

Southbound: Mapping International Students as Koreanists in an Age of New Southern Policy

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Abstract

This research examined two central concepts of Korean Southbound policy: 1) Filipinos going to South Korea and Koreans relocating to the Philippines for educational purposes; and 2) Southeast Asia, especially the Philippines, as the focus of President Moon Jaein's New Southern Policy. Narratives of international students as modern-day Koreanists were investigated from the perspective of their study abroad, daily life challenges, cultural interaction with locals, and the perceived impact of the New Southern Policy on Korean students in the Philippines and Filipino students in South Korea. Findings will be utilized as policy input to enhance the New Southern Policy in terms of exchange and mobility, multiculturalism, and internationalized education. Also highlighted was how students project themselves as contemporary Koreanists in the Philippines and South Korea as individualized advocates and promoters of Korean language, culture, and society in diverse contexts. Practices and mechanisms to promote Korean Studies in the Philippines should likewise be identified as well as potential opportunities for Filipino students to serve as Korean Studies ambassadors, further globalizing Korean studies discourse.

Keywords: International students, Korean studies, New Southern Policy, Study abroad

1. Introduction

South Korea's New Southern Policy (NSP) is seen as a move to expand and involve member-states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and India in investment, diplomacy, and cooperation mechanisms. Since its inception in 2017, NSP has pushed for transformation in the region's economic and political landscape. Various exchanges highlight policy provisions in reaching out to South Korea's neighboring countries. As NSP is seen to create an impact on economic cooperation and political relations among nations involved, it is also expected to contribute to improved ties amid contemporary landscape (Nurlaili & Linggarwati, 2020), featuring electronic and digitized approaches (Hoo, 2021). With NSP at hand, South Korea has officially recognized ASEAN-member states and India as key allies in the region, three focus points will be emphasized as pillars – prosperity, people, and peace. Korean – ASEAN relations span decades and this continues to grow owing to affirmative regional policies. Interestingly, the policy is seen as an avenue to champion mutual benefits through various cooperation venues such as culture and economics, instead of the linear propagation of Korean pop culture or Hallyu (Butsaban, 2020).

The dawn of President Moon Jaein's NSP signals careful scrutiny of stakeholder narratives to advance diplomatic ties between South Korea and ASEAN member-states. It is high time to maximize economic and human resource opportunities to which people-to-people exchange and international mobility are central concerns. Diversifying foreign policy strategies may be concretized by attempts that directly look at international students.

'South-bound' in this research captures two central concepts: (1) Filipinos going to South Korea and Koreans heading south to the Philippines for educational purposes, and (2) focusing on Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, as the direction of the New Southern Policy of President Moon Jaein. As NSP highlights regional cooperation while pursuing mutual interests between South Korea and ASEAN member-states, the context of international students can be seen as a tangible aspect in promoting security, peace, sustainability, and prosperity in the framework of NSP.

The international academic mobility between the Philippines and South Korea is evident on the growing number of students who pursue studies abroad. The internationalization of education exhibits a phenomenon of global scale and learning institutions worldwide, particular in the higher education sector continue to admit foreign applications in different levels of academic studies. Jang (2018) noted that the Philippines becomes a destination for Korean learners to study English due to the 'emotionally supportive environments' the experience provides.

The Philippine education system accounts to approximately 30, 000 Korean students in different academic levels (Choe, 2016). Korean students who stay in the Philippines for academic pursuits are mostly attributed to English language learning while others are in formal schooling. A study by Jang (2018) noted that Korean students learn English in the Philippines before moving to a Western English-speaking nation. Quinto et al. (2019) reported the following aspects that entice Koreans to study in the Philippines: low matriculation fees, low cost of living, availability of competent ESL tutors. Cruz and Parina (2017) noted that the Philippines is indeed an “effective venue” to accommodate English learners from foreign countries.

Filipino students in South Korea, on the other hand, pursue academic degrees through financial assistance and scholarships. These individuals contribute to the growing number of international students in South Korea, with fields of studying that vary from business, engineering, and the sciences. Moreover, a study confirms that Filipino women attend Korean universities as compared to their male counterparts (Sarmiento, 2017). Through the Filipino scholars’ organization in Korea, Ancho (2019) highlighted the crucial role of Filipino and foreign students in strengthening the future of Korea’s international education context.

Hence, the Filipino and Korean exchange students qualify to be perceiving agents of firsthand multifaceted experiences, and spectral socio-economic and educational influences, most especially the Korean wave from the South Korea to the Philippines, and even vice versa. The study investigates the narratives of international students as modern-day Koreanists through the lens of their study abroad experiences, daily life challenges, cultural interaction with the locals, and the perceived impact of the New Southern Policy to Korean students in the Philippines and Filipino students in South Korea. Findings of the study will be utilized as policy inputs to enhancing the New Southern Policy in terms of people exchange and mobility, multiculturalism, and internationalization of education.

The study also highlights how students project themselves as contemporary Koreanists, both in the Philippines and South Korea, who in their own ways have contributed, advocated and/ or advanced Korean language, culture, and society in various contexts. By looking at this, it is expected that practices and mechanisms to promote Korean Studies in the Philippines will be identified. Also, opportunities and ways forward for Filipino students to act as Korean Studies ambassadors will be established. This aspect will serve as a springboard in the globalization of Korean studies discourse.

