

The expectations and experiences of Korean  
International Students  
in New Zealand tertiary education

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# Purpose of the research

- Assist in process of 'internationalization'
- Provide research findings in this area with qualitative research
- Point to improvements in care of Korean International students in New Zealand tertiary organizations

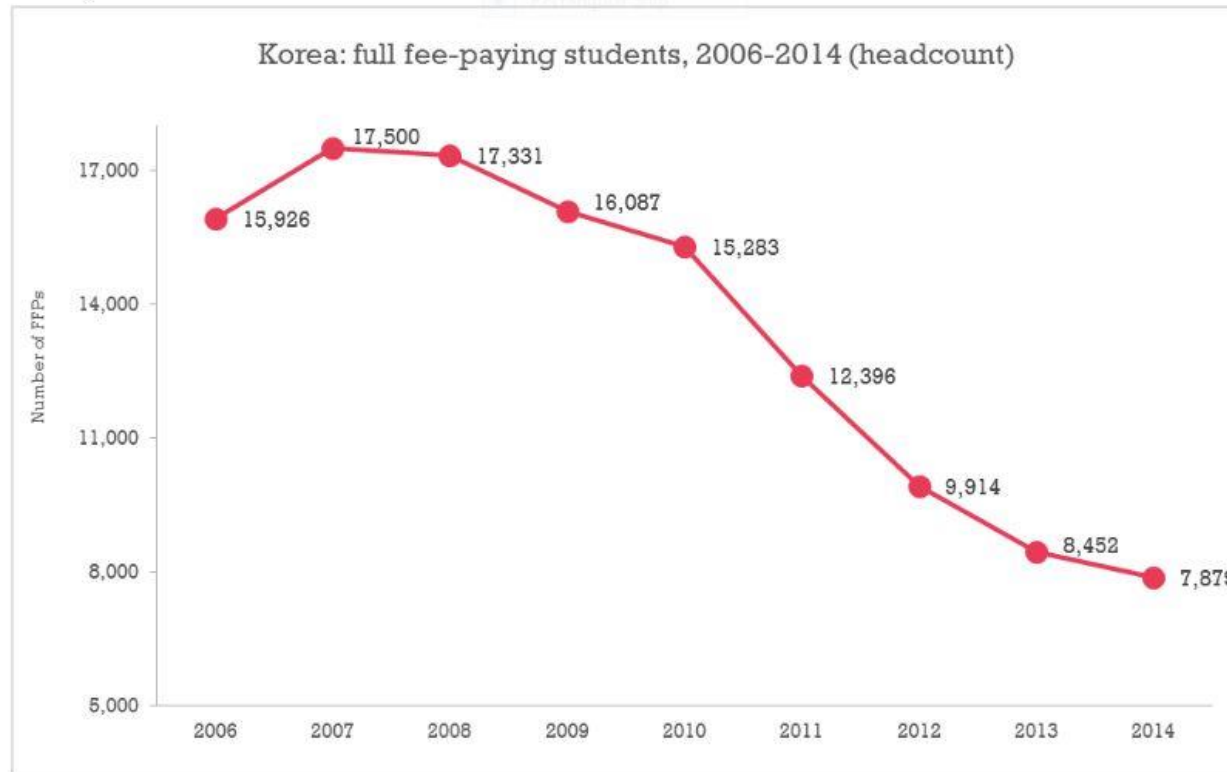
# Outline of presentation

- Background to the research - RL
- Research methods - JY
- Research participants – profiles / data -JY
- Three case studies – JY & RL
- Findings – RL & JY

# Literature review – main articles and resources

- For factual background:
- Factsheet Korea (2015) Department of Education New Zealand
- 7,879 Korean international full fee-paying students (in all sectors Primary schools to PTEs, ITPs and Universities) studied in New Zealand in 2014, down 7% (-573) compared to 2013.
- Korean international students in ITPs constitute 3.8% of all Korean students in New Zealand. (Total in 2014 – 303)
- 77% of all Korean students are in Auckland; 3% in Waikato.

Full year student numbers 2006-2014



[Source: Levy full fee-paying stats]

- 7,879 international full fee-paying Korea students studied in New Zealand in 2014, down 7% (-573) compared to 2013. The continued trend of declining student numbers was evident in 2014.

