

Exploring Asynchronous Online Courses in Language Group V: A Case of Intermediate Korean

Seung-Eun Chang
Georgia Institute of Technology

Abstract

While asynchronous online language courses have been increasingly implemented in higher-education environments, they have limited use for Language Group V. This study explores the curriculum design and efficacy of an asynchronous online mode for an intermediate Korean course, while also providing practical suggestions for optimal structuring of the course. To this end, the article provides a comparative analysis of the same course in two modes (i.e., an asynchronous online version and an in-person version) and evaluates the online mode's efficacy using various assessments, including pre- and post-tests; midterm exams; oral quizzes; spelling and spacing quizzes; and students' course evaluation surveys. The outcome indicates that students in the asynchronous online course performed

equally well as those in the in-person course on all assessments, and even outperformed in-person students on post-tests. Pedagogical insights and strategies on the benefits and challenges of online courses are also discussed.

Keywords: pre-test and post-test, Korean-language course, asynchronous online language course, curriculum development of online course

1. Introduction

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, many studies noted a growing demand for online learning:

more students enrolled in online learning courses between 2012 and 2016 than during previous years, despite an overall decline in the number of students in the United States pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees at all higher-education institutions during that period (Seaman et al., 2018). Additionally, more than 30% of college students are currently enrolled in at least one online course (Seaman et al., 2018), and this trend toward online learning has also been observed in language courses (Murphy-Judy & Johnshoy, 2017). This tendency was further accelerated through emergency remote teaching (ERT) during COVID-19, when most university courses transitioned to online teaching, regardless of instructors' preference, readiness, or competencies (Hodges et al., 2020).

Despite the increasing demand and preferences for online learning, concerns have been raised over the

effectiveness of online language learning and the extensive preparation required for conducting online classes (Johnshoy, 2013; Tarone, 2015; Thoms, 2020). According to Thoms (2020), both learners and instructors require appropriate training to make the most of digital tools and applications integrated into online language courses. This is due to the growing availability of newer digital tools, such as digital annotation tools, that enable meaningful social and collaborative interactions in online contexts. Thoms also addresses various pedagogical and curricular concerns, especially for effectively incorporating authentic, open, and wild online environments, such as websites, blogs, and social networking applications, into the language-learning context. In addition, Tarone (2015) emphasizes that the effectiveness of online language learning should be documented based on students' actual scores on standardized and validated measures of language proficiency, such as the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview; assessments of reading, writing, or

listening proficiency; or equivalent standardized assessments (ACTFL, 2012).

Meanwhile, contrary to these concerns, researchers have found that students in hybrid and/or fully online (asynchronous online) courses performed equally well as students taking in-person classes, or even outperformed in-person students in language success and competence gains. Specifically, several studies have demonstrated that there are no statistically significant differences in students' academic performance between hybrid or fully online language courses and in-person language courses (for hybrid, see: Chenoweth et al., 2006; Gascoigne & Parnell, 2013; for fully online, see: Enkin & Mejías-Bikandi, 2017; Money Penny & Aldrich, 2016; Salcedo, 2010). For example, Money Penny and Aldrich (2016) conducted a study comparing undergraduate students' oral proficiency in online and in-person Spanish classes. Their study used the Versant Spanish assessment tool to evaluate students' pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence formation, and fluency in a two-semester Introductory Spanish course

sequence; and the results showed no significant differences in oral proficiency between the two groups of students.

Further, some studies have observed that students enrolled in hybrid or fully online language courses outperform those in in-person classes (for hybrid, see: Scida & Saury, 2006; for fully online, see: Blake & Delforge, 2007; Sato et al., 2017). Sato, Chen, and Jourdain (2017) conducted a simulated ACTFL oral proficiency interview (OPI) with online Japanese students to compare their oral performance with in-person students. Quantitative results showed that online students outperformed their in-person counterparts in most of the three modes of communication (i.e., interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational) assessed in Integrated Performance Assessment's (IPA) scoring criteria.

Other studies have also shown that students' overall academic language skills were significantly improved via hybrid or fully online learning (for hybrid, see: Thomas, 2012; for fully online, see: Enkin & Mejías-Bikandi, 2017; Hoang & Hoang, 2022; Jiang & Chun, 2023). For instance, Hoang &

Hoang (2022) investigated the effects of regular collaborative activities via Google Docs on English academic writing skills. The participants were Vietnamese high school students who participated in a fully online English as a foreign language (EFL) course in academic writing. Pre- and post-test results indicated that the students' overall academic writing skills significantly improved over the course. Moreover, Jiang and Chun (2023) have assessed the efficacy of web-based training on English discourse intonation in improving Mandarin speakers' spontaneous speech quality. Pre- and post-assessments showed that students made statistically significant improvements in both speech comprehensibility and speaking confidence.

While many earlier studies have reported the promising potential of hybrid or fully online language learning, most studies have focused on Spanish or English learning, and work on less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) in this field is extremely limited. Further, while several studies have investigated hybrid language courses,

there is a need for more research about fully online language classes (Blake & Delforge, 2007).