Furthermore, the globalization of Korean Studies in local and regional spheres necessitates the development of high quality and competent experts who uphold the promotion, awareness, and interests in Korean language, history, culture, and society. It is undeniable that international

students have significantly contributed to these efforts in various capacities, thus, looking at their narratives provides future authentic directions to raise the bar of quality of and globalizing Korean studies.

The main objective of the study is ‘to map international students in the Philippines and South Korea as contemporary Koreanists in the light of the New Southern Policy (NSP).’ Therefore, the following are the specific objectives of the study: (1) Identify challenges faced by international scholars in terms of daily living, cultural aspects, academic concerns, and others; (2) document their perceptions on the impact of NSP as they pursue education abroad; (3) capture how international students contribute to the globalization of Korean Studies both in the Philippines and South Korea as they project themselves as Koreanists; and (4) propose inputs for the enhancement of the NSP in terms of people exchange, mobility, multiculturalism, and internationalization of education.

2. Literature Review

This literature review presents the purpose of New Southern Policy (NSP) and its impact in the Philippines. This will start with the discussion of NSP, the impact of NSP on South Korea in the Philippines, and the current scenario concerning multiculturalism and the internationalization of education.

The NSP aims to realize mutual prosperity and peace not only in Korea but in East Asia and the world as well. The policy includes seeking to elevate Korea's relations with ASEAN member states and India in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres among others (Committee & Policy, n.d.). It is anchored on three major pillars of people, peace, prosperity, the policy eventually aspires to promote ties with ASEAN member states and South Korea in the political, economic, social, and cultural realms (Ancho et al., 2021). NSP includes contributing to strengthening capacity building for students, teachers, and public officials from the NSP target countries by increasing student exchanges through scholarship programs and invitational programs for college students as well as offering public officials more training opportunities (Committee & Policy, n.d.).

Ancho et al. (2021) believed that NSP is projected as a vehicle in strengthening and harmonizing the relationship between South Korea and the ASEAN community. They stated further, that, “it upholds various provisions that span the political, economic, and social spectrum, including the education arena”. The concept of ‘exchange’ in NSP could be considered a vital practice in terms of inbound and outbound academic programs involving South Korea and ASEAN target countries.

The countries with the largest foreign arrivals coming to the Philippines are South Korea, China, the US, Japan, and Australia, but making South Korea consistently be the top 1 as there were about 1.8 million foreign arrivals (Versoza et al., 2020).

Miralao (2007) also emphasizes that intensified economic cooperation between the Philippines and South Korea contributes to the recent wave of Korean migrations to the Philippines, with some Korean company personnel and businessmen moving to the Philippines and bringing their families along with them. A study by Versoza et al. (2020) analyzed and discovered an increasing trend of South Korean arrivals over time in the Philippines.

Yogeeswaran and Dasgupta (2014) noted that multiculturalism can be presented in terms of broad societal goals of cultural equality, tolerance, and inclusion. The study of Suplico-Jeong & Arcilla (2013U) identified four factors that encouraged South Koreans to study in the Philippines, one of these factors includes the Philippine Environment as a multicultural environment which may include multicultural education.

Multicultural education involves changes in the total school or educational environment; it is not limited to curricular changes (Banks & Banks, 2004). It is also a reform movement that is trying to change the schools and other educational institutions so that students from all social classes, gender, races, language, and cultural groups will have an equal opportunity to learn.

In 2009, about 3.7 million tertiary students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2011). In a survey by the Philippine Bureau of Immigration (2011), South Koreans topped the list (around 11, 612) from the reported more than 26,000 foreign students in the Philippines as of August 2011 (Suplico-Jeong & Arcilla, 2013).

NSP's impact has been felt in the Philippines due to the presence of a growing number of inbound Korean students as presented in some of the studies. On contrary, there is a dire of studies on Filipino students in South Korea. Thus, an investigation on their experiences and welfare of the Filipinos in South Korea in comparison with the Korean in the Philippines is one of the aims of this study.

3. Methodology

To gain a more in-depth understanding of the narratives of international students, the study which was anchored on the qualitative research approach specifically employed a multiple case study design. Participants of the study were 6 Filipino and 6 Korean international students who were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) they have graduated / have been pursuing their undergraduate and graduate studies (Bachelor, MA or PhD) in the Philippines

and in South Korea for at least two years when the study was conducted; and (2) they have been enrolled either in government or non-government tertiary institutions located in the Philippines or South Korea. Participants were identified through the referral of some friends of the researchers.

Data were gathered through online interviews with the participants using the self-made interview guide validated by the experts in the field of education, internationalization of education, policy studies, and research. Interviews which took approximately 50.5 minutes revolved around the narratives of the international students as modern-day Koreanists. Highlights of the interviews were their study abroad experiences, daily life challenges, cultural interaction with the locals, and the perceived impact of the New Southern Policy to Korean students in the Philippines and Filipino students in South Korea. The interview was conducted in English and Filipino languages and following are the sample items asked during the interview:

- (1) What made you decide to study in the Philippines/Korea?*
- (2) How would you describe the Filipino/Korean culture?*
- (3) Do you know any diplomatic/economic/political policy concerning the Philippines and Korea? If yes, which are those that you find interesting and relevant?*
- (4) As an international student, do you believe that you have an active role in strengthening interests about Korean language, culture, and society? Why or why not?*

Prior to the actual data gathering, a pilot test was conducted. The recorded interview was transcribed and sent back to the participants for member checking. Data were analyzed thematically which highlighted how the students project themselves as contemporary Koreanists, both in the Philippines and in South Korea, who in their own ways have advocated and advanced Korean language, culture, and society in various contexts.