# Literature review – main articles and resources contd.

- On doing qualitative research
- - Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P. & Chik, A. (2014). Narrative enquiry in language teaching and learning research. New York: Routledge.  
(especially chapter 2 – Oral narratives)
- Burnard, P. (1991). A method of analysing interview transcripts in qualitative research. *Nurse Education Today* (199) 11, 461-466. UK: Longman Group.

# Literature review – main articles and resources contd.

- Li, M. (2016). Learning the Rules of the Game: Issues affecting academic acculturation of Asian International Students in New Zealand Universities. Chapter 3 in Bista, K. & Foster, C. (2016). Exploring the social and academic experiences of international students in higher education institutions.  
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Li Mengsheng - Senior Lecturer at the School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing, Massey University (Wellington)

# Research methods

- 11 interviews - 9 face to face / 2 video link interviews with Korea
- Audio recording of interviews, including the video-link interviews
- Transcription of interviews – including use of voice-recognition software, Dragon Naturally Speaking
- Immersion in the data and data analysis with categories



# Research Participants:

ROK = Republic of Korea  
(South Korea)

No.	Gender	Year of arrival in NZ	Age at arrival	Number of years in NZ	Tertiary study in	City at time of research interview
1	F	2010	19	1	Hamilton	Seoul, ROK
2	F	2002	13	12	Hamilton	Seongnam, ROK
3	F	2009	17	7	Hamilton	Hamilton
4	F	2002	20	1+8	Hamilton	Hamilton
5	F	2012	20	4	Hamilton	Hamilton
6	F	2007	13	9	Hamilton	Hamilton
7	F	2008	14	8	Auckland	Auckland
8	F	2011	15	5	Auckland	Auckland
9	F	2005	7	11	Auckland	Auckland
10	F	2007	19	9	Auckland	Auckland

# Research instrument:

## Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews

- The questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews covered four areas of participant experience:
  - 1. Profile information
  - 2. Before coming to New Zealand
  - 3. Experience of life and study in New Zealand
  - 4. Post-study experience in New Zealand and Korea.

# Categories emerging from the research data

1. Reasons for coming to NZ – families' and students' expectations
2. Pre-tertiary study life and study in New Zealand
3. Experiences of tertiary study in New Zealand
4. Experiences of life in New Zealand
5. Post-tertiary study experiences in New Zealand and in Korea
6. Reflections on fulfilment or non-fulfilment of expectations
7. Reflections / recommendations

# Participant 1: Susan

- "I didn't expect the university life would be like that. The lecturer was just doing PowerPoint and just reading the slides and then finished....we just put assignments in the assignment box...I did a lot on it, but she just gave me D, so I was like 'What am I learning?' .....I felt disappointed and empty."
- ".....do they know what they are doing now?...because I don't know....How do they know what to do or what they need to do things...?"
- "I cried a lot. I don't know why I cried, but I just cried a lot at that time. I was very annoyed with everything. Yeah, easily annoyed....I wasn't sleeping and every time I was so messing up...."
- "... when I said I want to quit the university, he was really angry. He was like 'Can't you just stay there and keep doing the same thing? You've been there for five years, what's wrong with that...?', but it was different....."

- **"....But I got really sick at that time. Like really bad headache and all over my body...like all sorts of chiropractic things....."**
- **"I was doing all by myself and that was the hard thing for me..... I was staying by myself , so I needed to do everything by myself like rental and money thing....I was so messing up and I couldn't endure that I think." ...**
- **"I don't know what I'm missing exactly, but sometimes I feel that if I do assignments in Korea, I can do it better. If I have to use a lot of academic words, that makes me so....frustrated. Sometimes, the lecturers say some jokes and other people laugh, but I still don't get it...."**
- **"...honestly in university not really, not very sure...but at high school, yes....diversity is quite good for me... I think..."**

# Participant 2: Sumin

- Arrival in NZ/ Expectations
- “Actually I majored in English language and literature at university in Korea and I wanted to improve my skills in English, especially my speaking skills so I chose to go abroad.”
- “The first reason was my little brother. The second reason was that compared to other countries New Zealand had a good exchange rate. So that decision was economic. I could afford to study in New Zealand.”
- “I had to support my younger brother who was at high school. I got very tired. It affected my studies and the way I often felt. Often I had to wake my brother up in the morning, which was not always easy, and I needed to prepare our lunchboxes. This gave me a lot of stress.”

