversation. Let the students master all and apply the language through practice in communication.” (P14M)*

### 3.3 Peace and Unification Concepts: Towards a Balanced View About North Korea

The discussion under this domain is divided into two streams. The first inquiry delves on the achievement of international understanding by mainstreaming peace and unification in the Korean language classroom. The second discussion talks about the participants’ initial impressions about North Korea and how the Korean language class has helped students access appropriate and authentic information about North Korea.

*“By mainstreaming peace and unification concepts in Korean language class, overall goal of international understanding through foreign language learning can be achieved because the concept of peace and unification process is one way of solving the gap of international misunderstandings. Peace and unification are needed to have a good understanding about peace policies, agreement, and commitment to reunite their rules with the other country to promote peace and not war to unification.” (P15F)*

According to P2M, by learning and understanding the language in a certain country, it is easy to express thoughts of what and how one feels in a particular situation and facilitating a meaningful communication will take place which can be a factor leading to international understanding and P3F believed that the concept of peace and unification have a deeper meaning for the students, assisting them in understanding and relating to what is known as internationalization in education.

*“Seeing Korea in the shoes of a Filipino better situated me in a position where I can appreciate their diversity, our diversity. It is also important that the professor remained non-partisan during classes. This also empowered peace and unification.” (P4M)*

P5F described the Korean language experience as a class that does not just study language per se but other underlying concepts/forces that might have shaped it over the years making way for international understanding is possible. P7F also considered the Korean language context as a niche to “to lessen divisiveness, prejudices and biases as language is also an expression of one’s culture and learning it (especially if foreign) leads to greater awareness and good insight of another culture.”

*“Through understanding the two concepts, the goal of international understanding through foreign language learning can be achieved. Such class is an eye opener as it shatters the stereotypes towards the target countries of learning. As the concepts of peace and unification in foreign language classes are taught, the learners do just become proficient in the language, but also become agents of edification of peace and unification that will create a ripple effect, essential to promote both national and international peace.” (P12M)*

The participants of the study were also able to share the ideas they hold about North Korea. These perspectives were mostly gathered from mass media, popular culture, and other platforms. The present study captures ideas on how Korean language classes could students help obtain appropriate and authentic information about North Korea.



*The only thing I know about North Korea is that it is a country trapped in the past. There are several vlogs that I saw about a group of tourists visiting North Korea. The tourists are accompanied by North Korean guides who remind them of the restrictions/rules that they need to observe. In terms of access to authentic materials, understanding the history of these countries can be a start. And access to these histories is possible through the Korean Language class.” (P5F)*

P13F opined that; *“I think it would add valid argument to include something about North Korea on learning Korean Language.”*

*“Basically, the course uncovers Korean culture -regardless of its political or geographical division. In Korean 2, we took time to be acquainted with North Korea’s basic identity and it was a good source of authentic information since it came from a research. Moreover, it was helpful in the sense that it widens student’s perspective on the good stories happening in the North. It balanced the information spread on the internet. (P11F)”*

The Korean language class is seen by P12M in advocating authentic and appropriate information about North Korea by saying;

*“When provided with factual information and not clouded by mere media influence, Korean language class can be an avenue of help to edify the learners on what North Korea really is. When this is achieved, full understanding not only of South Korea, but of the whole Korean peninsula can be achieved,”*

Above statement is also related to the idea of P7F who noted that; *“Korean language classes can be an avenue to promote what’s good about Korea. Aside from South Korea, North Korean culture, famous places, celebrations and traditions, school and government systems should also be discussed.”* P2M also advanced that it is high time that North Korea be given emphasis.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Beyond language and communication skills, advocating peace in the classroom is seen as a meaningful feat. The literature provides directions in traversing approaches and techniques in a foreign language classroom that promoted peace. The experiences and perspectives of students in the classroom can be seen as crucial inputs in designing the foreign language curriculum towards achieving the goal of international understanding through learning the Korean language.

Foreign, diplomatic, and political issues have reached the classrooms. The students do not just consume theories, but the practice of these concepts is highly sought. More than just preparing the traditional and conventional foreign language classroom set up, the challenge remains: present the foreign language class as a niche towards international understanding through peace and unification concepts. Topics focusing on peace and unification are seen to be critical and crucial for the contemporary era as well for the future of humanity.

The present study concludes how peace and unification can be aimed at nurturing students that mindset that cultivate values and attitudes towards tolerance, understanding, and sensitivity. With these in mind, individuals from various cultures and backgrounds gain mutual benefits and

gains amidst differences and imperfections. The Korean language experience of graduate students involved in the present study highlight ideas and practice experience, extending to their professional performance. The present research hopes to serve as an input in crafting research-based agenda and directions towards the teaching of foreign languages.

As Filipino graduate students hold various images of Korea, these ideas should be processed and contextualized during the foreign language class to provide clarification and unbiased mindset. The classroom should serve as a melting pot of intersecting images of Korea which are then put into consideration as inputs towards international understanding. Lessons in the classroom are also encouraged to be done with peace and unification in mind. With students being exposed to these concepts in any of their classes, the culture of putting it at the core of every academic endeavor happens gradually. Lastly, providing a balanced view about North Korea can be seen as a proactive approve in integrating peace and unification concepts in a Korean language class. Providing appropriate and authentic information and allowing students to digest and interpret these inputs will surely make the entire foreign language learning experience a meaningful experience.

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