
BLC Newsletter

Fall 2009

The Berkeley Language Center (BLC) was established in 1994 to support the learning and teaching of heritage and foreign languages on the Berkeley campus and, where appropriate, in the University of California system. A unit in the Division of Arts and Humanities of the College of Letters and Science, the BLC provides language instructors with opportunities to learn about new developments in the fields of sociolinguistics, language pedagogy, and second language acquisition. It supports research by language instructors, offers assistance in the development of innovative language learning materials, provides faculty and students with state-of-the-art learning facilities and equipment, and maintains a library and media archive of materials for language teaching and research. The Center is directed by Richard Kern of the French Department. Mark Kaiser is the Associate Director.

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Literacy in First-Year Turkish: A Multi-Voiced Approach

Kristin Dickinson

My BLC project was conceived largely as an extension of Jason Vivrette's fall 2008 project for first-semester Turkish. Through a series of film clips that emphasized the multicultural nature of Turkish society, Jason encouraged students to reflect critically on both the concept of Turkishness as well as the experience of learning Turkish in an American classroom. I continued this work in the second-semester classroom through a literacy-based pedagogical approach. My main goal was to incorporate a wide variety of texts—from poetry, folk songs, and prose to film clips and images—into a curriculum with an otherwise heavy emphasis on grammar and limited cultural materials. With the aim of fully integrating these texts into the everyday classroom, I paid careful attention to their thematic and grammatical relevance. I then designed a series of five units, each consisting of several activities based on one key text. By spreading these activities throughout a given textbook chapter, I aimed at making them an integral part of the curriculum—rather than supplemental cultural materials—and at allowing time for multiple interpretations to emerge.

It is through this emphasis on multiplicity that I sought to implement a literacy approach. In his book *Literacy and Language Teaching*, Richard Kern argues that literacy “involves an awareness of how acts of reading, writing and conversation mediate and transform meanings, not merely transfer them from one individual or group to another” (6). In other words, a literacy-based approach asks students to negotiate—rather than simply acquire—cultural

knowledge by reflecting actively in the target language on the ways in which meanings are constructed. I sought to do this by creating activities that approached texts from numerous perspectives, which encouraged students to question the varying layers of meaning that may be contained within a single text.

Within each unit, I sought to literalize this idea on the level of voice. By putting different types of mediums and authorial voices in conversation with one another, I encouraged students to engage in both readings and re-readings. Collaborative in-class activities allowed additional space for student voices to emerge, and follow-up creative writing assignments offered students alternative ways to express their ideas about the texts at hand. The creation of a class portfolio further encouraged students to read and discuss other students' creative work in relation to their own.

As an example of the kinds of activities I designed, I will briefly discuss Unit One, which is based on the poem "Davet" (Invitation), by Nazım Hikmet. As an introduction to this poem, I showed students the final scene of *Mavi Gözlü Dev* (The Blue-Eyed Giant), a 2006 film about Hikmet's life. In order to hide political information from a prison guard, Hikmet recites the poem "Invitation" with a student from his cell. As inmates in the courtyard hear the opening lines, they also begin reciting the poem in unison. Finally, a song adaptation of the poem is heard as the camera pans across the prison courtyard and key information regarding the end of Hikmet's life appears on the screen. This clip raised numerous questions for class discussion: What is Hikmet reciting? How famous is the poem? What is its political importance? And how does the meaning of the poem change when it is recited by different people?

With such questions in mind, we later engaged in an in-class reading of the poem. Hikmet's metaphorical depiction of Turkey as a "mare's head" galloping from far Asia and jutting out into the Mediterranean offers an image of the country that is much larger than its current geographical borders. We considered this idea in relation to two key grammatical structures in the opening stanza. Most importantly, we discussed how the *(y)İp* (*dörtnala gelip* / galloping) construction and the *(y)En* participle (*uzanan* / jutting) can each denote multiple tenses, including past, present and future. This leaves the poem open in a way that brings it temporally to the present time of our classroom. Finally, we considered the importance of temporality for the poem's message: Hik-

met "invites" his readers to be proud and patriotic, while remaining critical of the Turkish homeland, and what it means to be Turkish. This is emphasized through an inclusive use of the word "ours" at the end of each stanza. Students were then able to think back to the film clip and consider the shifting meaning of the word "ours" in "Invitation," in relation to the different groups of people who recite the poem. This then led us to reread the poem and to consider ourselves as subjects of the poem's "invitation."