Therefore, the present study reports findings about student scores on various assessments in a fully asynchronous online course, to examine their effectiveness while also exploring course design in asynchronous online modes. The study includes intermediate Korean courses taught in the fall of 2021 at a U.S. university. The article offers practical guidance and strategies regarding curriculum development of asynchronous online courses, including sample class structure and requirements. A comparative analysis of the same classes in two modes—(i) an asynchronous online mode (the primary concern in this article), and (ii) an in-person mode—are provided using several assessments, including pre- and post-tests; midterm exams; oral quizzes; spelling and spacing quizzes; and the university's course evaluation surveys for students.

2. Context

Although it is not unusual for universities to offer online Korean-language courses, most online classes have been conducted in a synchronous online or hybrid mode, rather than fully asynchronous online modes. In 2018, my university started offering synchronous online courses for introductory Korean, primarily to align with the institution's strategic plan (e.g., supporting online curricula and instruction to enhance student learning in virtual environments); to leverage technologies for supporting language programs (ACTFL, 2017); and to accommodate students' preferences for online courses (as stated in school surveys). Consequently, online offerings have further expanded to upper-level Korean courses and fully asynchronous online modes, inspired by previous studies concluding that language courses offered entirely online (i.e., asynchronous online) have the vital advantage of giving students greater flexibility in scheduling classes (Carr, 2014; Chenoweth et al., 2006). This background provides practical insights into the overall Korean program,

which needed a record of robust enrollment to strengthen the university's newly established Korean major programs.

I first developed an asynchronous online course for upper-level Korean (i.e., 4th level) for the 5-week summer session (Chang, 2021). I also continued designing asynchronous courses for regular-semester and lower-level courses. Even with the school-wide support for online courses, implementing a new online mode without any established guidelines was quite challenging. Most asynchronous courses in my school were designed for Spanish, and no model or template was available for Asian languages or LCTLs. In addition to the difficulties in implementing a new teaching practice, instructors had doubts about the effectiveness of asynchronous online courses for Language Group V. Therefore, to assess the efficacy of asynchronous online courses and to address instructors' concerns about this teaching method, two Korean-language classes, identical in content but taught in different modalities (i.e., asynchronous online and in-person), were offered during

the same semester with the same instructor. This article discusses the course experience, course evaluation, and the outcomes of student assessments.

3. Methods

3.1 Course Information

Two 3-credit Intermediate Korean I courses were involved in this study, (i) asynchronous online and (ii) in-person. While the two courses used the same textbook, had the same examinations and quizzes, and were taught by the same instructor, the amount of homework and the course requirements and assignment weights differed according to each course mode. Email communication between the instructor and students is a crucial component in asynchronous online courses; thus, this requirement was added to the online course's assessments, whereas an attendance and participation category was included in the in-person course. A summary of the course requirements for each class mode is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Course Requirements for each class mode.

Online course		In-Person course	
homework assignment	50%	homework assignment	30%
examination	30%	examination	30%
presentation and project	15%	presentation and project	30%
communication with the instructor	5%	attendance and participation	10%

Canvas, an online learning and teaching platform, was used for each course. The following class materials for the entire semester were uploaded on Canvas with the submission due date: (i) syllabus; (ii) schedule table; (iii) media resources; (iv) assignments; (v) sample quizzes and exams; (vi) guidelines for all assignments, presentations, projects, and activities; and (vii) review materials from introductory Korean courses (e.g., lists of vocabulary and grammar, and lecture videos for core grammar learned in lower-level Korean courses). Quizzes and

exams were listed on the schedule with due dates, but were not published until the scheduled test date. Pre-recorded lecture videos were also made available on Canvas for both courses, including the in-person class, due to anticipated COVID-related absences and students' need for class materials that could be reviewed. Students were expected to purchase the textbook but, due to copyright restrictions, textbook content was not uploaded on Canvas. Instead, each task included a page number from the original textbook for reference.

For the online course, all four skills in language learning (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) were involved in the homework assignments. The amount of homework in the online course was determined based on the class hours of the in-person course, and these assignments were given three days a week. For each unit, the following assignments were given for the online course: (i) vocabulary quiz; (ii) reading and comprehension homework (i.e., a recording of students reading from the textbook and

answering corresponding questions); and (iii) grammar homework. Every two units, there were review sessions with the following assignments: (i) listening, (ii) speaking, and (iii) writing assignments that covered both units. Unlike the reading and comprehension homework, the speaking homework for the review session was in a free-talking format. One or two topics were given to the students, and they talked about the topic(s) for more than 15 sentences in front of a web camera. Students were encouraged to respond to questions naturally, instead of reading from a pre-prepared script. However, I recognize that this might be challenging for students at an intermediate level. To facilitate the process, I assigned the same topic for their writing and speaking assignments, and I recommended completing the writing task first, to allow ample time for brainstorming and organizing thoughts before recording the speaking assignment.

