Korean Studies in Mexico: A Survey and Recommendations

Won-Ho Kim*

The Setting

Some 1,033 Koreans left Jemulpo (Today Inchon) port for Mexico in April 4, 1905, and arrived about 40 days later in Merida, Yucatan. They were first Korean immigrants to Mexico, arranged by a Japanese colonial company but actually sold as slaves to work in twenty-four henequen farms in nearby Chench, Za-Chil, etc. Frustrated with the miserable life there and suffering from the tumultuous Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), many of them attempted to escape and ultimately moved to Cuba. It is estimated that more than two thousand Korean descendants from the first immigrants live in Mexico and about eight hundred in Cuba. The immigration was the first contact between Mexico and Korea. Due to the first Korean community’s remote location from the national capital and to their low-class status, however, they and their descents did not attract proper attention by central governments in Mexico and Cuba, neither by social scientists. They were not able to expect anything from their motherland as Korea was annexed in 1910 by the Imperial Japan. It is the different situation from those in Argentina and Brazil, where

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* Professor, Graduate School of International and Area Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. whkim@hufs.ac.kr
the first Korean immigrants in 1960s, arranged by the Korean government, and their descendants stimulated the local academic interest in Korea and Koreans.

Since the 1960s, South Korea (hereafter Korea unless specified) has undertaken the state-led and export-oriented, industrialization and economic development strategy. Its trade structure focused in the beginning on advanced markets such as United States, Japan, and European countries. By the 1970s and 1980s, its trade frontiers came to include the Middle Eastern and major Southeast Asian markets. Mexico, however, was not in the list of major trade partners although its economic size was larger than Korea’s. That was principally because of Mexico’s long tradition of inward-looking development model. Since the Great Depression, when Mexico’s exports to the United States and other industrial countries were substantially reduced and Mexico lacked the foreign exchange needed to buy manufactured goods, Mexico undertook the import-substitution industrialization (ISI) development strategy. This inward-looking development strategy faced a dilemma beginning in late 1960s due to the current account deficits and accumulated foreign debts. The debt crisis in the early 1980s actually saw an end to the validity of ISI as a development strategy.

Joining the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1986 was the milestone that signaled Mexico’s official abandonment of the formerly protectionist ISI development strategy. The Carlos Salinas de Gortari Administration (1988-1994) took further steps towards liberalizing Mexico’s markets. As this meant a change in development strategy, from an inward to an outward orientation, Mexico needed to enhance its international competitiveness and penetration of international markets. Thus, free trade with the U.S. was sought in June 1990 to serve this new strategy.² Mexico’s admission to GATT encouraged Korean traders to make inroads in the Mexican market. By the time Mexico began to negotiate for a North American free trade area, Korean companies aggressively invested in Mexico to benefit from its more favorable location. The Korean president’s first state visit to Mexico in September 1991 further accelerated the mutual commercial and cultural exchanges between the two countries. Even

during the peso crisis (1994-1995), Korean companies were unique still deciding to invest in Mexico and hire more local workers. Such increasing presence of Korea in Mexico stimulated Mexican scholars to get interested in Korean subjects for their research and teaching although some others had already done with several works on Korean culture, economy and industries mostly in a comparative perspective.

While a total of thirteen universities in Korea ran the Spanish Department and sent students to Mexico for exchange programs, more universities and programs in Mexico came to be familiar with Korea. When the author joined the University of the Americas (udla-Mexico) as the first Korean full-time professor in Mexico in 1990, there were about fifteen Korean students in graduate programs in Mexico, about six hundred Korean immigrants in the whole Mexico, and few scholars studied Korea. Currently, there are more than one hundred Korean students, more than 25,000 Korean immigrants, and more than 30 Mexican scholars studying Korea. On the other hand, Taekwondo was another motivation for Mexicans to get interested in Korea. It arrived in Mexico during the 1970s although its main importance was recognized later in the 1990s. Nowadays it is considered as one of the most popular sports in Mexico, currently with 150,000 practitioners. Each year several Taekwondo gyms in Mexico send their students to affiliated Korean gyms.

However, the scope of Korean studies is rather limited. Although Korean tv dramas recently attracted the Mexican audiences who spontaneously organized Korea Fans Clubs, the Korean literature did not serve much to the Mexican public’s interest. The award of the Nobel Prize in literature to Octavio Paz drew Korean attention towards other, Mexican literary works such as the novels of Carlos Fuentes or Historia mínima de Mexico. In contrast, awareness of Korean literature in the Spanish-speaking world, including Mexico, is still marginal and in its initial stages. Under the circumstances, the Korea Foundation, one of the Korean studies promoting government agencies, made an important contribution to stimulate Korean studies programs such as those established at the College of Mexico (El

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Colegio de México: Colmex). But its inconsistent policy combined with the lack of serious interest by the Mexican institutions to produce low level of development of Korean studies in Mexico.

The following sections will review the significance of Korean studies in Mexico, and the institutions and scholars dedicated to Koreans studies, and attempt to suggest several policy suggestions to enhance Koreans studies in Mexico.