As the study presents no ethical threats to participants, proper observation of protocols in the conduct of the study was observed. Participants of the study were not from the vulnerable population, thus, the safety and security of participants and researchers were guaranteed. All individuals involved in the study signed an informed consent in relation to their participation in the research. An ethical clearance was also obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

International Students' Checklist: Culture, Language, Education, and Economy as Study Journey's Decision Determinants

Brave are those who choose to be refined within borders of their motherland, but braver are those who travel beyond their territories and put together their dreams in foreign soils. This sets a defining line between individuals who study abroad from those who do not. In this study,

such braver students shall be termed as 'international students', particularly Korean international student (KIS) and Filipino international student (FIS).

Culture as a decision determinant. Long before flying across borders to study, international students (ISs) face the obstacle of decision making. They embrace the provocation of selecting not only the program to take, but also the country they want to venture in. Culture has always been a major consideration in the selection of the place to study at (Marangell et al., 2018). Needless to say, there are two angles to see, cultural aesthetics, promotion, and congruence. The former is indeed an influential factor. The practices within a society affect all its facets, including learning institutions from basic to higher education. As the school is a social microcosm, it reflects what happen among citizens in general. It is a social pitcher where culture is funneled into. Hence, students who study abroad consider this factor. If the culture is enticing, then it is probable that they will pursue studying in the country of option and if it is not, then they will most likely hesitate to push through especially if the nation exhibits norms that are taboo to ISs.

No matter how enticing its culture is, the country will not be chosen as a place of study if it is not well promoted. The clear image that a country makes, shares to the possibility of being selected as a country to study at (Novoselova, 2019). A government who supports its people in the promotion of education itself and through culture, does a solid move to the internationalization of education. Moreover, congruence in culture is also a factor. Similar norms such as family values, community practices, social conformities, and the likes are seen as factor to consider. Overlapping cultural elements of the target and home countries bring a feeling of usualness and to some extent comfort to the ISs. As cultural similarities are sought after, differences are also cherished as they may be positive traits absent in the ISs' own country (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Nonetheless, there are also differences that are deemed as taboos. These become a 'cultural turn-off', a ground for prospect ISs to refuse studying in a host country. Nevertheless, even if there are clear similarities and differences between or among cultures, ISs with their families decide to select the target country to experience both culture and in the cases of multinational families, sense of cultural heritage. This is evident to Participant 3 (KIS).

Participant 3 (KIS) shared his family decision:

"First of all, it was more like a cultural decision, so my parents agreed that as half Filipino and half Korean, it is right that we experience both cultures. First Korean culture and Filipino then we would get to choose on the later part of our life which culture we would like to experience like

for college it was a case that I had a choice to choose whether to study in Philippines, continue my studies in Philippines or return to Korea.”

Language as a decision determinant. Aside from culture, another facet to view is language. English language, being the lingua franca of the world is the primary and practical tool to address language barriers among individuals within any international encounters, especially in the academe (Chapple, 2015). This is also the reason English language proficiency tests are requirements to become qualified for an international program in foreign universities. English may be convenient within the school or the university, but not always beyond the vicinities of the institutions. Learning such Germanic language is insufficient especially if the language is not native to the country. In non-native English speaking countries, the locals whom the ISs deal with daily, speak the vernacular which may be a hindrance for the students to transact with them. If the language spoken is of the same family tree such as French and Italian, both Romance languages, similarities in lexicon, syntax, and pragmatics may help the ISs to cope up with linguistic perplexities; nevertheless, the problem may begin when the native language of the ISs is of the different family tree such as Filipino language, an Austronesian language, and Korean language, an East Asian language (Lee & Ramsey, 2011; Jubilado, 2004). Such language-wise factors are considered in the selection of a country to study at.

Educational and economic landscapes as decision determinants. Another factors are the country's educational and economic landscapes. It is undeniable that the governing educational policies of a country and the quality of its education counts tremendously. When the country's schools and universities perform well locally and internationally, their performance entices the ISs, hoping that they will experience such education for themselves and for their home countries (Paik, 2015; Abubakar et al., 2010). In addition, all the state's transactions are dependent on its economy as it defines the finance and resource power fueling such transactions and this includes cost of living. ISs (though not limited to them) see this as a great factor to consider. Daily needs entail monetary demands. In other words, the cost of living in a country must jive with the financial capacity of the ISs. To sustain living and pursuing a course, the former must not raise above the latter (Grant et al., 2021). When the monetary demands are low, the chances of survival become high, leading to the accomplishment of the degree programs that these students take.

