

EXPANDING HORIZONS: THE ROLE OF KOREAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES PROGRAMS FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN ROMANIA

Alexandra Bija

Department of Korean Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University and Department of Modern Languages and Business Communication, Faculty of Economics and Business Management, Babes-Bolyai University, Romania

alexandra.bija@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract: *This article examines the possibility of teaching Asian languages—specifically Korean—within the framework of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) in Romania, particularly for business communication. As Romania's economic ties with East Asian countries continues to strengthen, there is a growing demand for professionals equipped with both linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding to navigate these partnerships effectively. The article begins with a literature review on LSP, highlighting global trends in Asian language learning and existing research in Romania. It discusses the benefits of cultural competence in business and the competitive advantages that language proficiency can provide in the global market. By proposing a conceptual framework for implementing Korean LSP programs, this article highlights how these initiatives can enhance Romania's workforce competitiveness, foster deeper business relationships, and strengthen the country's position in the global economy. The findings aim to serve as a foundation for future empirical research and practical applications in language education.*

Keywords: *Language for Specific Purposes (LSP); Asian languages; Business communication; Business Korean; Cultural competence; Professional language training*

1. Introduction

The globalized nature of today's economy requires a workforce that is proficient in multiple languages, particularly those that dominate the global market. While English has long been the lingua franca of international business, there is an increasing demand for proficiency in less conventional languages such as Korean, Chinese, and Japanese. This demand is driven by the economic rise of East Asian countries and their growing influence in global trade and business. For countries like Romania, where traditional language education has focused on European languages, such as English, French, German, languages that we traditionally consider to be lingua francas as far as day-to-day or business communication is concerned, there is a unique opportunity to expand the scope of language education to include Asian languages through programs that emphasize Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), and not only.

Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) is an approach to language teaching that focuses on the specific linguistic skills needed in professional and academic contexts. Unlike general language education, LSP programs are tailored to the needs of specific fields such as business, medicine, law, tourism, engineering, and so on. The importance of LSP is increasingly recognized in a world where professionals are expected to not only communicate effectively in a second language but also navigate complex cultural situations and industry-specific terminology and jargon. In this regard, the inclusion of Asian languages like Korean, Chinese, and Japanese in LSP programs can provide Romanian students and professionals with significant advantages.

This article aims to explore the importance of teaching Korean for specific purposes in Romania, with a particular focus on business communication. The relevance of this topic is supported by Romania's growing economic ties with East Asian countries. According to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<https://www.mae.ro>), Romania has been expanding its trade relations with China, South Korea, and Japan over the past decade, making proficiency in these languages, and cultural proficiency, increasingly valuable for Romanian businesses and professionals. Furthermore, understanding the cultural nuances of these countries is crucial for building successful business relationships.

By investigating these aspects, this article seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the importance of Korean, and other Asian languages in LSP programs, particularly in the context of business communication in Romania. We argue that such initiatives could greatly increase the employability of Romanian graduates, promote economic growth, and strengthen Romania's position in the global market.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and documented trends to explore the possible role of Korean language instruction within Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) programs in Romania. The qualitative nature of this research is justified by the need to provide a conceptual framework and theoretical foundation for future empirical studies and practical implementations.

In our paper we adopted a descriptive and analytical methodology grounded in the following key elements:

- a. Literature review as a primary method, as the study tries to draw upon a wide range of scholarly works, reports, and documented practices related to the teaching of Korean and other Asian languages within LSP frameworks, as well as global trends in business communication and cultural competence. The literature was selected based on its relevance to LSP education principles (e.g., Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), cultural competence in business contexts (e.g., Sung, 2015; Debaty, 2022) and existing language education practices in Romania (e.g., Han, 2019; Dragan, 2018).

- b. Case examples and contextual analysis in order to contextualize the findings. Real-world examples of Romanian businesses engaging with South Korean partners are referenced. These cases illustrate the practical applications of Korean language proficiency and cultural competence in business scenarios. We gathered real-life data on economic relationships between Romania and South Korea, on institutional capacity of Asian language programs and case studies and references to educational initiatives.

This paper is a qualitative study aimed at providing a conceptual framework for future empirical research, therefore it is focusing on the analysis of existing literature and documented trends in LSP to explore the role of Korean language instruction within such programs in Romania. Qualitative research is characterized by its emphasis on understanding complex phenomena through in-depth examination and interpretation of non-numerical data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:282). Unlike quantitative methods that rely on statistical analysis, qualitative research seeks to provide rich, contextual insights into the subject matter by analyzing texts, case studies, and existing practices. Thus, this study applies a descriptive and analytical framework, grounded in Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) LSP model and supported by principles from Dudley-Evans and St. John's (1998) work on English for Specific Purposes (ESP). We tried to deliver a systematic review of LSP education principles, cultural competence in business contexts and existing language education practices in Romania, whilst analysing trends and statistics.