As a final activity, we returned to the film clip and considered the placement of the poem in a biographical film—or the way in which the film appropriates the poem for its own purposes. To make this idea more concrete, I asked students to do a little research, write two sentences about Hikmet's life and post them on our bSpace site. Having students explain their own reasons for choosing specific information helped us to think as a class about the inherently subjective nature of biography and the ways in which information is often adapted for different purposes. On the following day, I led an in-class writing workshop in which students created a collective biography with the sentences they had provided. This forced students to think about how to organize the information at hand, how to connect sentences where necessary, and how to create meaningful transitions. As a result we created a class biography that was totally subjective—or completely "ours." Students were then able to discuss the ways in which they had appropriated Hikmet's life and work based on their own personal interests.

As this example unit shows, my implementation of a "multi-voiced" approach to teaching language aimed to combine traditional and non-traditional ideas of what it means to be Turkish with the constantly shifting dynamics of the classroom and the learning process itself.

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Online Communication in Beginning Spanish Instruction

Adam Mendelson

Prior research indicates that providing language learners with opportunities to interact with one another through online communication tools can promote positive outcomes such as increased motivation, diversified participation, and improved oral production (Lamy & Hampel, 2007). However, with the exception of Blake's (2000) suggestion that jigsaw activities are especially effective for promoting negotiation of meaning in online chat, I was unable to find other guidelines in the research literature on how to best use online communication in language instruction. Given my interest in investigating this type of instruction, the objective of my BLC project was to carry out multiple iterations of design and evaluation of computer-supported learning activities in an attempt to identify some best practices.

Working closely with the instructor of a second-semester Spanish class, we created a series of activities for her students. Some of these activities involved real-time text chat and took place in an on-campus computer lab. When successful, these chat-based activities were enjoyable and productive for students, and met our learning objectives. We also used online forums for homework assignments that complemented in-class discussions of assigned readings. This use of forums expanded the range of participants during class discussions and helped students feel prepared to speak. In this brief write-up I describe the chat-based activities in greater detail because I suspect that this type of instruction will be less familiar to many readers.

Chat-based activities in the computer lab

Over the course of the semester, four class sessions took place in an on-campus computer lab and involved groups of students communicating with one another through real-time text-based chat. The four activities were as follows:

1. Groups of 3 to 4 students read about ecological problems and solutions, and then through a jigsaw activity chatted about these texts to match each problem to its corresponding solution.
2. Groups of 2 to 4 students chatted about photographs of accidents that had occurred to a fictitious character while travelling in Spain. They then collaboratively composed a letter to this character with advice for future travels.
3. Groups of 4 to 5 students chatted about video clips related to a course reading. Chatting was followed directly by a whole group oral discussion about the videos and text.
4. Groups of 3 students chatted about a blog post and corresponding photographs from a fictitious character about studying at Berkeley. They then collaboratively composed and posted a response to the blog.

The instructor and I evaluated the outcomes of these activities based on multiple data sources and criteria:

- For each activity, students completed Likert-scale and open-ended questions about their enjoyment of the activity and its usefulness for learning Spanish.
- Chat logs were analyzed for evidence of on- and off-task behaviors, use of target structures, quantity of language produced, and distribution of student turns.
- When activities included a final product (e.g., blog post), these were evaluated for use of target structures and normative language.
- After every activity the instructor and I discussed our observations in detail.

Based on our evaluations, the second and fourth activities were by far the most successful. Given their similarities, this outcome has allowed us to reach some tentative generalizations about designing this type of instruction. I first present a detailed description of one of these activities (the fourth), and then present our emerging best practices as exemplified by this activity.

Our fourth chat-based activity involved a fictitious character, a young Argentinean named Alejandro, who had been accepted to UC Berkeley and needed advice from our students. This scenario connected to the current textbook chapter's themes (social issues, future plans), grammar (subjunctive), and communicative functions (expressing opinions, giving advice). The instructor first presented the scenario to the students a few days before the activity by asking them what issues Alejandro should investigate before coming to Berkeley. The students mentioned safety on and around campus, activism, and environmentalism. For each of these issues the instructor and I prepared a short message in which Alejandro expressed his concerns, and gathered some online photos to accompany each message. We posted the messages on a blog we had created for the class (Figure 1), and loaded the photos into the chatrooms we had been using throughout the semester (Figure 2). We also prepared a handout that included instructions for the activity and a short list of linguistic structures

Figure 1: The blog created for the class.