The in-person class had a similar outline of assignments as the online course, but with fewer requirements: (i) vocabulary quizzes; and (ii) grammar,

reading, and writing homework. No homework was assigned for speaking and listening, since these activities were the main focus of the in-person classroom. However, the same speaking and listening questions were available on Canvas as optional practice so students could access them voluntarily. The questions on vocabulary quizzes and homework content were the same for the two class modes.

To compare students' knowledge and understanding of the course at the beginning and end of the semester, online pre- and post-tests were created. An online take-home midterm exam was also designed to assess students' halfway progress. The pre- and post-tests were conducted in the first and the final weeks, respectively, and the midterm was held in the eighth week. Sample tests were offered before the actual ones, so that students could become accustomed to the format of each test. The test schedule was the same for both class modes.

A one-on-one oral quiz with the instructor was also administered in the twelfth week, primarily to assess the oral

and aural ability of non-heritage students, who typically demonstrate deficiencies in these areas. Alternatively, spacing and spelling quizzes were offered for most Korean-heritage students. This is because heritage students may demonstrate a limited ability to write accurately, with orthographic skills more comparable to non-heritage learners (Campbell & Rosenthal, 2000; Kagan & Dillon, 2001; Loewen, 2008). Additionally, my university teaches spacing rules at the intermediate level, in response to student demand and to further enhance students' understanding of Korean writing (Seo & Park, 2022). Therefore, a combination of oral quizzes and spelling and spacing quizzes was used to not only accommodate what students hoped to achieve in the class, but also as an area in which students might wish to practice and improve. The instructor determined the allocation of quizzes to students after reviewing students' performance on regular homework assignments and discussing with the students, if necessary.

To advance students' creativity, media competence/literacy, and speaking ability, show-and-tell individual presentation videos, mini-skits team videos, and a final project (K-drama video as group work, or digital storytelling as individual work) were included in the schedule. Considering the asynchronous online course students' preferences and circumstances, both individual and group formats were offered as options for the final project. To give students time to plan and brainstorm this project, the draft assignment was provided in the twelfth week, including the following prompts: (i) student's choice of project between two options; (ii) project topic; (iii) software program to be used; (iv) Timeline and To-Do List.

One movie day was added as well. Recommendations of movies were provided, but students could choose their own Korean movies, as long as they wrote and submitted the movie reviews in Korean. Students were encouraged to watch with classmates at their homes, or come to an in-person class movie day to watch together.

The entire semester schedule in the Canvas Home menu shows the assignments for each submission day, with students able to see the content and instructions by clicking each item.

3.2 Participants

Students were assigned to the class through an oral interview and/or placement test, and each class had 25 students, which is the university's standard enrollment cap. Both online and in-person classes had both Korean-heritage and non-heritage students: the asynchronous online course included 13 Korean-heritage and 12 non-heritage students, while the in-person course had 17 Korean-heritage and 8 non-heritage students. Given that all assignments, quizzes, and exams used for this research were parts of course requirements, all students were expected to complete them. However, only the results of students who submitted a consent form following the school's Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols were included in this research. Twenty students (10 Korean-heritage and 10 non-heritage) in the asynchronous

online class and 22 students (14 Korean-heritage and 8 non-heritage) in the in-person class participated in the current study.

3.3 Procedure

Of all exams, quizzes, oral activities, projects, and homework assignments outlined in the course information section, the following were included in assessing the course's effectiveness for this study: pre-test and post-test, midterm exam, oral quizzes, and spelling and spacing quizzes. In addition, this study includes the students' official course evaluation, as conducted by the university to ascertain authentic feedback regarding the courses.

- (1) **Online Pre-test and Post-test:** The online pre-test and post-test were administered to students to assess their progress between the beginning and end of the semester. Both tests consisted of listening (30%), writing (30%), and grammar (40%) sections. The pre-test and post-test were conducted in the first and final weeks of the term. The tests were conducted

online both for online and in-person class modes, and students took the test remotely as a take-home exam. Students had access to the exam throughout the test day. The test was about 50 minutes long and equipped with an online test proctoring tool, the Honor Lock. The exam procedure was the same for both online and in-person class modes.

The listening and grammar sections were created using Canvas's automated grading system, while the writing section was manually graded by the instructor. Students were given credit for taking the pre-test, but the actual score was not counted as a grade. Also, students were not given the correct pre-test answers after the submission. On the post-test, the test questions and the difficulty level were almost the same as the pre-test: slightly different vocabulary and sentences were used for some questions, and the essay topic was different. The score

on the post-test was entered as a percentage of the course grade.