2.2. Scope and Limitations

Since our study focuses on laying the groundwork for implementing Korean language programs tailored to business communication in Romania, and it is a qualitative study, its primary goal is to explore existing research, identify gaps, and propose practical recommendations. Thus, a limitation, and one that we are hoping to address in future studies, is the lack of data collected through surveys, interviews, or other direct forms of research. Instead, we relied on analysing what's already available, such as academic articles, reports, and real-world examples of Romanian businesses engaging with South Korean partners. By doing this, we aimed to provide a detailed and insightful understanding of how Korean language instruction could be integrated into Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) programs. The study is designed to offer a conceptual framework and a strategic blueprint that future researchers, educators, and policymakers can build upon.

Another limitation is that the study focuses primarily on business communication as the target context for Korean language instruction. There may be other professional fields, like tourism or diplomacy, where Korean LSP programs could also be valuable. Expanding the scope to include these areas could provide a more comprehensive picture of the potential impact of Korean language education in Romania.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a solid foundation for understanding why Korean language and cultural competence are important and how they can be effectively taught. By highlighting the need, the challenges, and the possible solutions, this research paves the way for future studies and practical initiatives that can bridge the gap between Romania and East Asia.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Overview of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) in Language Education

Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) is a branch of language education that focuses on teaching specific linguistic skills adapted to the needs of particular professional or academic contexts. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987:15-16), LSP emerged in response to the increasing demand for specialized language training that could better meet the professional requirements of various fields. Unlike general language courses, LSP programs are designed to address specific vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills needed in areas such as business, law, medicine, tourism and so on (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Research has shown that LSP programs are highly effective in enhancing language learners' ability to communicate in professional settings. Basturkmen (2010:34) highlights that LSP is characterized by a focus on the needs of learners, as "needs analysis is a key component in ESP course design and development", task-based learning, and contextualized language use. These features make LSP an ideal approach for teaching languages that are necessary for specific and varied professional purposes, including business communication. By emphasizing real-world tasks and professional scenarios, LSP courses can significantly improve learners' language proficiency and prepare them for the specific communicative challenges they will encounter in their careers.

3.2. Global Trends in Asian Language Learning for Business

The increasing importance of Asian economies in the global market has led to a growing demand for proficiency in Asian languages, particularly for business purposes. Chinese, Korean, and Japanese are among the most studied Asian languages worldwide, especially in regions where economic ties with Asia are strong. According to a report by The Centre for Advanced Research in Language Acquisition (CARLA), there has been a significant rise in the number of students enrolling in Asian language courses across Europe and North America. Liu and Shibata (2008:40-43) state that the reasons for students taking Asian language classes are cultural understanding and administrative orientation. A more recent report, put together by Duolingo (2023) states that Korean, Chinese and Japanese were among the most popular languages accessed on the platform. Several studies have explored the benefits of learning Asian languages for business communication. For example, Kubota and McKay (2009:594) discuss how language proficiency not only facilitates business transactions but also helps build trust and rapport in business relationships, which are crucial in many Asian cultures. Similarly, Sung (2015: 268) notes that understanding the subtleties of Korean language and culture can provide businesses with a competitive advantage, particularly in negotiations and long-term partnerships.

Despite the growing interest, the integration of Asian languages into LSP programs remains limited in many parts of the world. We argue that there is a need for more specialized curricula that cater specifically to business communication in Asian languages. This includes developing materials that focus on industry-specific vocabulary, business etiquette, and cultural nuances, which are essential for effective communication in the Asian business context.

3.3. Existing Research on Teaching Asian Languages in Romania

In Romania, language education has traditionally focused on European languages such as English, French, and German. However, we cannot oversee the importance of diversifying language programs to include non-European languages, particularly in response to Romania's expanding economic relationships with countries like China, South Korea, and Japan. Despite the fact that the demand for Asian languages in Romania is still relatively low compared to European languages, there is a clear trend towards diversification (Eurostat).

Several studies have explored the potential benefits and challenges of integrating Asian languages into Romanian education. Research by Wang (2016:37) highlights the success of initiatives to promote Chinese language learning in Romanian primary and secondary schools, particularly where cultural exchange programs have generated enthusiasm among students. Similarly, Dragan (2018:98), Lungu (2018:109) and Focsanean (2013:73) document growing interest in Japanese language courses, especially in tertiary education, where students aiming for careers in technology and business see Japanese as a strategic asset.

As far as Korean language is concerned, Han (2019:93) lists the Romanian institutions which offer Korean Language classes, and goes further noting the interest in Korean language and culture, saying that "If 10 years ago the fans of Korea were between 14 and 26 years old, now their number has increased dramatically, and the age level has dropped, reaching somewhere between 7 and 8 years and covering both the abovementioned age segments, but slowly expanding to the adult, mature, high-end consumer of K-pop, K-drama, and Korean cuisine." (96) Overall, the existing research tackles both the promise and obstacles of teaching Asian languages in Romania. With adequate support and resources, Romanian institutions could meet the growing demand for Asian language skills and prepare students for a diverse range of professional opportunities in East Asian markets.