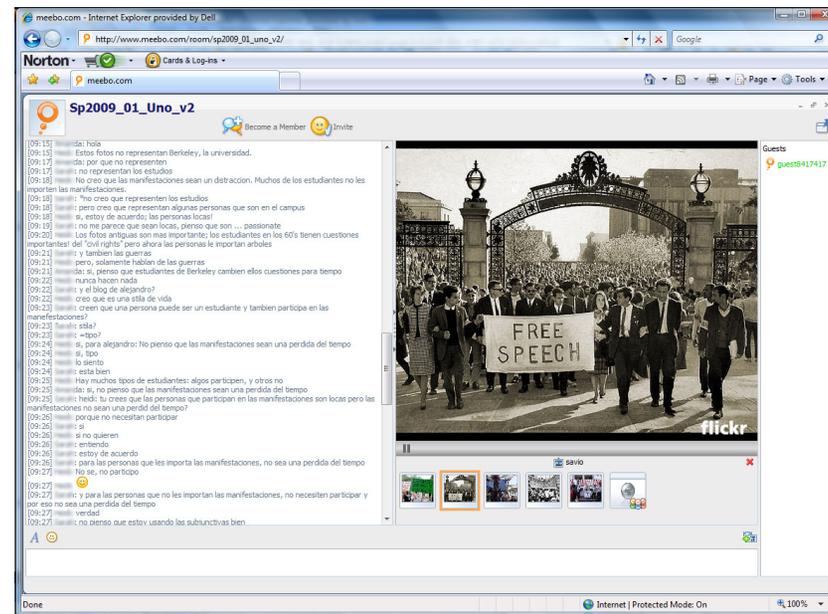


that each group was expected to use. Finally, we posted an announcement on bSpace that included links to the blog posts and chatrooms.

In the computer lab, the activity was divided into two parts of 20 to 25 minutes each. First, each group of three students met in a chatroom to share their opinions and recommendations about Alejandro's blog post and accompanying photos. Second, each group gathered physically around a single computer to collaboratively compose and post a response to Alejandro. The next day's lesson in the classroom consisted of follow-up activities based on printouts of the comments the students had posted on the blog.

Based on the criteria presented above, this activity was our best of the semester. On their evaluations, 17 of 18 students "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the activity was enjoyable and helped them learn. The chat logs showed that the students had made serious efforts to integrate all target structures while completing the task, and their distribution of turns was very well

Figure 2: Meebo chatrooms used throughout the semester.



balanced. Additionally, the comments they posted on the blog went well beyond task requirements and reflected relatively normative language use.

The success of this activity and the similarly structured second activity of the semester support the following suggestions about designing chat-based instruction for on-campus computer labs:

- Build continuity between in-class activities and computer lab activities. In addition to connecting directly to other course content, this fourth activity was introduced and then followed-up in the classroom.
- Use the computer lab as a classroom. The activity included both online and face-to-face interactions between students.
- Use the computers to do things that can't be done in the classroom. Group interactions around online photographs and blogs required the use of computers.
- Provide explicit expectations regarding the use of specific communicative functions and their corresponding linguistic forms. The activity was structured to guide students in composing a specific type of message with a specific set of linguistic features.
- Have students produce a tangible output with an audience that includes at least the entire class, not only the instructors. The comments that students posted on the blog were publicly available and explicitly shared with the whole class during follow-up activities.
- Within clearly established expectations, provide room for student expression and creativity. The students not only played a role in defining the topics of the activity, but also had opportunities to discuss their personal opinions.
- Provide feedback on linguistic output of online activities. The follow-up activities included correcting common errors from the chat logs and blog comments.

Online forums to complement class discussions

Over the course of the semester, seven bSpace forums were used to complement discussions about assigned readings. Tasks that students completed in the forums included:

- Posting a question about the reading before the class discussion.
- Responding to another student's question after the discussion.
- Posting a reflection on a theme or topic between class discussions.
- Commenting on a specific passage.

Especially when forum assignments took place the day before class discussions, their influence was clearly observable. Students frequently repeated aspects of their forum posts, they made references to the posts of their classmates, and a wider range of students generally participated in these discussions. However, the biggest impact of the forums was the way in which the instructor was able to use what her students had posted online to productively shape the next day's discussion. When a student posted a potentially hot topic in the forum, the instructor would ask that student to bring it up the next day in class to spark responses from other students. With students that were less likely to participate on their own, she would sometimes call on them directly when it was appropriate for them to share what they had previously posted online. In this sense, the forums became a resource that enabled the instructor to provide personalized opportunities for her students to productively contribute to class discussions. At the same time, the forums prepared students to take advantage of these opportunities by enabling them to rehearse their contributions in writing before having to speak.