- (2) **Midterm Exam:** The 50-minute, online midterm exam was also conducted in the eighth week, following the same protocol for online and in-person courses. The exam procedure was the same as the pre- and post-tests, and the types of exam questions included case marker, expression, reading, and essay. The essay section was manually graded, while other sections were created using an automated grading system.
- (3) **Oral Quiz:** The results of a one-on-one oral quiz (conducted in the eleventh week) were also used to evaluate each student's speaking and listening abilities. Practicing and memorizing basic sentence patterns can help learners create longer and more complex sentences, especially for beginning- and early intermediate-level students. Therefore, the sample questions with audio files for the oral quiz were

offered to both class modes for practice purposes. However, the actual oral quiz questions were not exactly the same as the sample questions; quiz questions were slightly varied, based on students' responses.

The oral quiz was conducted either in-person or online, and students signed up for the time and mode they preferred among the options provided. Although both courses offered two options, in-person students signed up for the in-person quiz, while online students signed up for the online quiz. The online quiz was administered through Bluejeans (one of the school's official online meeting tools) and the in-person quiz was conducted in the classroom. The quiz length was 15 minutes per student. Results for the students who submitted the consent form were included in the current study: 10 non-heritage students in the online class, and 8 non-heritage and 2

heritage students in the in-person class. The oral quiz rubric is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' oral quiz was evaluated based on the following rubrics.

(a) Fluency (20%)	Speaks confidently and naturally without hesitation. Ideas flow smoothly.
(b) Grammar Accuracy & Vocabulary Range (20%):	Uses correct grammar conjugation as well as appropriate and various vocabulary from the units.
(c) Understanding (20%)	Understands the instructor's question well and the response should be relevant to the question.

(d) Intelligibility (Pronunciation & Intonation) (20%)	Speaks with accurate pronunciation, and the instructor should understand the student's speech.
(e) Spirit, Effort, & Punctuality (20%):	Students' language-learning abilities differ. Other aspects are considered in addition to the performance, such as preparation level, spirit, and attitude.

Each item was evaluated according to four rating scales:
Excellent, Good, Fair, and Needs Improvement.

- Excellent: Suggested expectations are successfully fulfilled or exceeded.
- Good: Expectations are largely met, with only a few exceptions.
- Fair: Expectations are met more than half of the time.

- Needs Improvements: Expectations are only partially met.

Most Korean-heritage students participated in the online spelling and spacing quizzes instead of the oral quiz. Results of the students who submitted the consent form are included in this study: 10 Korean-heritage students from the online class, and 12 Korean-heritage students from the in-person class. Study materials and sample questions for the quizzes were provided so that students could prepare for them.

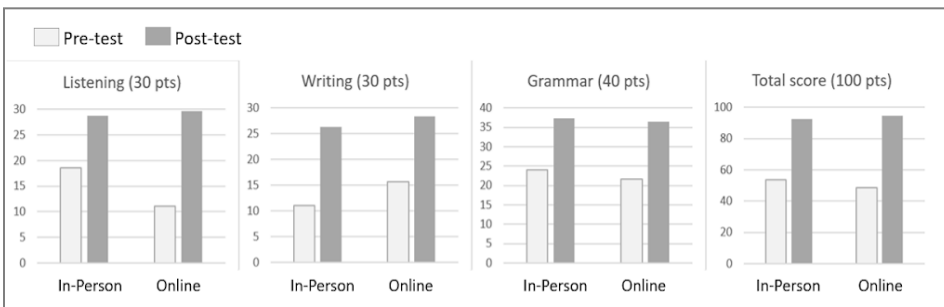
- (4) **Student's Course Evaluation:** Lastly, the university's official teaching evaluation by the students (i.e., the course instruction opinion survey [CIOS]) is provided to analyze student feedback for the class. The CIOS offers students' quantitative and qualitative responses, and evaluates the overall effectiveness of the course and instructor, knowledge gained in the course, the best part of the course, and potential course improvements.

4. Results

4.1 Assessment Test: Pre-test and Post-test

Visual distributions of pre-test and post-test mean scores for the in-person and the asynchronous online classes are given in Figure 1. Each section of listening, writing, and grammar, plus the total score, are provided. The graph shows that scores for each test section increase on the post-test in both class modes. Specifically, the post-test score was higher in the online mode than in the in-person test for the listening and writing sections, while it was higher in the in-person than in the online mode for the grammar section.

Figure 2. Mean scores of the pre- and post-tests for the in-person and asynchronous online class modes



Mean scores for assessment tests (possible score of 100) for in-person and online classes, organized by students' heritage background, are displayed in Table 3. Both heritage and non-heritage students showed increasing post-test scores for the in-person and asynchronous online classes, and the average difference is even greater for the online class (47.6 pts) than for the in-person class (40.7 pts).

Table 3. Mean scores for assessment tests (possible score of 100) for in-person and online classes, by students' heritage background.