4. The Importance of Teaching Korean for Business Communication

4.1. Economic Ties Between Romania and Asian Countries

Romania's economic relationship with East Asian countries has been steadily growing over the past two decades. As of 2022, China, South Korea, and Japan were among Romania's top trading partners outside of the European Union. Trade with China alone accounted for a significant portion of Romania's total imports and exports, highlighting the importance of the Chinese market for Romanian businesses (Statista 2023). Similarly, Japanese (JETRO, 2023) and South Korean (Pavalasc, 2024; Agerpres, 2023) companies have made substantial investments in Romania, particularly in the automotive and electronics sectors, contributing to job creation and technological advancement.

In this context, proficiency in Asian languages is increasingly valuable for Romanian professionals who wish to engage effectively with these key markets. Learning these languages can help Romanian businesses navigate complex trade negotiations, build stronger partnerships, and better understand the cultural nuances that influence business practices in Asia. For example, in many East Asian countries, business relationships are built on trust and long-term engagement rather than short-term transactions. Being able to communicate in the local language can facilitate deeper connections and more successful negotiations.

Ties with South Korea have been growing steadily. The Romanian Agency for Investment and External Commerce recently gave a detailed report on the economic ties between Romania and South Korea, saying:

“According to Romanian statistics, the total volume of trade between Romania and the Republic of Korea amounted, in 2023, to USD 1,205.8 million, being 5.5% higher than the previous year. Romanian exports to the market of the Republic of Korea registered an increase of 35.6%, compared to 2022, reaching USD 580.5 million (28th place among the destination countries of products delivered from our country and 3rd place in Asia).

Romania's imports from the Republic of Korea decreased by 12.5% compared to 2022, reaching USD 625.3 million (29th place in the list of partner states, suppliers of products in our country and 3rd place among Asian states, after the Chinese Republic and India).

Currently, 284 commercial companies with Korean capital are registered in Romania, with a subscribed capital of USD 123.6 million, which places this country in 31st place among the investing states in our country. The real value of Korean investments in Romania is higher than the one shown in the Romanian statistics, many of them being made by subsidiaries from other countries of Korean companies.” (ARICE, 2024)

Notable South Korean corporations, including Samsung, LG, and Daewoo, have established substantial operations within Romania, emphasizing the country's potential as a strategic European base for South Korean businesses. The ongoing expansion of these companies reflects both an increase in trade volume and a deepening economic interdependence between Romania and South Korea. Moreover, as the interest in making business ties with Romania increases, every year, business matchmaking events take place between Korean and Romanian companies from various domains of activity, such as the cosmetic industry, telecommunications, agriculture, engineering, alternative energy and so on.

4.2. Benefits of Cultural Competence in Business

Cultural competence, or the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures different from one's own, is a critical skill in today's globalized business environment. This is especially true when dealing with Asian markets, where business practices are often heavily influenced by cultural norms and values. For instance, concepts such as *guānxi* 关系 in China (the importance of networks and strong relationships), *nemawashi* 根回し in Japan (the process of

building a foundation in business), and *jeong* 정/情 in Korea (principle based on loyalty and connection) are pivotal to conducting successful business in these countries (Yang, 2006:288, Glisby, 2018:19, Yang, 2011:164). By learning Asian languages, Romanian professionals not only gain linguistic skills but also develop a deeper understanding of these cultural concepts. This cultural competence can lead to more effective communication, stronger business relationships, and a better ability to navigate cultural differences that could otherwise lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. As Debaty (2022:31) suggests, language is more than just a tool for communication; it is a gateway to understanding the values, beliefs, and practices of another culture. This is exactly why, at the moment, LSP education in many institutions focus on cultural aspects as well.

In today's interconnected world, intercultural communication and cultural awareness are more important than ever. They refer to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds, acknowledging and respecting diverse perspectives, values, and communication styles. As globalization brings people and nations closer together, the need for intercultural competence has expanded beyond personal interactions to encompass professional, academic, and diplomatic spheres (Alexa, 2022:6).

Effective intercultural communication allows individuals and organizations to navigate cultural differences with proper understanding, which is crucial for reducing misunderstandings, building trust, and promoting collaboration. This competence is especially critical in international business, where subtle differences in etiquette, values, and expectations can influence negotiation outcomes and partnership success. For example, cultural concepts such as the previously mentioned *guanxi* in China or the idea of "face" in many Asian cultures (Hooker, 2012: 395) play significant roles in business contexts. Misinterpreting these cues can lead to unintentional offense or breakdowns in negotiations.