Closing comments

Both chat-based and forum-based activities provided enjoyable and productive learning experiences for the students who participated in this project. However, it is important to note that the work involved in setting up these activities varied greatly. Using the forums to complement class discussions strikes me as a slam dunk. Setting up these activities is quite simple, students are generally familiar with the use of forums in academic settings, student tasks took only a few minutes, and reading forum posts in order to integrate them into the class discussion only required about a half hour from the instructor. Setting up chat-based activities is more complex. It requires learning to conduct class in a new

environment, managing multiple technological platforms, and productively harnessing the informality and playfulness that students are likely to associate with chatting (Thorne, 2003). The more times we did these activities the easier and more familiar they became for us and the students, but early in the semester we found ourselves working quite hard without a clear sense of the outcomes our efforts would produce. In the future, I hope to experiment with giving the students greater responsibility for setting up these activities. For example, it seems quite reasonable that students rather than instructors could take the lead in finding online photos and loading them into chatrooms. This sort of student involvement might increase the meaningfulness of the activity while also lessening the workload of the instructor.

Acknowledgement

In an effort to protect the identities of the students I worked with this semester, I have chosen not to identify their instructor. This is unfortunate because it does not give her the full recognition she deserves for her invaluable contribution to this project. Her dedication, pedagogical vision, creativity, and awareness of her students' needs were critical to our successful outcomes.

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Reading TV: Graphic Overtitles in Korean TV Shows

Junghee Park

My research starts from a recognition of the importance of teaching media literacy in Korean—a form of literacy which is becoming an essential part of language education today. Knowing how to “read” sophisticated layers of multimodal communication is an essential skill for our students to acquire. For my project, I looked at a unique kind of media literacy in Korean. Specifically, I examined what I term “graphic overtitles” in Korean TV shows. In contrast to traditional subtitles (which usually represent a direct captioning of the speech of the people in the movie) that are shown at the bottom of the screen for deaf or foreign viewers, “graphic overtitles” take on varied forms in terms of typography, colors, size and visual structuring, often appearing all over the screen rather than at the bottom. They also differ from traditional subtitles in that they represent selective utterances that participants make and use diverse semiotic features other than written language. They can be seen as the producer’s active participation in the show, even mediation in the audience’s reaction to the television show’s participants and events, through written language as well as graphic images and symbols.

“Graphic overtitles” deserve attention in that (1) they represent multi-voicedness (Bakhtin, 1981) of an utterance in a multileveled participation framework, (2) they play a part in the co-constructing of specific sociocultural genre/activity of TV-mediated discourse and add a new dimension to the show, serving the goals of entertainment, (3) as a written communication like the Internet and comic books, they illustrate many features of genre-specific usage of semiotic resources, such as graphic features using *Hangul* keystrokes and emoticons and cartoon-like symbols and images, and finally, (4) the understanding of this

new semiotic dimension will play an important role in teaching students to grasp the relationship between language and genre/discourse, on the one hand, and between language and culture, on the other. In this article I will provide a brief summary of my project by illustrating semiotic resources and linguistic features frequently found in graphic overtiles in Korean TV shows. After an examination of graphic overtiles, I will make suggestions for teaching this genre to students of Korean, and I will provide a framework for understanding this new written mode of communication.

For my data, I used two different shows in Korean. One is called “Yasimmanman” (“YSMM”/“We asked 10,000 people online”) in which the guests have to guess the responses to a question that has been asked of about 10,000 people online. The other show is “Mwuhantocen” (“Infinite Challenge”), in which six comedians are engaged in the creation of various scenarios in each episode. Figures 1 and 2 give an example of graphic overtiles from each show.

Figure 1:
Aha~ Kickboard~ ^^;; (from
“YSMM”)



Figure 2:
How (would I say) this in
English... (from “Infinite
Challenge”)



Analysis

For the analysis, I will summarize semiotic resources for graphic overtiles observed in Korean TV shows and list linguistic features frequently found in graphic overtiles. Semiotic resources for graphic overtiles can be divided into two types: textual and visual.

