

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TYPES OF PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP AND MOTIVATION TO LEARN KOREAN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The number of enrollment in Korean classes has recently been reported to increase. It seems to have a relationship with the parasocial relationship among the media viewers. Parasocial relationship is known as an unmutual, one-sided relationship with the public figures among the media viewers. The society seems to have a negative stigma towards the community with parasocial relationship with Korean media figures. Hence, this research attempts to study on the relationship between the types of parasocial relationship and motivation to learn Korean language in order to overcome the stigma. This is to prove that parasocial relationship could be beneficial for the society. Therefore, this paper investigated the types of parasocial relationship as the intrinsic factor, which has more influence on the students' motivation to learn Korean language. This research studies on the level and the relationship between parasocial relation and motivation to learn Korean language among the undergraduates in Malaysia. A set of questionnaire was distributed to the respondents. Hundred and fourteen undergraduate students from three local universities, which are IIUM, UTM and UKM had responded to the survey. The students had taken or currently enrolled in Korean class at their respective universities before participating in the survey. Findings show that there is a significant relationship between both types of parasocial relationship and motivation to learn Korean language. Theoretical and practical implications were discussed further to provide insights for future studies in this area.

Keywords: Media figures, motivation, parasocial interaction, parasocial relationship

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a second language is considered common in Malaysia since we were colonized by the British long before. However, being able to acquire other foreign languages is the additional criteria that people are looking for nowadays. There are many possible reasons that motivate people to start learning foreign languages. While Chinese and Spanish are the most spoken foreign languages in the world, it seems that over the years, Korean language has taken place in the eye of the Hallyu (Korean Wave) followers. In 2018, British Broadcasting Company (BBC) has reported the statistical comparison in learning Korean from 2013 until 2016. It was announced by the Modern Language Association in the US that there was an increase of 14% in the number of students enrolled in Korean classes in between the years. An unforeseen rise in the number of people taking Korean language courses must be influenced by the global exposure of Korean pop culture. It can be seen that people were not really paying attention to learn Korean two decades ago as compared to now.

The revival of Korean Wave through globalization had caused different opinions and acceptances among the media viewers. It seems like this phenomenon has brought up new opportunities in learning foreign languages, especially Korean language, among the followers. People tend to learn Korean simply because they are attracted to the Korean pop culture such as music and movies. It started with imitating simple phrases that they often heard in the movies or TV drama and songs of their favorite band. Later on, they have developed interest in learning the language to omit the language barrier between themselves and their favorite celebrities and fictional characters. With the advancement of the Internet, it is getting much easier for the media viewers to access the Korean music and movies. This makes them able to have repeated encounters with their favorite media figures. After the media viewers had repeatedly viewed the media figures, it turns out that they could relate with them and started to feel attached and close with certain celebrities or fictional characters, which later on created parasocial relationships (Gannon, 2018).

However, the society seems to have different opinions regarding the media users' behaviour. They appeared to have a negative view on parasocial relationships, whereby their concern is that the media viewers are too obsessed with the media figures especially Korean celebrities or fictional characters. Hence, people who try to learn Korean language are often being misjudged by the society as being fanatic rather than getting interested in foreign language. They are often being compared with other foreign language learners as people claimed that other foreign languages such as Mandarin and Japanese are more beneficial for business and professional purposes. This is probably because Chinese and Japan have brought to light on the strong influence on soft power in terms of economy and culture as compared to Korean (Heng, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation to learn Korean Foreign Language

Lai (2011) described motivation as a reason for certain behaviors due to a person's own strong willpower. The enthusiasm has pushed forwards the behavior towards a certain aim in achieving something. According to Armstrong (2010), there are two major types of motivation, which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is the external inducement that motivates the individuals to do something. The author further explained that

extrinsic motivation sometimes does not last long as much as intrinsic motivation because the dependency towards the reward system is high.

Meanwhile, intrinsic motivation is different from extrinsic motivation. Individuals' internal incentives had generated their inner interest to challenge themselves in achieving their goals with no anticipation of rewards except for their own sake and self-determination (Armstrong, 2010). The same study from Zubairi and Sarudin (2009), found the reason for them to have intrinsic motivation is their interest in associating with people of different cultures and languages. Their finding has shown that Korean and Spanish languages were the most chosen foreign languages learned based on intrinsic motivation.