Test type	In-Person			Asynchronous Online		
	Heritage	Non-heritage	Average	Heritage	Non-heritage	Average
Pre-test (100 pts)	68.3	34.3	51.3	60.7	32.4	46.6
Post-test (100 pts)	93.9	90.1	92	94.1	94.3	94.2
Difference	25.6	55.8	40.7	33.4	61.9	47.6

Statistical analysis determined whether there was any significant difference between the pre-test and post-test, class modes, and heritage backgrounds. The results of an ANOVA—with the test score as the dependent variable and test types, class modes, and heritage backgrounds as independent variables—showed a significant main effect for test types [$F(1, 76) = 39394.6, p < 0.0001$] and heritage backgrounds [$F(1, 76) = 5469.7, p < 0.0001$]. However, there was no significant difference between class modes. Significant interactions between heritage backgrounds and test types were found. This might be because score differences between the pre-test and the post-test were greater for non-heritage students than for heritage students. The results indicate that the students in the asynchronous online course demonstrated enhanced listening, grammar, and writing abilities comparable to those in the in-person class, thus supporting previous findings.

4.2 Midterm Exam

The online midterm exam consisted of four sections: case marker, expression, reading, and essay. The visual distributions of each section for the two class modes are given in Figure 2, and the mean scores are given in Table 4.

Figure 2. Mean scores of midterm exam sections for the in-person and asynchronous online class modes



Table 4. Mean scores for online midterm exam (possible score of 100) for in-person and online classes by students' heritage background.

Test type	In-Person			Asynchronous Online		
	Heritage	Non-heritage	Average	Heritage	Non-heritage	Average
Case Marker (15 pts)	13.7	13.7	13.7	14.6	12	13.3
Expression (51 pts)	40.1	39.4	39.8	44	32.7	38.4
Reading (9 pts)	7.0	4.5	5.8	6.6	4.2	5.4
Essay (25 pts)	24.1	24.2	24.2	24.8	24.1	24.5

Mean Score (100 pts)	85.0	81.7	83.4	89.9	73	81.5
Total Mean Score	83.8			81.5		

Although these results suggest that the scores are quite similar for the two class modes in general, every section is higher for the in-person class than for the online class, except for the essay section. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the two class modes. An ANOVA statistical analysis was conducted with the midterm exam score as the dependent variable and class modes and heritage backgrounds as independent variables. There was no significant difference between class modes, while the heritage backgrounds showed a significant difference [$F(1, 38) = 1030.9, p < 0.05$], with higher scores for heritage students than for non-heritage students. To assess

whether there was any class mode effect present in each section of the midterm exam, the data were evaluated using the general linear model multivariate ANOVA: the dependent variables were the scores of the case marker, expression, reading, and essay sections; and the independent variables were class modes and heritage backgrounds. The results found no significant difference in all four score categories depending on the class modes, while heritage background was found to be significantly different in the reading section [$F(1, 38) = 62.3, p < 0.01$]. Also, no significant interaction effect was found. Overall, the findings indicate that students in the asynchronous online class had comparable proficiency to those in the in-person class in the areas of case marker usage, expression, reading comprehension, and the essay, although the mean score in each area was slightly lower for the online class than for the in-person class.

4.3 Oral Quiz and Spelling and Spacing Quizzes

The students' oral proficiency was evaluated based on (i) fluency (20%); (ii) grammar accuracy and vocabulary range (20%); (iii) understanding (20%); (iv) intelligibility (pronunciation and intonation) (20%); and (v) spirit, effort, and punctuality (20%). The detailed procedure and the rubrics are provided in section 3.3. The mean oral quiz scores were collected from 20 non-Korean-heritage students (10 for online and 10 for in-person classes).

Results for in-person (98.6%) and online classes (98.6%) were found to be exactly the same, indicating high achievement. There was no significant difference in each rubric category between the two class modes either. Visual distributions of each category for the two class modes are given in Figure 3, and the mean scores are given in Table 5. In the case of an in-person class, 8 non-heritage and 2 heritage students participated in the oral quiz. While fluency was higher for heritage than non-heritage students and grammar accuracy was slightly higher for non-heritage than heritage

students, their difference was not significant. While oral proficiency was the most concerning aspect in online language classes, these results, contrary to concerns, demonstrated the same level of achievement as students in an in-person class.

Figure 3. Mean scores of the oral quiz for the in-person and asynchronous online class modes.

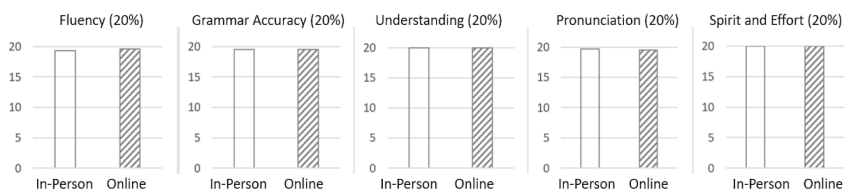


Table 5. Mean scores for the oral quiz (possible score of 100) for in-person and online classes by students' heritage background.