1. Textual semiotic resources for graphic overtiles
 - Typography: letterforms, color, texture, movement, three-dimensionality
 - Punctuation marks: three dots, question marks, exclamation marks, tilde
2. Visual semiotic resources for graphic overtiles
 - Emoticons (from Internet communication)
 - Comic book symbols
 - Cartoon-like pictures

Figure 3:
Describing giggling of the
speakers (from “Infinite
Challenge”)



Figure 4:
It’s an honor... dear Taehee
(crying) (from “Infinite
Challenge”)



In graphic overtiles, we can see that differences in typography are used to express different voices. For example, the block font is used mostly in commentaries or summaries by the producer, while the handwritten-style font is used in quotations and in describing emotions. The color and size variations with many punctuation marks are also effectively employed in delivering the delicate nuances or stances of the participants. The use of primary colors to emphasize the meaning of the utterances and the use of black and white to express the producer's voice are also noticeable. Question marks and exclamation marks are used to express curiosity and surprise (or emphasis), respectively. A tilde is seen as an effort to convey the intonational characteristics of the utterance. Three dots indicate an ellipsis, but sometimes also suggest an unspoken reaction that the participant must be feeling to some surprising or strange situation.

Visual aspects of graphic overtiles include use of emoticons, comic book symbols, and cartoon-like pictures (shown in Figure 2). In Figure 1, we see

Figure 5



Figure 6



‘^^;’ (smiling eyes with sweat beads), which is an emoticon frequently used in Korean Internet communication to depict embarrassment in a light way. The computer keyboard has also given rise to a shorthand involving *Hangul*, characters from the Korean alphabet, to illustrate the emotions of the speakers on the Internet. Some examples of these are indicated below.

- ㅊㅊ the use of a vowel ‘ㅊ’ (sound of ‘u’) to depict a crying face
- ㅠㅠ the use of a vowel ‘ㅠ’ (sound of ‘yu’) to depict a crying face with more tears
- ㅋㅋ the use of a consonant ‘ㅋ’ (sound of ‘k’) to describe giggling
- ㅎㅎ the use of a consonant ‘ㅎ’ (shound of ‘h’) to describe a laughter

And we can see this Internet semiotic mode on the TV screen. In Figure 3, we find the use of ‘ㅋㅋ’ to illustrate the two participants’ giggling when they are watching the other participant’s comic interview, and in Figure 4, the use

Figure 7



Figure 8



of $\pi\pi$ when the producer depicts how touched (almost to the point of tears) he was when he heard that a famous actress (shown on the screen) said she'd been watching the show, are from "Infinite Challenge."

The use of emoticons and the Korean alphabet as pictographs shows the extension of Internet-specific semiotic signs to another communicative context, validating these pictorial signs as a new semiotic mode on their own.

Another intertextual usage of semiotic resources is observed in the comic book symbols and cartoon-like pictures found in graphic overtitles. The use of speech balloons and the frequent use of onomatopoeia (sound symbolic words) with punctuation marks suggest that the growth of graphic overtitles has been influenced by the conventions of comic books.

Figures 5 to 8 all manifest common linguistic and symbolic resources found in comic books. Figure 7 shows a drawing of sweat beads next to a host of "Infinite Challenge," when his elementary school grades are revealed. His grades were pretty bad, and he seems to be somewhat embarrassed, and at that moment the sweat beads appear within the figure of a cloud. And the 'anger cross' depicted in Figure 8 appears when an interviewer says that the man on the screen is old. Sweat beads and anger crosses like these are used on these TV shows in the same ways they are used in comic books (see Figure 6).

In addition to textual and visual semiotic resources, there are some linguistic features frequently found in graphic overtitles. These linguistic features include sound-symbolic words (or onomatopoeia), stance-marking words, and headless relative clauses. Sound symbolic words are words that mimic sounds to depict physical and/or mental state. In Figure 5, the words on the graphic overtittle *kkung* describes the sound people make when they are doing something that is really hard or difficult. In the picture, the person is eating really spicy *kimchi*, and the overtittle depicts the difficulty he's having with it. The frequent use of sound-symbolic words is a distinctive feature of comic books and we can see an example in Figure 6, in which a woman is working on a very difficult essay, and the sound symbolic word *kkung* is used to describe her physical and mental state.

In graphic overtitles, we also see many stance-marking words that are attached to speakers or to the utterances that the speakers make. These words describe the speaker's emotive stance, which the producer is evaluating. In Figure 9, a participant in "YSMM" who discovers his answer is not in the top



Figure 9:
Unexpectedness.



Figure 10:
(Complaint) why (didn't) you tell us?