Lessons of Life Episodes: Impressions and Experiences in the Host Countries and Learning Institutions

Impression as a point of comparison. Initial impression on the host country may not be as significant as the real impact when international students (ISs) stay in the country, but this serves as a point of comparison to elucidate and somehow evaluate the depth of their familiarity before and after living in such country for a span of time. Studying in a country is an episode of learning and acculturation as the ISs learn and adapt the existing culture of the host country. Every first time is painful. When ISs surpass such challenge and adapt such cultural element, acculturation begins (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Hence, initially ISs may find it exasperating to adjust, but it shall come to pass. In fact, as Participant 3 (KIS) responded, “Of course, in the beginning it was quite hard for me to adjust from Korean to Filipino culture but then as I got used to it, it was more comfortable, it was more welcoming.” Initial positive and/or negative impressions may last when proven right and may fade when found wrong through experience. When the impression is positive, appreciation follows. In fact, Participant 3 (KIS) added, “As I experienced my whole high school in the Philippines, I got accustomed to the culture here. It was more relaxed.” This is also true to Participant 2 (KIS) as she observed how happiness dominates the cultural ambiance of the Filipino people.

Describing her impression on the Philippines, Participant 2 (KIS) said:

“Everyone seems so happy like when I was just passing the street everyone’s dancing and there’s always peoples singing on the street like karaoke. I like the atmosphere of the Philippines like ambiance of the Philippines; they’re happy despite of their situation, their economic situation or their national situation. It looks like it doesn’t matter to them.”

Among those who studied in South Korean, the participants (FIS) find the host country exhibiting safety, law abiding, and well disciplined. They really appreciated these attitudes among the locals wishing that these were also evident among their home country’s citizens. Participant 7 (FIS) highlighted the feeling of safety staying in the host country while Participant 8 (FIS) also shared how disciplined Koreans were as they fell in line and followed traffic rules.

Participant 7 (FIS) narrated her life episode experience:

“I am actually surprised. Their society is very safe and secured that you will not get worried that there may be culprits or rapists. Though there may be cases such as that, but compared to the Philippines, it is safer here.”

Participant 8 (FIS) also added her own observation. She said:

“Koreans amaze me. They are disciplined and follow even the simplest rules such as falling in line when getting on the bus and when in a restaurant, disposing wastes. They really follow the rules. They always wait for their turns. Nobody overtakes others in a line. That’s what I am amazed about.”

As mentioned previously, the impression is vital to see how deep and far an individual learns about the host country. Nonetheless, experiencing the country through studying is more significant than initial impression as per ISs are concerned. The challenges that encounter and surpass allow them to grow as individuals, adopted and global citizens. In the previous discussion on study journey decision determinants, it is mentioned that culture, language, education, and economy are the core considerations in choosing a host country. The same as the previous one, those considerations are the foci in this section; however, the four are discussed on how they are experienced by the ISs firsthand.

Cultural similarities and differences as learning. Clearly, the study at hand focuses on the study of the experiences of Korean and Filipino ISs in the Philippines and South Korea. Though the two countries are both Asian, they have cultural similarities and differences which may bring forth interesting learning episodes for ISs and for the aspirants. Similarities will always be enjoyed, but differences will be taken a spectrum of ways. These are lived by the ISs. Their daily encounters with the locals allow them to become key informants of norm diversity. In today’s epoch, differences are not hated, but celebrated. The beauty and grotesque of culture are learned and appreciated, rather than despised and antagonized. Nonetheless, the former and latter may be learned and appreciated, but this does not always entail that ISs are acculturated with such foreign ways as they already have an established mindset framed from their cultural imprints in their home countries. In other words, foreign norms are known, but not imbibed all the time. In the case of Participant 2 & 4 (KIS), they never liked the ‘Filipino time’ notion contrary to ‘빨리 빨리 (palli palli; quickly) Korean culture’, but tried to be patient when they dealt with it. Relevant to the previous notion is the speed of transactions in the host country. Participant 6 (KIS) in fact wished that it could have been done in a better way.

Participant 6 (KIS) narrated her experience:

“I kinda have that ‘cause being a Korean, I’m really like hot-tempered and the Koreans, they like things to be done in a faster and more convenient way,

but then, in the Philippines, like for example, when you're about to enroll or when you're about to buy something and you have to wait in the line, it takes a long time. But then, that's the part that I want them to... that I felt like.. mmm... I don't think that's nice. Like I'd like them to improve on this."

However, to avoid conflicts among the locals, ISs tend to practice such norms though they are not within the grasp of both logic and personal cultural imprints. Nevertheless, it cannot also be ignored the fact that there are cases that they are already born or raised as early as their childhood in the host country which make them vulnerable to be chiseled in the ways of the foreign territory. Participant 1 (KIS) shared, "Yes, Sir. I am born in the Philippines." He continued, "Since kindergarten, we have been here in the Philippines so we have already adapted (the culture) here. In fact, I have never been to Korea." Apparently, they have a different case.

In fact, Participant 6 (KIS) shared the same experience:

"I guess I don't know what to say about impressions because like I said I went there I was only four years old. So it's like, I was already part Filipino. So I thought that Philippines was more of my country, rather than, like I didn't have any first impressions."

History plays a tremendous impact on the nation's culture. Learning this can make the ISs learn the stories behind the ways of the host country. Having known some of the facets of Filipino culture, Participant 6 (KIS) had a notion on why Filipinos are seen slow and/or the *mañana* habit.

Sharing what she knew about the culture, Participant 6 (KIS) stated:

"I guess it's the culture and I guess because of history, you guys were like uhm... going back to history, you were conquered by the Spaniards and then, you kinda got influenced by them and then you kind of were like uhm... let's say like uh... I don't know the right word but then, like you guys lazed out in some way and then, kind of push back things and don't do it them uhm... on the time that you guys are supposed to do."