Test type	In-Person			Asynchronous Online		
	Heritage	Non-heritage	Average	Heritage	Non-heritage	Average
Fluency (20%)	19.5	19.3	19.4	n/a	19.6	19.6
Grammar Accuracy and Vocabulary Range (20%)	19.4	19.5	19.5	n/a	19.5	19.5
Understanding (20%)	20	20	20	n/a	20	20
Intelligibility (Pronunciation and	19.7	19.7	19.7	n/a	19.5	19.5

Intonation) (20%)						
Spirit, Effort, and Punctuality (20%)	20	20	20	n/a	20	20
Total Mean Score	98.6			98.6		

The mean scores on spelling and spacing quizzes for Korean-heritage students (from 10 online and 12 in-person students) showed no significant difference between the two class modes (99.5% for online and 100% for in-person). Overall, the findings provide empirical support that online students are equivalent to in-person students in terms of oral and aural proficiency, as well as spelling and spacing skills.

4.4 Students' Course Evaluation: Quantitative and Qualitative

Students' course evaluations were collected through the school's official survey, CIOS. The participants included 20 of 25 (80%) students from the online course, and 19 of 25 (76%) students from the in-person course. Each of the evaluation scales used five rating options per category: e.g., Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree; Exceptional, Very Good, Good, Fair, and Poor; and so on.

The quantitative results indicated that students in both class modes were very satisfied with the course's effectiveness overall (4.8/5.0), indicating either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" responses. Regarding the instructor's overall effectiveness, the responses were 5.0/5.0 for the online course (all students responded "Strongly Agree") and 4.9/5.0 for the in-person class (all responded "Strongly Agree," except for two students). The responses for "Amount learned in the course" were 4.6/5.0 for the online course and 4.4/5.0 for the in-person course, with the majority

responding “Exceptional” and “Great Deal” for both classes. Most students responded that the instructor successfully communicated with students for both classes (4.9/5.0 for both modes). The instructor’s availability was also positively reported (5.0/5.0 for online and 4.9/5.0 for in-person). Both online and in-person students showed equally positive responses, with some even rating the online course higher in certain categories, which demonstrates that the online course can be implemented effectively and satisfy students.

In addition, some qualitative feedback obtained through the open-ended CIOS questions is summarized, focusing on the online course. For example, for the best aspect of the online course, many students praised the assignments’ structure and variety (e.g., “*very effective and comprehensive,*” “*included some fun questions that were related to popular Korean media,*” “*interesting,*” and “*really appreciate the homework structure*”), as well as the lecture videos (e.g., “*concise but very effective*” and “*very helpful*”). Students especially highlighted the cultural, oral, and aural assignments, saying

that the speaking and listening practice was beneficial without in-person contact. They also enjoyed the projects and the speaking homework, which helped them understand Korean culture beyond just the language. Additionally, the instructor's quick feedback was appreciated by many students.

On the other hand, for suggestions on course improvement, students mentioned the complexity of irregular verb conjugation, a desire for more explanation about grammar, slower use of Korean in lecture videos, and a lack of listening opportunities (e.g., “*wanted to listen to more Korean*”). Notably, the subject of greatest concern expressed by students pertained to grammar learning—rather than the level of interaction, which has been widely considered the key pedagogical issue in online courses.

5. Discussion

Findings from multiple evaluations (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, case marking, expression, essay, and grammar) indicate that students in an asynchronous online course achieved comparable proficiency levels to those in an in-person class. Furthermore, students' feedback suggests that the course was effective in facilitating significant learning gains, which aligns with previous research in this area (Arispe & Blake, 2010; Blake & Delforge, 2007; Chenoweth et al., 2006; Enkin & Mejías-Bikandi, 2017; Salcedo, 2010). Some insights and suggestions gained from conducting online courses are provided below.

5.1 Potential Reasons for the Positive Outcomes

Online students had more assignments than in-person students, necessitating a higher level of study and preparation to fulfill the coursework successfully. More assignments provide more opportunities to receive instructors' comments on student performance. Thus, extensive feedback on each student's homework could have helped them enhance their

skills even further, by focusing on their specific and recurring errors. Instructor feedback on assignments was offered to both in-person and online students. However, it seems that online students paid more attention to their instructor's feedback compared to in-person students. This was evident because a higher number of online students corrected their previous errors in their subsequent work.

In addition, the flexibility of online class schedules could potentially have a positive impact on students' academic performance. The number of asynchronous online courses in Korean is increasing at my university because online courses are popular and consistently fill up. In addition to the class content, students appreciate the schedule flexibility allowed by this format. The following student comment exemplifies the benefit of flexible scheduling: *“I loved that everything was on Canvas at the start of the year. I am taking a lot of classes this semester, and I can't emphasize just how helpful the organized course schedule was. It took off so much stress, and I could finish assignments early when I had very heavy weeks.”*

Further, the availability of pre-recorded lecture videos on Canvas could have greatly assisted students via repeated viewings, thus enabling a more comprehensive review of the course material. These lecture videos were available both for in-person and online classes. This allowed in-person students to reference them in case of class absences or for additional practice. Online students had to use them to complete their assignments, while in-person students regarded them as optional, relying more on in-person class activities. According to class evaluations, many online students found the lecture videos extremely helpful and revisited them multiple times.