Figure 11:
(big laughter) ...got bowled over

five list asks, “It’s not on the list?” At this point, the word “unexpectedness” shows up on the screen to mark the speaker’s stance. In Figure 10, one of the main hosts of “Infinite Challenge” asks the producer (who is off-screen) why he didn’t tell the hosts who’s coming on the show, and, over his utterance, which is in a speech balloon, the word “complaint” is seen, manifesting the host’s feelings at that moment.

The other linguistic feature that is salient in the graphic overtitles is the use of a headless relative clause, i.e., a relative clause that lacks the noun that it modifies. For example, the phrase “a girl who is pretty” reads simply “...who is pretty.”

In Figure 11, the graphic overtittle reads, “...got bowled over” below “big laughter.” On the show the participants are laughing out loud because of another participant’s story about his grades in elementary school, and instead of the words “the co-hosts who got bowled over,” the words “got bowled over” show up on the screen. This use of a seemingly ungrammatical construction can be argued to be an adaptation to the new communicative context in the form of graphic overtitles on a TV screen. As you can actually view the modified entity on the screen, you can omit the modified entity in a linguistic construction.

Having discussed briefly the semiotic resources—textual, visual, and linguistic—used in the new semiotic mode of graphic overtitles in Korean TV shows, I would now like to address more basic questions like what and how. What do graphic overtitles do? I argue that they bring the interaction close to the home audience by simulating a conversation between explicit (those who can be shown on TV) and implicit (the home audience, and the producer) participants of the show, and evolve the relationship between the audience and the show. And this evolving relationship between the show and the home audience sometimes takes a very interesting form. When “Infinite Challenge” aired an episode without graphic overtitles because of a union strike, the fan club for the show created their own graphic overtitles and uploaded the augmented video on the Internet. They said these “subtitles” were like a 7th member of the show. This anecdote casts light on how important the graphic overtitles are to the show. The question of how these new practices came about is something to be studied further, but the use of graphic overtitles demonstrates how people adapt to a new communicative context involving advanced technology

and how they adopt available semiotic resources from similar discourses, in this case, from the Internet and comic books.

Suggestions for Teaching Korean

Finally, I’d like to make a few suggestions for incorporating graphic overtitles into a Korean language curriculum. I surveyed 202 students (81 beginning level students, 55 intermediate level students, 29 advanced level students, and 27 4th- and 5th-level students) on the subject of graphic overtitles. I asked what the students thought about graphic overtitles after I showed a couple of clips from Korean TV shows. With respect to the positive aspects of graphic overtitles, the beginning and intermediate level students wrote about the addition of humor to the show and the educational effect of the overtitles. By educational effect, they meant that graphic overtitles helped contextualize the show and conveyed aspects of Korean culture. With respect to negative aspects, students said that graphic overtitles went by too fast and were confusing, and sometimes seemed childish. It is interesting to contrast these observations with those from more advanced Korean students: 4th- and 5th-year Korean learners mentioned the creative aspects of the graphic overtitles and the educational effect. For negative aspects, they wrote about the overuse of graphic overtitles, possible manipulation by the producer, and limitations on audience interpretation. As the more advanced learners understand more, they seem to recognize more about the possible pluses and minuses of graphic overtitles, offering greater opportunity for in-depth discussion about the use of graphic overtitles. The following are a few suggestions for teaching Korean at each level using clips from Korean TV shows with graphic overtitles. More specific procedures will evolve over time, but for now these should suffice to help uncover the rich potential of graphic overtitles for teaching Korean language and culture in this age of technology-mediated communication.

- Beginning level students:
 - awareness-raising of graphic overtitles
- Intermediate level students:
 - use of clips without sounds for speaking and writing practice

- learning stance-marking words and sound symbolic words
- learning culture
- Advanced level students:
 - learning more difficult stance-marking words and sound symbolic words
 - creating their own graphic overtitles
 - discussion of graphic overtitles

Conclusion

I have examined a new type of technology-mediated communication in Korea: graphic overtitles in Korean TV shows. This examination has revealed that various semiotic resources, including those found on the Internet and in comic books, are in play in the emergence of a new genre of written discourse composed of words and images in the form of graphic overtitles. Graphic overtitles add a new semiotic dimension to the multi-faceted social world of Korean TV shows, being inseparable from the shows themselves; and I argue that they are the product of people's adaptation to a new communicative context to express different voices/stances in a multilevel participation framework. As I implied in the introduction, this new form of literacy should be integrated into the teaching of Korean language and culture, as proper understanding of how visual/graphic aspects of written language in technology-mediated communication is essential not just to get information but also to express one's opinion and feelings and to communicate with others appropriately in a specific sociocultural discourse.

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