Beyond professional contexts, intercultural communication enriches personal relationships, enhances creativity, and broadens one's worldview. By engaging with diverse perspectives, individuals learn to think more flexibly, adapt to new situations, and appreciate the complexities of global society. This skill is especially valuable in multicultural environments, such as workplaces, schools, and international communities, where collaboration across cultural lines can inspire innovation and strengthen teamwork.

Ultimately, intercultural communication is fundamental in building respect, understanding, and cooperation among people from different backgrounds. As societies become more diverse and interdependent, this skill will remain vital for promoting peaceful coexistence, productive interactions, and a more inclusive global community.

4.3. Key Cultural Concepts in Korean Business Communication

Cultural competence, or the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, as we previously mentioned, is a fundamental component of LSP education. Successful business communication with South Korean partners requires more than just linguistic proficiency; it demands an understanding of the cultural values that shape professional interactions. Integrating cultural competence into LSP programs is essential for preparing Romanian professionals to navigate these cultural intricacies effectively.

The following key concepts highlight foundational aspects of Korean business culture that should be incorporated into LSP curricula.

a. *Jeong* (정) – Building Emotional Bonds and Loyalty

Jeong is a deeply rooted concept in Korean culture, representing emotional bonds and a sense of loyalty that develops over time. In business contexts, this translates to a preference for trust-based, long-term relationships over transactional engagements. Yang offers an example of *jeong* in a professional setting, saying that: “Among others, after-work gatherings are considered to be very important, along with attending personal events such as weddings and funerals. It is quite common in Korean organizations that you travel to a colleague’s hometown to stay overnight at his/her parents’ funeral to show your support and empathy. By engaging in very personal affairs, especially during difficult times, you and your colleagues in the organization build strong bonds and, consequently, experience *jeong* together. In the same vein, when attending these personal events, people usually give an envelope containing some money to their friend or colleague.” (2016:287-288)

For Romanian professionals, cultivating *jeong* involves demonstrating sincerity, patience, and commitment. Engaging in relationship-building activities, such as informal meetings or social gatherings, can help establish the trust necessary for successful partnerships. Therefore, regularly keeping in touch with Korean partners, remembering personal milestones, and showing genuine interest in their well-being fosters a sense of *jeong* that can strengthen business relationships.

b. *Nunchi* (눈치) – The Art of Social Awareness

Nunchi refers to the ability to read the room and understand unspoken cues during interactions, and it can directly be translated as “eye measure” (Debaty, 2022:26). This skill is vital in Korean business settings, where indirect communication is often preferred to avoid conflict or embarrassment. As per Choi and Choi (1992:51), this concept covers two different contexts, one of them being “indirect communicative exchanges”, and the other being “figuring out” the state of the affairs.

Romanian professionals can develop *nunchi* by paying close attention to body language, tone of voice, and pauses during discussions. Sensitivity to these subtle cues can help avoid misunderstandings and demonstrate respect for Korean communication norms. If a Korean business partner responds with prolonged silence or avoids direct disagreement, it may signal hesitation or discomfort. Adjusting one’s approach accordingly can help maintain a harmonious atmosphere.

c. *Inhwa* (인화) – Promoting Harmony and Consensus

Inhwa, or harmony, is a guiding principle in Korean business culture, particularly in hierarchical environments. Decisions are typically made collectively, and preserving group cohesion is prioritized over individual opinions. Debaty explains that *inhwa* not only expresses “(the) need to respect parents and other authority figures, such as rulers, elders, leaders, and those with a high rank in hierarchy”, while in business “workers must obey their employers’ and supervisors’ orders and expect to get satisfaction from them”, but also that “it does not mean that their efforts to preserve the relationship are one-sided ... both parties have the responsibility to maintain harmony by protecting each other’s face.” (2022:28)

Romanian professionals should be prepared for collaborative decision-making processes that may take time. Supporting group consensus and showing respect for team dynamics can enhance cooperation and mutual trust. During negotiations, for example, expressing patience and valuing each participant's input helps create a sense of shared purpose, reinforcing *inhwa*.

d. *Kibun* (기분) – Preserving Dignity and Respect

Kibun encompasses a person's dignity, emotional state, a sense of pride, and good behaviour (Chaney and Martin, 2011). In Korean culture, maintaining *kibun* is essential for positive interactions, as causing someone to lose face can damage relationships. Debaty says about this concept that: "... features of indirect communication, such as avoiding saying "no" or sharing bad news, are used to preserve each other's *Kibun*. In a business context, more specifically, Korean people always try to remain polite, friendly, and to accomplish things with the best intention. Since a manager's *Kibun* can be damaged by a lack of respect from his/her subordinates, the latter will typically avoid such conduct" (26). Lee explains how the concept of *kibun* could be misinterpreted by giving the following example: "Americans usually like to do business directly. They present their opinions and feelings by giving direct and clear answers. Sometime, they even seem argumentative to those who are from other countries. In this case, there is a very high chance that Americans would hurt Koreans' *Kibun*, and thus, it is hard for the two parties to achieve agreement on business. Therefore, it is very important for foreigners, like Americans to understand the culture of *Kibun*, and be prepared and practice picking up their non-verbal and body languages to know the actual meaning. On the other hand, Americans should try to avoid too argumentative or aggressive when doing even small business with South Koreans." (Lee, 2012, 185)