Positive and negative experiences. Experiences may happen within and outside the learning institutions. Needless to say, they may be positive or negative. Participant 1 (KIS) shared that he was bullied when he was younger, but eventually endured and got used to it as

he matured. Though he experienced being bullied by few, he still had supportive and helpful classmates and teachers as he mentioned. Participant 4 (KIS) claimed that he never felt uncomfortable staying in the Philippines because he saw Filipinos as kind individuals and the complaint he had was the hot weather and the food. Furthermore, Participant 2 (KIS) also told about her experience on how her learning institution promotes spirituality and camaraderie development among the students of her host university. She appreciated it a lot.

Appreciating the university's culture, Participant 2 (KIS) said:

"I never remember struggling too much about academics in the Philippines. In the Philippines, the school was more focusing on growing your own identity and your own spirits as you know the Philippines is more focused on Catholicism. I really enjoyed going to school because the school really focused on making students get to know each other."

"They tried hard to let everyone get along with each other like there's no bullying and they try to hold as many events as possible to unite the whole group of students in the school and I really enjoyed that because unlike here in Korea, we are really focused on academics like when you go into high school there is no much events going on because you will need to focus on college exams."

Discussing about his life in his host university and his Korean university, Participant 4 (KIS) narrated:

"Like in university life, because in my university life my classmates were the people... They are really nice, like the professor, all the faculty members. They are really nice like they are really friendly. It's easy to go them to them, but in Korea it's really difficult. The professor is too strict. It's really difficult."

Part of any culture is food. It is a huge factor as it is a primary need aside from being a cultural element. Nonetheless, it becomes a problem when one does not prefer the food in the host country, but it becomes a gustatory haven if the ISs find it fitting for them. The attachment to the food follows attachment to the people and the culture.

For instance, Participant 6 (KIS) said:

“I really like street foods and I miss them. And I’ve heard from my friends that because of the pandemic, the street food, the vendors there had to close up, so I kind of felt bad when I heard that.”

Participant 10 (FIS) shared how he found the food culture differences between his host and home countries:

“Part of the Asian culture is food, I think. I don’t know why our staple is rice while Koreans have a lot of side dishes always. I don’t know the reason. Among us Filipinos, one viand is enough, right? Even there’s a little of a dish, you are still happy as long as there are a lot of rice. Here in Korea, it’s the opposite. There’s less rice and more viands.”

However, food is not the sole concern, and it is not always that ISs experience comfortable situation. The road provides a different angle for the students. The traffic and the uncomfortable transportation have been two of the concerns of Participant 5 (KIS) when she studied in the Philippines.

As ISs stay in the host country, they develop a clear image of their culture. Participant 1 (KS) enthusiastically said that he is proud of the Filipino culture and described the Filipinos as cheerful and helpful people. He also said that both Koreans and Filipinos are respectful and religious as observed among Filipinos and his Korean family especially his father. Furthermore, Participant 3 (KIS) also shared how welcoming Filipinos are and how comfortable it is to stay and study in the Philippines. He said, “The people were warmer in a sense, so I wanted to also continue my studies in here, Philippines.”

Participant 6 (KIS) also narrated her own experience:

“They’re (Filipinos) so friendly and they’re so nice to me and they’re more open-minded than... If I were to compare than Koreans, they’re way open-minded and when I say something to them, it’s easier to come out than when I say something to Koreans.”

On the other hand, Participant 8 (FIS) shared about Koreans' toxic culture of work which they appear to exhaust them in a way. She (FIS) narrated:

"Koreans are too addicted to work. They don't have a sense of time. When they have time, they will finish the task even until Saturday or Sunday. If they need data, they will do everything to gather and deliver those."

Another interesting input about Korean and Filipino culture is shared by Participant 9 (FIS). He said:

"Koreans and Filipinos are both Asians. Here in our laboratory, I have European and North American friends and they can really see the similarities. These may be our respect for our families. The Philippines and South Korea both have it. Respect for the elderly is another. Seniority in the workplace is one. I think in the Philippines, it's the same. They all call you sir or ma'am. Here they use 교수님 (kyosu-nim / professor) or 선배 (seonbae / senior). In the western countries, there's none I think."

Language as a tool for all human transactions. Language has always been an indispensable portion of international (but not limited to) study experiences. One cannot set aside language when discussing about one's life in a foreign country. Such portion is both perplexing and interesting as the challenges force the ISs to be adept with the host country's language but allow them to develop coping mechanisms that are worthy of highlighting as they serve as lessons for ISs and for the aspirants. As the transactions from the simplest to the most complex require language use, it is an advantage for ISs who are linguistically inclined and stayed since birth in the host country, but it becomes vexation for those who are not. When Participant 1 (KIS) was asked what Korean language expressions he knows, he responded, "Since I am born in the Philippines, it has always been Tagalog. I just know common Korean language expressions a little."

As mentioned previously, English is useful but the native language is indeed the more significant even in the academe. Participant 2 (KIS) narrated that though English was primarily used in her host university, there were Filipino subjects to study and the examinations were quite challenging for them. Fortunately, the teachers were there to assist them.