Ironically, it seems that one critical factor toward online students' academic success is that the absence of in-person access to their classmates and instructor may have actually heightened student engagement, attention, and self-motivation, due to a perceived need to compensate for the lack of in-person connection. As previously mentioned, all online learning resources were accessible to both in-person and online students. However, online students demonstrated

notably higher engagement with the online materials compared to in-person students.

5.2 Interaction and Communication

One of the most crucial elements to emphasize in asynchronous online courses might be how interaction between students, and between students and instructors, can be effectively implemented. It is indeed a truism that the virtual setting is less engaging than the in-person classroom; however, integrating new technology and tools into the online educational system has significantly advanced the level of interactivity. For example, to maximize students' engagement and interaction in the online mode, the online course for this study integrated the reading and speaking homework, a presentation, a mini-skrit, and a final project into the Discussion module in Canvas, so that students could see other students' work and leave comments for them. Leaving comments for others (at least 5 entries) was required for the presentation, the mini-skrit, and the final project. The instructor was also actively involved in leaving comments on

each student's work, not only in the personal gradebook but also in the public Discussion module.

Moreover, in-person and virtual office hours and email communication with the instructor are important. The email communication category counted as part of their overall grade (5%). Students were expected to respond to the instructor's email within two days whenever any issue came up. In their course evaluations, students appreciated the instructor's communication with them (e.g., "*I have emailed her for help several times, and she is always there to reach out to!*" and "*super willing to help/give feedback, which is crucial for a foreign language course!*"). Also, the class movie day and extra-credit opportunities for participating in on- and off-campus Korean events all inspired students to interact with each other.

Interestingly, student participation on course evaluation surveys was slightly higher among those in the online class (80%) than in the in-person class (76%). This standard university survey is entirely voluntary; it is administered online outside of class, and individual responses

remain anonymous to the instructor. Therefore, the participation rate of 80% of the 25-student class is quite high, which could be interpreted as indicative of online students' strong connection to and engagement with the class.

5.3 Online Assignment Submission

Online assignment submission is beneficial for both instructors and students. Using the various tools in Canvas, instructors can reduce repetitive and mechanical grading tasks that would have to be done manually without such online tools. The automated grading function not only saves the instructors grading time and effort, but also gives students useful comments for each question if instructors add these relevant comments when creating each question. In this way, students can immediately pinpoint the source of their mistakes on each question, and instructors can spend more time giving meaningful comments. In their online course evaluations, several students valued the instructor's feedback; e.g., *“Really nice and understanding with great feedback!”* *“Love*

having ample feedback,” and “Thorough feedback for every assignment!”

5.4 Advance Notice Assignments

Based on students’ feedback and my own experience, I have several additional, brief suggestions for preparing students in advance for upcoming major assignments. These items were made into graded assignments to ensure students’ attention to the future schedule.

- (1) **Syllabus Quiz:** Having a syllabus quiz on the first day is beneficial for students to self-assess their understanding of course policies.
- (2) **Sample Quizzes or Exams:** Sample quizzes or exams are highly recommended before the actual ones, to make students adjust to the format.
- (3) **Project Draft:** Submitting a draft of midterm presentations and final projects is crucial for reminding students of these assignments and helping them prepare ahead of time.

5.5 Challenges and Limitations

Some challenges and improvements deserve to be addressed.

As mentioned earlier, the online class is always full of students and consists of many assignments. Although some assignments are graded using an automated grading system, speaking assignments, essays, and projects are still graded manually. The further development of new technologies for the grading system, or the hiring of assistant graders, would reduce the workload related to this aspect.

I acknowledge that a larger sample size would provide more solid statistical validity, although collecting a larger size for asynchronous online courses was practically difficult, given that the language courses typically have a maximum limit of 25 students. Also, my university offered only one asynchronous online section with a comparable in-person section of the same course. With the increase in asynchronous online classes, I anticipate that, eventually, more statistically significant research can be conducted with a larger sample size.

As mentioned earlier, while the same resources were available via Canvas to both online and in-person students, potential variations in attitudes, self-motivation, and autonomy of the two modes might have influenced their academic performance differently and to varying degrees. Also, the overall attendance rates and participation in the in-person class during the COVID-19 situation were slightly lower than in typical semesters. These two aspects were not thoroughly examined in this study and warrant further investigation.

6. Conclusion

Although there has been much doubt and concern about conducting fully asynchronous online courses, this study offers promising possibilities for such growing initiatives. Compared to the previous era, technologies designed for online learning have evolved significantly, and students now have greater exposure to authentic Korean language and culture through numerous online shows and media resources. Due to this trend, Korean can be effectively incorporated into

asynchronous online courses with meticulously organized course structures. Given the high popularity and robust enrollment of online courses, adopting these best practices for asynchronous online instruction can be considered a beneficial option particularly for language programs facing declining enrollment.