Therefore, in a business context, in order to preserve *kibun*, Romanian professionals should offer constructive feedback in a respectful manner, avoiding direct criticism or confrontation. Acknowledging achievements and showing appreciation also help maintain positive morale. Instead of pointing out mistakes directly, framing suggestions in a supportive and respectful way helps protect the *kibun* of Korean colleagues or partners.

e. Hierarchy and Respect (존경)

Hierarchy lies at the foundation of Korean society and is deeply woven into both social and professional interactions. Rooted in Confucian values, the emphasis on respect for age, seniority, and rank continues to influence the way Korean people communicate and make decisions. Understanding this hierarchical structure is essential for Romanian professionals seeking to build successful business relationships with their Korean counterparts.

In Korean culture, hierarchy shapes interactions from a young age. Children are taught to respect their elders, use honorific language and observe customs that reinforce social order. These practices are not limited to family settings; they extend to schools, workplaces, and broader social interactions.

For instance, in everyday conversations, Koreans will carefully consider factors like age, social status, and professional rank to determine the appropriate level of formality. Using the wrong form of address or failing to show the expected level of deference can cause discomfort or even damage relationships. Hierarchy and respect are also evident in speech, as Korean language has casual and honorific

language, marked by differences that appear not only at a grammatical level, as it does in most languages that have deference in speech, but also at the level of vocabulary. Then, in Korean there are 6 different registers that have to be used according to the relationship between the people involved in a conversation.

In Korean business settings, these cultural values translate into well-defined hierarchical structures that guide workplace dynamics and decision-making processes. Hierarchy in business serves several purposes: it will highlight a clear chain of command. Decisions typically flow from the top down. Senior leaders are expected to provide guidance and direction, while junior employees follow instructions and show deference. This structure helps maintain order and clarity within organizations. Then, there is the respect for experience and expertise, as age and tenure are often associated with wisdom and reliability. Senior employees, who have accumulated years of experience, are given the authority to make key decisions. Younger or newer employees are expected to demonstrate humility and a willingness to learn.

As far as business etiquette is concerned, formalities such as bowing, addressing people by their titles (e.g., *sajangnim* for a company president), and giving or receiving business cards with both hands are ways to demonstrate respect for hierarchy. These customs might seem rigid to those unfamiliar with Korean culture, but they are crucial for showing sincerity and professionalism.

4.4. Enhancing Competitive Advantage in the Global Market

Incorporating Asian languages into the Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) programs in Romania could significantly enhance the competitive advantage of Romanian professionals and businesses in the global market. With East Asia continuing to grow as a major economic hub, proficiency in languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean can open up new opportunities for trade, investment, and collaboration. Companies with employees who are fluent in these languages and culturally aware are better positioned to enter Asian markets, negotiate favourable terms, and build long-lasting partnerships.

Moreover, for Romanian students, acquiring skills in Asian languages can broaden their career prospects. As businesses increasingly seek to expand their operations into Asia, there is a growing demand for professionals who can bridge the language and cultural gaps between Romania and its Asian partners. According to a report by Hulett (2019), multilingual employees are seen as a valuable asset by companies that operate internationally, as they can help facilitate smoother communication and reduce the risk of cultural miscommunication.

4.5. Relevance to Romanian Educational and Economic Policy

The importance of teaching Korean for business purposes also aligns with broader educational and economic policies in Romania. We have mentioned that the economic ties with South Korea, Japan and China are on an ascending path. By integrating Asian languages into LSP programs, Romanian educational institutions can better prepare students for the demands of the global economy and support the country's economic goals.

Furthermore, promoting the study of Asian languages can enhance Romania's attractiveness as a destination for foreign investment. Companies from China, South Korea, and Japan that are considering investing in Romania may be more inclined to do so if they find a local workforce that is not only skilled but also

culturally and linguistically prepared to engage with Asian partners. As Romania seeks to strengthen its position in the global market, cultivating language skills that align with its economic interests is a strategic move.

5. Feasibility and Interest in Learning Asian Languages in Romania

5.1. Current Demand for Asian Languages in Romania

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the interest among Romanian students and professionals in learning Asian languages, particularly Korean. This trend is largely driven by the growing interest in Asian pop culture, as noted by Han (2019:93) and Dragan (2018:98). Romania's growing economic ties with East Asia and the increasing presence of Asian businesses within the country are at fault as well. The demand is not limited to students alone; professionals in fields such as business, tourism, and international relations have also shown a keen interest in acquiring Asian language skills. The Korean Cultural Centre in Cluj-Napoca alone has individuals employed in various domains participating in general Korean Language classes.