Types of Parasocial Relationship

Parasocial relationship is a theory, which has been studied for many years yet many of the researchers still could not properly define the term. However, there are similarities found in each definition. Literally, "parasocial relationship", (n.d.) is a form of one-sided, face-to-face interaction through media. Meanwhile, Chung and Cho (2014) added up to the definition of parasocial relationship as having an unmutual relationship with the public figures. This is because public figures do not know the existence of the media viewers in person and are not tied to the relationship either. In contrast to the media viewers, they want to believe that they had a close or to the extent of romantic relationship with the media figures. This definition is supported with another additional view by former research that defined parasocial relationships as an attachment that occurs towards people that always make an appearance in the media such as public figures, actors and celebrities (Giles, 2002). In his study, he divided parasocial relationship into three different categories that related to it;

- i. Parasocial relationship between the media users and the real-life human.
- ii. Parasocial relationship between the media users and the fictional character.
- iii. Parasocial relationship between media users and the fictional non-human character.

Nonetheless, past research has found that different gender perceived parasocial relationships differently. Wang, Fink and Cai (2008) argued that men involved in parasocial relationships due to loneliness while women formed parasocial relationships to cater to the lack of interpersonal communication. Despite having a lack of interpersonal relationship in real life, some individuals may feel comfortable with virtual face-to-face interaction hence allows for their involvement in the parasocial relationship. On the other hand, previous research (Laken, 2009; Shen, 2009) found that females are more likely to be involved in parasocial interaction with media figures and celebrities compared to male.

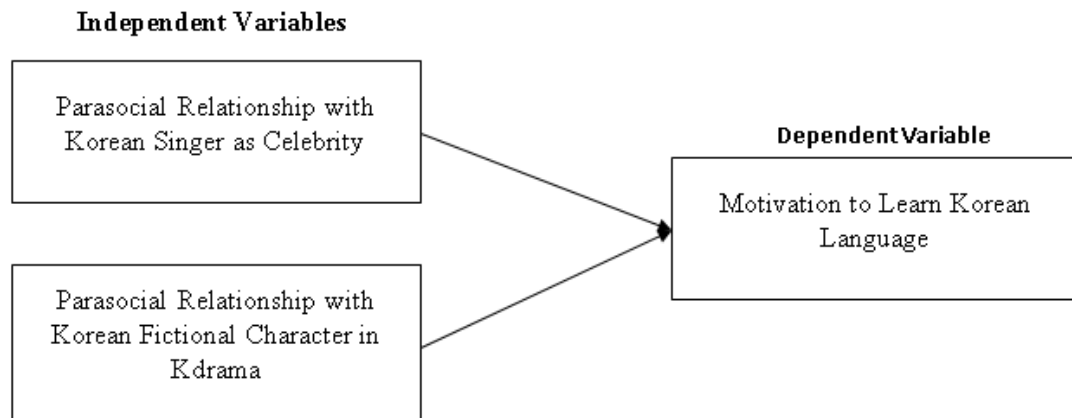


Figure 2. 1: Relationship between Types of Parasocial Relationship with Motivation to Learn Korean Language

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research used correlation type of research analyzing the relationship between two variables, namely independent and dependent variables. The independent variables for this study are types of parasocial relationship with Korean celebrities and fictional characters and the dependent variable for this study is motivation to learn Korean language.

Population and Sampling

Population is defined as a group of targeted respondents that the research planned to study. However, only a sample of population were in order to generalize the study (Majid, 2018). Therefore, the population of this study was local university students in Malaysia who had taken or currently taking the Korean classes in their respective universities.

The sampling technique chosen for this research was purposive sampling. This research was focusing on the local universities students who enrolled in Korean classes as the participants. This is aligned with the dependent variable of this study that is motivation to learn Korean language among the local university students.

Research Instrument

In this research, the instrument used to collect the data was a set of questionnaires that was adopted and adapted from previous research that was in line with the objectives of this study. However, due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and the issuance of Restricted Movement Order (RMO) in March 2020, the data were collected through online form (Google form). The online form was distributed through Whatsapp.

There were four sections in the questionnaire, which are Section A for demographic profile, Section B for Parasocial Relationship with Korean Singer as Celebrity, Section C for Parasocial Relationship with Korean Fictional Character in Kdrama and Section D for Motivation to Learn Korean Language

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Variable	Descriptive	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	17	14.9
	Female	97	85.1
University	IIUM, Pagoh	31	27.2
	UKM, Bangi	56	49.1
	UTM, Skudai	27	23.7
Age	18-22	97	85.1
	23-27	17	14.9
	28-32	0	0.0
	33-37	0	0.0
Level of Korean Language	Level 1 (Beginner)	87	76.3
	Level 2 (Intermediate)	23	20.2
	Level 3 (Advanced)	2	1.8
	Other	2	1.8