Participant 2 (KIS) elaborated in her narration:

"Most of the students did speak English well and our school encourage all of the students to speak English and all of the class went on English so

I didn't have much challenge or struggle there. But we have Filipino subject which was quite struggle and challenge but we had some Korean students so we request a petition to open up a special session for us because we could not take exam on that so we can get a grade. So we got a special exam on Filipino subject where the teachers will translate the exams for us in English so we could (solve) answer or at least get a grade."

Class discussions are vital in the process of edification. This is when the salient features of the studied discipline are revealed to the students. Nonetheless, the situation becomes uneasy when the medium of instruction is unfamiliar to the students. This is the kind of problem that Participant 5 (KIS) encountered. She shared, "In college, the professor sometimes talked in Tagalog, so I wanted to understand or what professor said but many times I couldn't understand what they were saying." This is also evident among ISs who work in laboratories in a Korean university.

Participant 7 (FIS) highlighted the importance of learning the native language:

"The only problem we had is language barrier when working, but at the end of the day, we write in English. English is needed in reports, but you should also learn Korean to answer their questions in right approach. Out of the workplace (laboratories), that is more challenging as you need to go to places where people speak only Korean."

Participant 9 (FIS) shared similar observation in learning Korean:

"Yes, language barrier. Here in our campus, we don't have too much problem because everyone speaks English. The problem is when you are new here in Korea and you'll go out of the campus. You need to survive. If you don't have required Korean classes, you need to do self-study."

Host country's educational performances. Countries around the world highlight disciplines in the promotion of their country, depending on their international performance in the field of education. For instance, on the one hand, the Philippines is proud of English as a second language speaker; hence, the country promotes English mediated programs both in schools and universities (Madrurnio et al., 2016). On the other hand, South Korea is known for its cultural promotion, and excellent performance in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM); thus, it offers programs in culture studies, and STEAM education (Hong, 2017).

These promotions entice students from other countries to visit, stay, and study in such countries. However, the real challenge begins when they take the programs. The instruction provided by the foreign host school and/or university reveals their chiseling learning experience and expertise to the ISs. Those serve as significant contact to the education performance of the host country. Along with instruction are the educational policies. Serving their purpose, the policies govern the learning institutions; therefore, they direct and/or create conditions for the ISs. These may affect them explicitly and implicitly. When affected, they may take them positively or negatively.

Host country's economic landscape. As discussed previously, the economic landscape of the host country matters in its probable selection and as elucidated, it sets the living condition of the ISs in terms of monetary matters. This may vary from circumstance to another. When the ISs come from a country with higher or of the same cost of living, they may find living in the host country comfortable. Participant 5 narrated how she appreciated her purchasing power in the Philippines. She said that commodities and services in the country were cheaper compared to South Korea. She also added that it was the reason that most foreigners liked the Philippines. Nonetheless, the trial comes in when the ISs are from poor family and/or countries. Sustaining their needs may be of great challenge. These are daily food consumption, monthly house rentals, tuition fees (when there is no scholarship), and the likes. This challenge persists and escalates especially when there is no assistance coming from the host institution and/or host government.

Building Roads of Mutual Development: Perceived Impacts of South Korea's New Southern Policy

As the New Southern Policy (NSP) is effectuated, it has managed to touch the varied facets of the international community specifically in Asia (Oh, 2020). Due to this policy, the interaction between South Korea and Southeast Asians with India, such as the Philippines becomes inevitable. The policy builds a new road for the rapid demands of the contemporary culture, economy, and even in education. The international students (ISs), being the key beneficiaries of the NSP, have experienced and/or observed its impact. These experiences and observations are insights that can be used to review and even make the policy even better both written and implemented.

Mutual development and deep cultural connections. Though the South Korea spearheads this momentous move, the country and the Philippines are seen as co-beneficiaries of the continuous implementation of the policy. The same as the other countries from the third to first world ones, development is needed to maintain and/or move forward to the different levels and aspects of

national undertakings. Due to this reason, development will always be the ultimate duty of any governments and states. However, as it does not happen overnight and sometimes, impossible when a state runs alone, international partnership becomes an answer (Lannon & Walsh, 2019; Schaaf, 2015). When two or more countries work together for the common good of their people, mutual development follows. Though rich in economy, a country may lack resources and other skills that are evident among the citizens of another country or vice versa. Hence, the two need each other. This is true between South Korea and the Philippines. As South Korea extends its helping hands, the Philippines also offers its potentials to the former. The countries of the world are an ecosystem that always struggles for economic stability and balance and the doorways of NSP provides ‘international mutualism’, an epitome of solution to the state imbalances within each country.

Furthermore, as South Korea diverges its focus from the western country to Southeast Asian countries, it does not only tap the potential economic partners, but it also deepens its cultural connections with its Asian roots. Though the countries are situated from different regions, they share the same Asian heritage. In other words, similarities among East and Southeast Asians are unquestionable. However, differences still exist as boundaries of isolation due to geographical walls, limits interactions; nonetheless, this policy establishes a gateway for the saturation of cultural harmony. One culture entices the other and vice versa, creating an intermarriage of norms alongside with national identity diversity.