**Significance of Korean Studies in Mexico**

In the western scholarship in general, Korea has not taken a major part of Asian studies for a long time. European and American academic interest tended to focus on China and Japan, and they did not afford to cover Korea. Such is the case in Latin America, particularly in Mexico. Following suit of European and American scholarship, the Mexican academic community has remained distant from Korea. Even when u.s., Soviet, Japanese, and Australian academic communities touched upon some Korean themes, the Hispano academic world has not made a notable contribution to the Korean studies. Even limited Korean immigration studies in Argentina and Mexico were not carried out until the 1990s. More generally, the so-called “Oriental Studies” were not much known in Mexico until the 1950s, when some interest in China and India slowly grew with Asian Studies programs initiated by Colmex, and limitedly by the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Unam), the largest university in Mexico.

On the other hand, studies on Korea have been more published in English or other European languages than in Spanish. In Spain there was once a movement to translate Korean literature and philosophy into Spanish by the initiative of several publishers. But in Latin America there was no such systematic effort. Rather, spontaneous books and theses by university students filled the vacuum.

There may have been a certain epochal factor in limiting Korean studies. Alfredo Romero Castilla of Unam, who is considered as the first Mexican Koreanist, argues that the modern Korea since liberation from the Japanese colonial rule was not fully appreciated by Mexican scholars due to ideological reasons. The post-revolutionary Mexico was rather independent of the Cold War. Although Mexico maintained strategic relations with u.s., it did not always comply with u.s. in several diplomatic
issues. For instance, Mexico did not agree with U.S. embargo against Fidel Castro’s Cuba in the name of national sovereignty and self-determination. Mexican scholars also wanted to look into Korean issues not only from the South Korean perspective but also the North Korean one while Mexico itself experienced alteration of conservative and progressive governments in the mid-20th century but under the same tricolor banner of the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (Pri). Many Mexican scholars found in Korea a divided nation with only a half explanation of its whole identity by each half. Castilla recalls that in the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, it was almost impossible to study rigorously and systematically the Korean history and culture not only in Korea but also out of Korea due to influence of one side view either by South Korea or North Korea. Particularly, not many studies on North Korea were published by non-North Korean authors. Many of that kind were those textbooks of history and heroic fiction published by North Korean foreign language service. But with time the research field was widened, and recent research outputs became more balanced.⁴

One can find it interesting how a Mexican viewed Koreans. Castilla, a historian married with a Japanese woman, visited Korea for the first time in late 1960s by the academic exchange agreement between Unam and the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (Hufs) in Korea. He confessed later the he then found in Korea his academic destination as he admired “the land of morning calm.” But the political situation was not so calm but dynamic in every aspect in that period. The nation was under the economic development drive by ex-general Park Chung Hee, and his bureaucratic authoritarian regime was confronted with labor unions, activist students and political opponents crying out the cause of democracy. Castilla’s first contact with Koreans and subsequent cultural shock impressed him with a nation of changing society and turmoil. He interprets the process of nation building as the contemporary motive of admiration and the process of historical transformation.

To the eyes of a Mexican intellectual, Koreans carried several different idiosyncrasies by which foreigners tend to understand them. Comparison with other nations of the world in their idiosyncrasies was the easiest job of that kind.

⁴ Alfredo Romero Castilla, “Para comprender la transformación histórica de Corea,” unpublished paper.
Firstly, Koreans looked as “Irish of Asia” because they had the temperamental, volatile character and inclination for music and singing. Secondly, Koreans were “Spaniards of Asia” as they had the tendency to “laugh at their and others’ misfortunes and enjoy the spectacle as Spaniards like bullfights.” Thirdly, Koreans were “North Americans of Asia” because they acquired a new awareness of themselves with rapid industrial development and social change, and even “demonstrated openly ethnic superiority.” Lastly but not the least, Prof. Castilla found in Koreans the “Mexicans of Asia” because of their national pride, the “determination to secure identity and to achieve economic progress.” He was inspired to take this configuration by the Nobel literature Prize laureate Octavio Paz, who asserts in his book El laberinto de la soledad that Mexicans are not the only solitaries but that they need to find other isolated people in the world to build together a common destiny.

Whether the motivation comes from either anthropological or political or economic, Korea slowly rises as a research field in the Mexican scholarship. Those motivations for Korean studies in Mexico principally come from the discovery of Asia, East Asia or Asia-Pacific as unknown force in the world. No Mexican academic institutions have straightforwardly the specific Center for Korean Studies. In most cases, Asia-Pacific Center, apec Center and Asian Studies Center include Korea in their sphere of research or study. The Korean language also is one of the major Asian languages to be chosen in most cases as a non-compulsory foreign language. The interest in studying Korea comes along with the practical needs such as economic, commercial and political ones.

This has several implications. Firstly, Korea should be studied to complete understanding East Asia after the studies of China and Japan. Language, cultural, historical, political, economic and anthropological approaches to Korean studies take this path. That is why many apec Study Centers in Mexico focus on Korea and they are the principal window for Korean studies. Mexico’s higher education has the tradition of linking university curricula to professional jobs. College graduates are called with the professional titles —licenciado (similar but superior to bachelor), engineer, economist, lawyer... — before their last names to indicate their fields of academic training.