5.2. Institutional Capacity and Availability of Language Programs

While interest in Asian languages is growing, the availability of language programs structured to meet this demand remains limited in Romania. Currently, only a few universities offer courses in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and most of these are part of general language studies programs rather than specialized LSP curricula. For example, the University of Bucharest and Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca offer degree programs in Korean, Japanese and Chinese studies, but these programs do not specifically focus on language for business or for professional purposes (University of Bucharest, 2023; Babes-Bolyai University, 2023).

Aside the two aforementioned state universities, there are a number of other institutions which offer classes for those who desire to learn the 3 languages, but again, without a specific focus on LSP, but rather general use. Japanese is also being taught in a number of private universities such as Hyperion University, Romanian-American University and "Dimitrie Cantemir" University in Bucharest. Some secondary and tertiary education institutions offer Japanese classes as well, such as "Ion Creanga" and "Emil Racovita" National Colleges in Bucharest, and "Mihai Eminescu" National College in Suceava. And then we have other cultural centers and institutions that aim at promoting Japanese language and culture in Romania, such as Babes-Bolyai Japanese Cultural Centre and Sembazuru Centre in Cluj-Napoca, East-Asian Studies Centre in Timisoara, Japanese Cultural Centre in Oradea, Murasaki Centre, Akino Centre, Sakura Japanese School in Bucharest and the Sakuranbo Association in Constanta (Japanese Embassy in Romania, 2023).

Korean Language is also taught in a number of private Universities, such as the Romanian-American University, and "Titu Maiorescu" University in collaboration with Sejong Cultural Centre. Other Cultural centers and institutions that teach Korean language are: the FIDES Centre for Foreign Languages, Arirang Academy, Romanian-Korean Studies Centre in Bucharest, the Korean Cultural Centre in Cluj-Napoca, Shilla Association in Timisoara, Sejong Centre in Iasi and others.

Chinese language is taught through the Confucius Institute, a Chinese institution that actively promotes Chinese language and culture in multiple cities in Romania, such as Cluj-Napoca, Bucharest, Brasov, Sibiu and others.

5.3. Potential Challenges in Implementing LSP Programs in Asian Languages

Implementing LSP programs in Asian languages in Romania presents several challenges that need to be addressed to ensure their success. One of the primary challenges is the shortage of qualified teachers who are proficient in Asian languages and possess the necessary skills to teach them in a professional or business context. There are currently very few Romanian educators who are trained in both the language and the specific cultural and business practices of East Asian countries. This can interfere with the development of effective LSP programs in these languages. To overcome this, a solution would be to develop specialized training programs to equip existing current Korean language instructors and Korean language graduates with LSP teaching skills, and collaborate with universities in South Korea to offer certification courses or exchange programs for Romanian teachers.

Another challenge is the lack of sufficient teaching materials that are specifically designed for LSP in Asian languages. Most available resources focus on general language learning rather than specialized language use in business settings. Developing high-quality, context-specific teaching materials will require collaboration between Romanian educators, language experts, and business professionals familiar with Asian markets. Additionally, obtaining funding for such initiatives may be challenging, as institutions may need to prioritize their resources towards more established language programs.

Moreover, there is the misconceptions about the difficulty of learning Asian languages. Many students and professionals in Romania may perceive Asian languages as too complex or irrelevant to their careers, leading to lower enrolment in such programs. Addressing these misconceptions through awareness campaigns, showcasing success stories, and demonstrating the tangible benefits of Asian language proficiency in business can help increase interest and participation, and one way to do so is to organize outreach programs to showcase the simplicity and logical structure of both *hangeul* and Korean grammar structure. Highlighting success stories of individuals who have learned Korean and benefited professionally could also change public perception. Moreover, using interactive learning tools such as mobile apps, gamification, and online platforms to make learning Korean more engaging and accessible could make it more popular. And lastly, offering introductory courses focused on essential business vocabulary and phrases to help students gain confidence before tackling more complex language structures could make the endeavour seem less difficult.

5.4. Opportunities for Expansion and Collaboration

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for expanding LSP programs in Asian languages in Romania. One promising approach is to use digital technologies to provide flexible, accessible language learning options. Online courses through teaching platforms such as Zoom, MS Teams, mobile apps, and virtual exchange programs can make learning Asian languages more accessible to a broader audience, including working professionals who may not

have the time to attend traditional classes.

Additionally, Romanian educational institutions can collaborate with Asian cultural and educational organizations to develop tailored LSP programs. By building these partnerships, Romanian institutions can enhance their capacity to offer high-quality LSP programs in Asian languages and create a more culturally enriching learning environment.

Furthermore, there is an opportunity to integrate Asian language learning with other disciplines such as international business, economics, and cultural studies. Interdisciplinary programs that combine language learning with business and cultural studies can provide a more inclusive education, preparing students to navigate the complexities of working with Asian partners. Such programs can attract a diverse group of students interested in careers that require both language proficiency and cultural competence.