## Participant 2: Sumin

- “I had a problem speaking with other people. Also I felt that many people had a problem speaking with me as an Asian person. That kind of experience made me feel embarrassed and awkward. And even at times humiliated.”
- “Most people treated me as an Asian girl but one of my teachers showed a special understanding of me as a Korean person.”
-

# Participant 2: Sumin

- Tertiary Education Experiences
- “I wasn’t used to portfolios. In my experience of learning English in Korea, my university did not require that amount of essay writing.”
- “It was quite hard to get used to the New Zealand accent. Korean students are used to listening to American accents. They are often uncomfortable listening to Australian or New Zealand accents.”
- “It would be good if some support staff were Korean. When Korean students arrive in New Zealand... they are often having difficulty to speak to others.”



# Participant 3: Katie

- "I was so scared...when I see some foreign people...it was so difficult to me. My personality is always to be shy... when they look at me I feel scared. I don't know why. It's fine now..." "I always cried every day. Yes, I thought I wanted to back to Korea....."
- "I was usually quiet, but when my classmates ask me, I usually do it. But I usually so afraid when I was speaking in front of other people. **When I stood in front of other people, I was so panic. I can't say anything. I was panic. I was so panic.** .....it was very difficult at first. " "Now, I think I'm getting better, but not comfortable....but it's fine.."
- "**I don't know what I should do.** What should I study? Just tell me what I should do and the teacher said, no you should do it yourself." "**In Korea teachers never ask me anything.** They just teach. There's only one way....., **but in NZ, teachers ask a lot of questions** during the class time. It was a new experience. It increased my involvement"

- “..... but in my university **they never do that..... I feel it’s good. Sometimes, I don’t feel like coming to school.**”
- “...in New Zealand, I have to do everything. I have to do cleaning, paying bills and control myself....”
- “.....when I'm staying in Korea, it's fine.....**everything is fine and my body... it's really fine.** But I don't know why in New Zealand, I get a cold.....when I see the doctor, he said you need to take a rest. I always did, but it still happens. But now I’m getting used to it. **When I feel stressed I usually get sick...during exam time or the assessment time especially.... .”**

# Findings

## Expected / not Experienced

- Significant friendship with local people
- Socialising with local people
- Full acceptance from local people
- Living arrangements without some tensions

# Educational Issues

- Language problems
- Difficulties adjusting to teaching styles
- Difficulties with essay writing
- Difficulties with speaking demands
- Dissatisfaction with their grades
- Uncertainly about the worth and international recognition of their qualification

# Personal Issues

- A significant number of the participants experienced
  - Difficulties with spoken English, especially with New Zealand slang, idioms, jokes
  - Family pressures to do well
  - Financial issues
  - Frequent decreased motivation
  - Lack of confidence in most social situations
  - Feelings of isolation
  - Cultural shock e.g. with unfamiliar food
  - Health concerns
  - Homesickness, loneliness

# Findings

- Our findings confirm Li Mengsheng's research findings showing that for Korean international students there are two interrelated processes going on –
  - adaption to New Zealand culture in general
  - adjustment to academic culture in particular
- In most cases the more a student has adjusted to New Zealand culture, forming associations with both New Zealand and Korean peers, the more they adjust to the demands of tertiary education in New Zealand. In most (but not all cases) this can be seen as an outcome of time - the number of years they have spent in New Zealand.

# Positive points

- New Zealand natural environment
- Staff people who cared and who demonstrated understanding of the Korean people and Korean peninsula
- Key role of Korean peer / community group organizations in providing social support

# Perceived needs and recommendations from participants

- - Pastoral care
  - 1. Appropriate orientation programmes specifically for Korean students
  - 2. Korean staff people in international student support teams



# References

- Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P. & Chik, A. (2014). Narrative enquiry in language teaching and learning research. New York: Routledge.
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