As shown in Table 1 above, there were 97 female respondents, which is equivalent to 85.1%, followed by male with only 17 respondents with 14.9%. It can be seen that the majority of the respondents who learned Korean language are female as compared to male. With regard to the universities, 31 (27.2%) of the respondents were students of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Pagoh Campus, 56 (49.1%) of the respondents were students from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Bangi and the least respondents were from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Skudai with only 27 (23.7%) of them. Meanwhile, 85.1 % of the respondents were aged between 18-22 years old and another 14.9 % were between 23-27 years old. Majority of the university students with 76.3% were in Level 1 for Beginner, while another 20.1% of them were in Level 2 for Intermediate, very least number of the students with only 1.8% were in Level 3 for Advanced as well as those who self-study.

Table 2: Correlation between Type of Parasocial Relationship and Motivation to learn Korean Language

No.	Variables	SD	Mean	1	2
1	Korean Celebrity	.70	3.75		
2	Korean Fictional Character	.87	3.70	.653**	
3	Motivation	.61	4.34	.478**	.538**

Table 2 shows the result of the inter-correlation among the variables involved in this study. Most of the variables have moderate correlation while others are highly correlated. The significance of the correlation indicates the extent of variables to change depending on other variables.

From the results, there is a high positive correlation between Korean celebrity and Korean fictional characters ($r=.653$, $p<0.01$). Meanwhile, the correlation between the parasocial relationship (Korean singer as celebrity and Korean fictional character in Kdrama) and the dependent variable were also established. Both of the independent variables show moderate

correlation with the dependent variable (motivation to learn Korean language). From the findings, the Korean celebrity shows a moderate positive relationship with motivation to learn Korean language ($r=.478$, $p<0.01$). Similarly, Korean fictional characters also show a moderate correlation with the motivation to learn Korean language ($r=.538$, $p<0.01$)

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Standardized Coefficients BETA
Korean singer	.222*
Korean fictional character	.392**
R	.563
R ²	.317
Adjusted R	.305
F Change	25.791
Significance F Change	.000
Durbin Watson	1.751

Table 3 shows the results of multiple regressions between the type of parasocial relationship and motivation to learn Korean language. Based on the table, the F value of 25.791 indicates the significance ($p<0.05$). The F value helps to show the details of the relationship between the regression and the parasocial relationship. The R² of 31.7% explains the variance in the motivation to learn Korean language, which was predicted based on the type of parasocial relationship. From the findings, all variables of type of parasocial relationship are significant in motivating the students to learn Korean language. Therefore, hypotheses are supported.

Based on the findings, both types of parasocial relationships have an impact on the motivation to learn Korean language among the university students. Even though parasocial relationships with Korean fictional characters and motivation to learn Korean are more significant compared to parasocial relationships with Korean singers, both of them illustrate a positive relationship on motivation to learn Korean language. Previous study has stated similar research on fanatic fans of Japanese anime and Harry Potter series. They have adopted the language from the anime and the series to be used within their community of discourse. In addition to supporting the statement, Fukunaga (2006) in her study found that Japanese media viewers were motivated to learn Korean language from the Kdrama.

Previous study done by Song and Pornsima (2017) where positive attitudes towards Korean celebrities are seen as an intrinsic motivation in learning Korean language. In addition towards the positive attitudes, Chappius (2014) stated that parasocial relationships are high likely to occur among the community with the same common interest and goals. Hence, being involved intensively in Korean pop culture could motivate the community to learn Korean language due to their enthusiasm in following the trend (Song & Pornsima, 2017).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Parasocial relationships should not be viewed as negative and the stigma towards Korean fans among the society should change. Parasocial relationships should be viewed as a motivation to learn foreign languages. In order to motivate people, especially the media viewers, to learn Korean language in a better way, intrinsic factors should be included in teaching methods. Modern ways of introducing new vocabulary and daily conversation also can be done without fully depending on the textbook. Lecturers or teachers should consider using the latest songs

of any Korean singer that the students can relate to in the class to boost the students' motivation. Due to the parasocial relationship that they had with the singer, it could enhance their motivation to learn Korean as they feel more connected. Parasocial relationships also occur between the media viewers and Korean fictional characters especially in Korean drama. Similar to parasocial relationships with Korean singers, this type of parasocial should not be viewed negatively. It is proven that parasocial relationships with Korean fictional characters in Kdrama helps to motivate the students to learn Korean language. This is because through watching the drama, students find it easier to learn the language phonetically. Nevertheless, they were motivated to learn Korean through watching the drama in the first place, hence, it can be a good effort to include selected Korean drama clips into the course outline for Korean classes.

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