References

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.
(2012). Retrieved from *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012*.
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.
(2017). *The role of technology in language learning*.
Retrieved from ACTFL | The Role of Technology in Language Learning.
- Arispe, K., & Blake, R. (2012). Individual factors and successful learning in a hybrid course. *System, 40*(4), 449–65.
- Blake, R., & Delforge, A. (2007). Online language learning: The case of Spanish without walls. In B. Lafford, & R. Salaberry (Eds.), *The art of teaching Spanish: second language acquisition from research to praxis* (pp. 127–47). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

- Campbell, R.N., & Rosenthal, J. W. (2000). Heritage languages. In J.W. Rosenthal (Ed.), *Handbook of undergraduate second language education* (pp. 165–184). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Carr, M. (2014). The online university classroom: one perspective for effective student engagement and teaching in an online environment. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 14(1), 99–110.
- Chang, S-E. (2021). Exploring media curation and sociocultural competence in asynchronous language courses. *The Korean Language in America*, 24(2), 85-96.
- Chenoweth, N., Ushida, E., & Murday, K. (2006). Student learning in hybrid French and Spanish courses: an overview of language online. *CALICO Journal*, 24(1), 115–45.
- Enkin, E., & Mejías-Bikandi, E. (2017). The effectiveness of online teaching in an advanced Spanish language course. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), 176–197.

- Gascoigne, C., & Parnell, J. (2014). Comparing Enrollment and Persistence Rates in Hybrid and Traditional Post-Secondary French, *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 17(1). Retrieved from [gascoigne_parnell171.pdf \(ojdla.com\)](#).
- Hoang, D., & Hoang, T. (2022). Enhancing EFL students' academic writing skills in online learning via Google Docs-based collaboration: a mixed-methods study, *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. DOI: [10.1080/09588221.2022.2083176](#).
- Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A. (2020). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online teaching. *Educause Review*. Retrieved from <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>.

Jiang, Y., & Chun, D. (2023) Web-based intonation training helps improve ESL and EFL Chinese students' oral speech, *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 36(3), 457-485, DOI: [10.1080/09588221.2021.1931342](https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2021.1931342)

Johnshoy, M. (2013). Survey results: Challenges and advice from experienced online language teachers. Powerpoint pdf on the CARLA website. Retrieved from <http://www.carla.umn.edu/technology/tlo/survey.html>.

Kagan, O., & Dillon, K. (2001). A new perspective on teaching Russian: Focus on the heritage learner. *Slavic and East European Journal*, 45(3), 507–518.

Loewen, D. (2008). Overcoming aural proficiency: Pitfalls for heritage learners in Russian cyberspace. *Heritage Language Journal*, 6(1), 23–39.

- Money Penny, D.B., & Aldrich, R.S. (2016). Online and Face-to-Face Language Learning: A Comparative Analysis of Oral Proficiency in Introductory Spanish. *Journal of Educators Online*, 13, 105-133.
- Murphy-Judy, K., & Johnshoy, M. (2017). Who's teaching which languages online? *LALLT Journal of Language Learning Technologies*, 47, 137–167.
- Polat, M., & Erişti, B. (2019). The effects of authentic video materials on foreign language listening skill development and listening anxiety at different levels of English proficiency. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 6(1), 135-154.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33200/ijcer.567863>.
- Scida, E., & Saury, R. (2013). Hybrid Courses and Their Impact on Student and Classroom Performance: A Case Study at the University of Virginia. *CALICO Journal*, 23(3), 517-531.
<https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.v23i3.517-531>.

- Sato, E., Chen, J., & Jourdain, S. (2017). Integrating digital technology in an intensive, fully online college course for Japanese beginning learners: A standards-based, performance-driven approach. *The Modern Language Journal*, 101(4), 756-775.
- Salcedo, C. S. (2010). Comparative analysis of learning outcomes in face-to-face foreign language classes vs. language lab and online. *Journal of College Teaching and Learning*, 7(2), 43–54.
- Seaman, J., Allen, E., & Seaman, J. (2018). *Grade increase: Tracking distance education in the United States*. Babson Survey Research Group. Retrieved from <http://www.bayviewanalytics.com/reports/gradeincrease.pdf>.
- Seo, J., & Park, Y. (2022). Analysis of differences in reading comprehension ability according to the spacing variable of text. *The Journal of Korean Teacher Education*, 38, 235-254.

- Tarone, E. (2015). Online foreign language education: What are the proficiency outcomes? *Modern Language Journal*, 99, 392–393.
- Thoms, J. J. (2020). Re-envisioning L2 hybrid and online courses as digital open learning and teaching environments: Responding to a changing world. *Second Language Research & Practice*, 1, 86–98.
- Zhang, P., & Graham, S. (2020). Vocabulary learning through listening: Comparing L2 explanations, teacher codeswitching, contrastive focus-on-form and incidental learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(6), 765-784.