All things considered, the growing interest in learning Asian languages among Romanian students and professionals presents a unique opportunity to expand Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) programs in these languages. While there are challenges related to teacher availability, resource development, and cultural perceptions, these can be addressed through strategic investments in education, international collaboration, and innovative approaches to language teaching. By implementing LSP programs in Asian languages, Romania can enhance its economic ties with East Asia, support its global business aspirations, and equip its workforce with the skills needed to succeed in a multicultural business environment.

6. Recommendations for Implementing LSP Programs for Asian Languages in Romania

To successfully implement Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) programs for Asian languages in Romania, it is crucial to design curricula that align with the specific needs of the market. These programs should not only focus on language proficiency but also incorporate relevant cultural, economic, and business practices specific to each Asian language and country. For instance, a curriculum designed for Korean LSP could include modules on business etiquette and corporate culture, which are essential for effective communication and relationship-building in Korean business contexts.

Another significant challenge in implementing LSP programs for Asian languages is the shortage of qualified teachers who possess both language proficiency and the skills to teach within a specific professional context. To address this, educational institutions should encourage students who learn Asian languages to enrol in teacher training programs that focus on pedagogical skills, which will aid in a better performance as future teachers.

To expand access to LSP programs for Asian languages, institutions could turn to digital tools and online learning platforms. Online courses offer flexibility, making them accessible to a wider range of learners, including working professionals who may not have the time to attend traditional, in-person classes. These platforms can also facilitate the integration of multimedia resources, such as video tutorials, interactive simulations, and virtual reality experiences, which can enhance the learning experience. For example, the use of AI and various online platforms could enable students to participate in simulated business meetings with Japanese or

Chinese clients, providing a realistic and immersive environment to practice language skills and cultural etiquette. Online learning platforms can also support the development of collaborative projects with peers and professionals from Asian countries, fostering cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

To increase interest and enrolment in LSP programs for Asian languages, it is essential to actively promote the benefits of learning these languages for professional purposes. Awareness campaigns could be conducted in collaboration with industry leaders, highlighting success stories of Romanian professionals who have successfully leveraged their Asian language skills in their careers.

Additionally, universities and cultural institutions could organize workshops, seminars, and networking events that showcase the importance of Asian language proficiency in today's globalized business environment. Featuring guest speakers from businesses with strong ties to Asia could provide students and professionals with insights into how language skills can enhance career prospects and facilitate successful international collaborations

7. Conclusion

In a world that is increasingly interconnected, proficiency in Korean, and other Asian languages, has become a valuable asset for professionals who are involved in international business. As Romania continues to strengthen its economic ties with South Korea, the need for Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) programs in Korean has never been more evident. This article has highlighted the significant benefits of implementing Korean-focused LSP programs, showing how such initiatives enhance the competitiveness of Romanian businesses in sectors such as technology, automotive, and energy, while providing professionals with essential language and cultural skills necessary to navigate complex negotiations and establish strong partnerships.

Moreover, LSP programs can contribute to Romania's broader economic and diplomatic goals. By helping professionals acquire specialized language skills and cultural knowledge, Romania can position itself as a valuable partner to Asian economies, attracting investment and trade. The ability to communicate in an Asian language, paired with an understanding of local business etiquette and cultural practices could pave the way for more international collaborations.

In conclusion, the implementation of LSP programs for Asian languages in Romania is not only a strategic educational initiative; it is an investment in the country's future economic growth and international standing. By recognizing the value of language skills as a bridge to deeper understanding and more effective communication, we can form a generation of professionals who do not only speak Asian languages but are also able to navigate the nuances of global business. This, in turn, will ensure that Romania remains a competitive and influential player on the world stage.

8. Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Seed Program for Korean Studies of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Studies Promotion Service at the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2023-INC-225001).

References:

- [1]. **Agerpres.** (2023) *CCIB: Peste 280 de firme cu capital sud-coreean erau inregistrate in Romania, in septembrie*, Available: <https://www.agerpres.ro/economic/2023/11/01/ccib-pest-280-de-firme-cu-capital-sud-coreean-er-au-inregistrate-in-romania-in-septembrie--1196493>
- [2]. **Alexa, O.** (2022). "Intercultural Communication Within the Global Economy. A Look at Asia". *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law*. 5-12.
- [3]. **Ambasada Japoniei in Romania** (2023) Lista institutiilor cu predare in limba japoneza, Available: https://www.ro.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ro/cultura_institutii.html
- [4]. **ARICE.** (2023) *Joint Committee for Industrial Cooperation Romania – Republic of Korea*, Available: <https://arice.gov.ro/1/comitetului-mixt-pentru-cooperare-industriala-romania-republica-coreea/>
- [5]. **Babes-Bolyai University.** (2023), Available: <https://lett.ubbcluj.ro/curricula-2024-2027-nivel-licenta/>
- [6]. **Basturkmen, H.** (2010). *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- [7]. **CARLA.** (2023) Available: <https://carla.umn.edu/about>
- [8]. **Chaney, L. H., & Martin J. S.** (2011). *Intercultural business communication* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- [9]. **Choi, S.C., and Choi S.H.** (1992). "The Conceptualization of Korean Tact, Noon- Chi". *Innovations in Cross-Cultural Psychology*, edited by Saburo Iwawaki, Yoshihisan Kashima, and Kwow Leung, Berwyn, PA: Swets & Zeitlinger, 49-61.
- [10]. **Debaty, J.** (2022) *Culture shock in intercultural business communication: a focus on interactions between Western and East Asian Workers*, Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres, Université catholique de Louvain.
- [11]. **Denzin, N. K.** and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, London: Sage Publications.
- [12]. **Dragan, A.** (2018). "Teaching Japanese Language in Tertiary and Secondary Education: State and Private Institutions in Romania". *Acta Linguistica Asiatica*.
- [13]. **Dudley-Evans, T.** and **St John, M. J.** (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-disciplinary Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [14]. **Duolingo.** (2023) *2023 duolingo language report*, Available: <https://blog.duolingo.com/2023-duolingo-language-report/>
- [15]. **Eurostat.** (2023) Database, Available: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/education-and-training/database?node_code=educ_lang
- [16]. **Focșeneanu, A.** (2013). "Japanese Studies at the University of Bucharest: Focusing on the Center for Japanese Studies. Japanese Studies Around the World". *New Trends in Japanese Studies*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.
- [17]. **Glisby, M.** (2018) *From Understanding to Navigating Japanese Business Culture*, Available: https://www.eu-japan.eu/sites/default/files/report_from_understanding_to_navigating_japanese_business_culture.pdf

- [18]. **Han C.H.** (2019) "Teaching Korean Language and Culture in the Romanian Space. Challenges and Approaches". *Annals Of "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University Linguistics, Literature And Methodology Of Teaching* Volume XVIII, No.2, 92-96.
- [19]. **Hooker, J.** (2012). "Cultural differences in business communication" in *Intercultural Discourse and Communication*, Wiley.
- [20]. **Hulett, M.** (2019) *How The Power Of Language Can Grow Your Career And Business*, Available: <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbestechcouncil/2019/07/02/how-the-power-of-language-can-grow-your-career-and-business/#1fd2099870>
- [21]. **Hutchinson, T.** and **Waters, A.** (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-centred Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [22]. **JETRO.** (2023). Rūmania shinshutsu nikkei kigyō (Nihon ni honsha ga aru kigyō) / Major Japanese-Affiliated Companies operating in Romania (headquartered in Japan), Available: https://www.jetro.go.jp/world/europe/ro/links/links_2.html
- [23]. **Kubota, R.** and **McKay, S.** (2009). "Globalization and Language Learning in Rural Japan: The Role of English in the Local Linguistic Ecology." *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(4), 593-619.
- [24]. **Lee, C.Y.** (2012). "Korean Culture And Its Influence on Business Practice". *The Journal of International Management Studies*, 184, Volume 7, Number 2, 184-191.
- [25]. **Liu, J.J.** and **Shibata, S.** (2008). *Why College Students Want to Learn Asian Languages: A Comparative Study of Motivational Factors for the Selection of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese*.
- [26]. **Lungu, M.** (2018). "Overview of Japanese Language in Upper Secondary Education and School Curriculum in Romania". *Acta Linguistica Asiatica*.
- [27]. **Pavalasc, M.** (2024) *Topul celor mai puternice companii din Coreea de Sud prezente în România. Samsung va avea un concurent serios*, Available: <https://termene.ro/articole/topul-celor-mai-puternice-companii-din-coreea-de-sud-prezente-in-romania>
- [28]. **Statista.** (2023) *Main import partner countries for Romania from 2018 to 2023, by value*. Available: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1094674/import-partner-countries-romania/>
- [29]. **Sung, J. B.** (2015). "Korean for specific purpose program for students of hospitality", in J. Trace, T. Hudson, & J. D. Brown, *Developing Courses in Languages for Specific Purposes*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i.
- [30]. **University of Bucharest** (2023) Programe de studii, Available: <https://unibuc.ro/studii/programe-de-studii/licenta/#1544007903630-16679d6c-1dee>
- [31]. **Wang, Y.** (2016). "Chinese Language Promotion Activities in Romanian Primary and Secondary Schools". *Management of Sustainable Development Sibiu*, Romania, Volume 8, No.2.
- [32]. **Yang, F.** (2011). "The Importance of Guanxi to Multinational Companies in China:.. *Asian Social Science*. 7. 10.5539/ass.v7n7p163.
- [33]. **Yang, I.** (2006). "Jeong exchange and collective leadership in Korean organizations." *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*. 23. 283-298. 10.1007/s10490-006-9003-6.