Extrapolating her observation on mutual development and cultural connections, Participant 2 (KIS) shared:

“The western countries like they shouldn’t cut off but it’s good that they have changed the channel to the ASEAN countries because we have got enough from the western countries like there’s not enough new opportunities and innovations that we could find from the westerns or European countries anymore unlike ASEAN countries like Philippines or Indonesia which are emerging countries and they have thousands of opportunities to be found in the next futures and I think South Korea could be a good partner to assist on the development because South Korea is now one of the advanced countries that have a lot of potentials to provide a lot of assistance and technology assistance and I think we have a lot of deep relationship with many of the ASEAN countries so I think, yeah that policy is good for both ASEAN countries and South Korea.

In addition, Participant 7 (FIS) further explained how both ends may contribute from the policy:

“Knowing that they prioritize Southeast Asia and India, it becomes a very good opportunity not only for them but also for ASEAN countries. We can help them discover other cultures aside from the westerners and on the other hand, they can help us in adjusting to both culture and technology.”

Socio-economic opportunities and promotions. Perceived by the participants, Southeast Asian countries may seek more opportunities in South Korea or the other around. Because of this partnership, the possibility of trade, business, entrepreneurship, and employment broadens. In the absence of work placement in the home countries, there is still a chance for an individual to find a fit employment and/or business for him or her. This is what Participant 5 (KIS) pointed out. She said, “Future workers can come here to Korea, and make money, and of course we need some workers so yah, we can cooperate. Yes, I think so, because they can earn more money here.”

Elucidating what she said, Participant 5 (KIS) added:

“It’s just my opinion. Some go to Philippines because they feel like here in Korea there’s no work for them, so they need some new way to make money and to find their new business, so they go to Philippines, but I heard that sometimes the business is not going well so I hear pity for them.”

Participant 9 (FIS) also shared:

“They would like to take advantage of the geographical location. The countries are near with one another. Trade flow is easier. I think Korea wants to treat ASEAN countries as one network. It will be easier for them to do trade if they do that.”

NSP is also seen as South Korea’s way of promotion. As the products of the country are introduced to Southeast Asians, the former gains consumers from the latter. In fact, Participant 7 (FIS) claimed, “I think with that kind of policy, it will eventually bolster with ASEAN and South Korea and that’s a good thing because we are close to them. I think Filipinos are great consumers of media such as KPOP.” The policy creates a complex and immense markets for both offered entertainment, services, and goods. The flux of trade among countries opens among the ends of the involved countries. However, a participant worries as he fears that

the exploration of the Southeast Asian region may lead to its exploitation. Hence, South Korea as the explorer must be cautious in its interactions with its target nations and vice versa.

Sharing his point of view, Participant 3 (KIS) explained:

“To see that Korea will be tapping on to resources of other countries, there’s always that sense that when you’re tapping into other resources you think you have a lot of it so you over-excavate and over-exploit that would actually damage the other economy, the economy of other countries, in this case the other Southeast Asian countries as well.”

Impacts on education. Another perceived impact is on education. It is undeniable that for higher education institution to gain progress, it also needs the help of its foreign counterparts. This policy creates an avenue for more scholarships among countries. Participant 9 (FIS) even shared, “In education, I know about GKS, KGSP. Education is funded through these programs. Competition is really high. You need the scholarship. I think Filipinos have slots for those.” South Korea provides opportunities to educate its foreign scholars and to learn from them as they exchange knowledge and skills needed for mutual development within and beyond the microcosm of the academe.

The Koreanists and the Phenomenal Hallyu: The Narratives of Korean Language and Culture Promotions among Nations

Hallyu (한류) has proven its immense ripple effect on the different parts of the world (Kim & Nam, 2015). Because of this phenomenon, South Korea has established well its place in the international market. The country has already put together ‘cultural odor’ alongside with its East Asian counterparts, China and Japan. As Participant 8 (FIS) stated, “We can’t do more because Korean culture is already sustainable.” Participant 10 (FIS) even added, “Hallyu is really tremendous in Southeast Asia.” This cultural permeation extends and continues as the Koreanists emerge from both Korean and non-Korean individuals. As Korean culture is native to its citizens; hence, its promotion among them follows. However, it becomes more interesting when Hallyu-influenced individuals pass its effects on others. As the participants claim, the Korean culture lives on its own as the Korean wave continues throughout the globe. Nonetheless, even though the participants know this fact, they still take part in promoting the Korean culture in many ways.

The international students (ISs) are indeed major Koreanists. They serve as promoters of all that is Korean. Since they are in other countries and exposed to Korean culture, they have a lot of opportunities to promote the culture, contributing to Hallyu as a whole. In the Philippines, Korean International Students (KIS) have promoted the Korean culture among Filipinos and in South Korea, the Filipino International Students (FIS) have also shared the culture among their countrymen through social media.

Korean drama is undeniably a powerful agent of Hallyu since the drama reflects the varied aspects of Korean culture on different levels. Because of the culture's flamboyance, people around the globe including the Filipinos are enticed to watch such television programs. However, though there are some similarities, there are also cultural differences that lead to queries. These may be about the culture and its aspects such as language and food. This is when the Koreanists get in. Participant 6 (KIS) stated, "Since they were interested in the K-Drama or K-Pop, they would sometimes what does this mean or yeah, they would approach me about that and I would willingly help and translate what it meant." Participant 8 (FIS) added, "When promoting, I concentrate on food. K-Pop groups are flitting over time, but food doesn't." Korean culture-interested individuals normally ask questions to them, confirming their schemata of the culture and/or satisfying their curiosity to learn more more about language. To Participant 12 (FIS), it has good results.

Sharing her point of view, the participant said:

"I think with the Korean language, it's a good thing that a lot of people are learning the Korean language because somehow, they can have chances to work in some Korean firms you know since Korean companies require employees who can speak Korean, English, and other languages."

In Philippine universities, this happens both class and campus-wide during students' interactions. On the class level, the participants shared how their classmates would ask about the Korean culture, and language. Intentionally and unintentionally, they become Koreanists. As they confirm queries and at the same time educate other people, making them more captivated by Hallyu. Furthermore, universities promote foreign language and culture. It becomes an opportunity for the Koreanists to further endorse the Korean culture and in most cases, the language.

Participant 4 (KIS) shared his Korean language teaching experience:

“My school teaches high school also. In the United Nations’ Day, just the one event of the United Nations Day for the foreign, for the foreigners go to the high school and they teach their language. So, I got to the one classroom I teach them like 30 minutes.”

In South Korean universities, FIS would also have activities in and out of the universities. Their learning experience in Korea becomes their pride. Hence, this pride turns into their promotion tool. There comes a drive to share these to their fellows as they also want them to enjoy the same opportunities.

Participant 9 (FIS) gave his own ways of promotion:

“In the case of graduate students and those who work, I think it is when we post our personal experiences on social media that we promote Korean culture. For example, I would post pictures of our travels and people would comment how nice the places or sceneries are. I think it influences your friends and other contacts on social media.”

Their getaways and even their gastronomic experiences are excellent life episodes that may appeal and influence other people to have a taste of the South Korean escapade. Participant 7 (FIS) narrated, “I would share Korean clips and Korean drama links on Facebook.” Because social media is the fastest and reliable platform of promotion, intentionally or unintentionally when they post these affairs, they turn into visual instrument of Hallyu.

There are a lot of interactions among international students and the locals of their host countries through the culture as experienced and observed in education, language, and economic facets. in their ways. There may be positive and negative sides, but these allow the students to cherish their culture as they learn from the similarities and differences in comparing theirs with the host countries’ culture. The experiences they share does not only reveal the cultural subtleties but provide guides for those who aspire to take their chances of getting their own education in foreign lands. Furthermore, those who experience Korean culture firsthand, use this exposure to become Koreanists in their unique ways. This contributes a lot to the ripple effect of the Korean wave.

Towards a sustainable NSP: inputs and ways forward

To spread NSP inclusive of growth and development between Philippines and Korea among international students, the following may be taken into consideration:

1. Inclusion of Korean/ Filipino as a Foreign language in the curriculum

Language is usually a barrier among international students. Some opt not to socialize because of their inability to communicate using the language of the country they are in. Hence, it is deemed beneficial for Filipino international students if Korean would be included at least as foreign language (FL) in the tertiary level. In the same manner, the inclusion of Filipino as a Foreign Language in the tertiary level curriculum in Korea may be recommended.

2. Scholarships for Filipino students intending to study in Korea or for Korean students intending to study in the Philippines

To encourage more international students, both countries may sponsor scholarship grants to deserving students.

3. Student/ Faculty Exchange Program between the Philippines and Korea

Not only Student Exchange Program but also Faculty Exchange may be initiated to provide more opportunities for the educators to experience the culture of the two countries.

4. Encourage collaborative projects or research between Korea and Philippines

Funded collaborative research focused on NSP may further educate international students about the nature and purpose of the policy.

5. Strengthening tourism activities

Both the Korean and the Philippine governments may engage in tourism projects showcasing the culture of both countries. This can be done through online or through the various Social Networking Sites accessible to both countries.

6. Intercultural language teaching and learning or multicultural literacy

Language classrooms in the Philippines and Korea may dwell not only on developing the communicative competence of the learners but also intercultural competence. Developing the knowledge, skills, and attitude of the international students not only towards a 2nd language but also towards a 2nd culture must be the goals of the language classrooms.

5. Conclusions

This study mapped international students in the Philippines and South Korea as contemporary Koreanists in the light of the New Southern Policy (NSP). Based on the results of the study some of the challenges faced by international scholars in terms of daily living, cultural aspects,

academic concerns, and others were referred as Study Journey's Decision Determinants were perceived which makes up the International Student's Checklist. These includes culture, language, education, and economy.

Impressions as a point of comparison and experiences in the host countries and learning institutions were also considered as lessons of life episodes among international scholars. These include (1) impression as a point of comparison; (2) positive and negative experiences; (3) language as a tool for all human transactions; (4) host country's educational performances; and (5) host country's economic landscape.

Furthermore, international students' perceptions on impacts of South Korea's New Southern Policy Building Roads of Mutual Development include: (1) mutual development and deep cultural connections; (2) socio-economic opportunities and promotions and (3) impacts on education. It is believed that these contribute to the globalization of Korean Studies both in the Philippines and South Korea.

In order to spread NSP's inclusion of growth and development between Philippines and Korea among international students, the following may be taken into consideration: (1) inclusion of Korean/ Filipino as a Foreign language in the curriculum; (2) scholarships for Filipino students intending to study in Korea or for Korean students intending to study in the Philippines; (3) student/ faculty exchange program between the Philippines and Korea; (4) encourage collaborative projects or research between Korea and Philippines; (5) strengthening tourism activities; and (6) intercultural language teaching and learning or multicultural literacy.

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