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5 Alfredo Romero Castilla, ibid.
Mexico’s practical interest in Asia principally started in early 1990s, when the Cuenca del Pacífico (Pacific Rim) became one of the clichés among Mexico’s intellectuals and policy practitioners with stronger perception of new industrial power houses in East Asia. In the new international framework, East Asia came up as a new horizon for them. Although Mexico’s trade with the whole Asia never had passed five percent out of its total trade with the world by then, linkage with East Asia was emphasized by opinion leaders. Mexico finally was accepted as a member in apec in 1993. Then, new research centers for apec studies opened in several universities as windows to the study of East Asia including Korea.

Secondly, Korea is an important subject to study geopolitics in Northeast Asia since the 19th century to include the division of the Korean peninsula. Historical and geopolitical approaches cherish this interest of research. Thirdly, the comparative study of South Korea and North Korea should be an interesting subject in terms of their differentiated paths of social transformation. Political and international relations approaches should be employed for such studies. Fourthly, the comparative study of Mexico and South Korea in their processes of economic development and the study of the relationship between the two countries should be an important practical subject. This last theme is most popular among Mexican Koreanists for the time being because they want to draw implications from Korea’s successful economic, industrial and social development. When Korean and Mexican governments established the bilateral 21st Century Commission to study the common vision and action plan to submit the presidents of both countries, the Commission met several times for a couple of years to prepare the final report comprised of an executive proposal and four thematic papers. These four papers employed the comparative approach to analyze the Mexican and Korean political and international, economic, industrial, and cultural and education achievements and challenges.⁶

**Mexican Institutions and Scholars**

Mexico has a large territory comprised of 31 states and a federal capital. Although there is no core Korean studies institution, several individual institutions have interest in promoting

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Korean studies, and dozens of scholars continue to conduct research on themes related to Korea even scattered, space-wise and time-wise. While students of Korea in Argentina and Chile rather concentrate in their capital cities, those in Mexico are scattered throughout the country. In these terms, it can be said that Mexico has no short history in Korean studies, but not much developed both in terms of the institutional focus and the number of core researchers. It is still in its infancy.

In recent years, there have been initiatives to gather together Koreanists in Mexico. The first nation-wide Conference on Korean Studies was held at Colmex in May 26, 2008 by the sponsorship of the Korea Foundation and Korean Embassy. It was not a rigorous academic seminar but rather a social meeting. About forty Koreanists in Mexico met together to present their own research interest and future study plans. From this meeting, however, a Promoting Group was elected, and its second Conference was held in the University of Colima during March 26-27, 2009 with a number of academic papers presented. Several papers were not original ones specifically to be presented to this Conference, but they deserved attention among the participants to get to know the topics and fields covered about Korea. While there is no national journal of Korean studies in Mexico, the University of Colima plans a book to contain all the papers presented in the second Conference on Korean Studies. More importantly, however, a national association, the Mexican Academy of Korean Studies (AMEsCo), was established on this occasion, with Alfredo Romero Castilla of Unam as president and Juan Felipe Lopez Aymes as secretary general. In this Meeting, thirty-one Koreanist scholars signed an agreement to launch AmesCo whose principal purpose shall be to promote Korean studies in Mexico and Mexico-Korea comparative studies. Among other plans announced, AmesCo was to open a website to facilitate virtual communication among the members and the public, and to create and maintain periodical publication in electronic format. The original Promoting Group was assigned to prepare the Statute of the AmesCo.\(^7\)

A second grouping of scholars relevant to Korean studies can be the Mexican Consortium of apec Study Centers. For the reason above mentioned, apec studies may entail several

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\(^7\) Acuerdo de Creación de la Academia Mexicana de Estudios Coreanos, March 27, 2009.
significant aspects of Korean studies. Currently, the University of Colima, University of Guadalajara, University of Baja California Sur, Michoacana University of San Nicolás de Hidalgo have their apec Study Centers. The Monterrey Institute of Technology (Itesm) is preparing to open one soon. As in other apec member countries, Mexico also runs the Mexican Consortium of apec Study Centers. The role of technical secretary is now played by Ernesto Rangel, Director of the apec Study Center (Ceapec) of the University of Colima. Most of Asia specialists in each university are affiliated or full members of their apec Centers because these provide them with systematic and professional research environments. Those apec Centers publish their own journals with occasional papers on Korea. Particularly, Portes, the journal published by the University of Colima’s Ceapec, dedicated its first issue (Vol. 1 No. 1, 2007), edited by Fernando Alfonso Rivas Mira, as the Korea special number to include seven papers on Korea written by scholars from different universities and policy practitioners.

Currently, the most active Mexican higher education institutions in Korean studies are the University of Colima and University of Guadalajara. But the oldest are Colmex and Unam. In 1964, Colmex established the Oriental Studies section at its Center for International Studies. In 1968, it became the Center for Oriental Studies whose main focus was on China and Japan. Due to the ethnocentric connotation, the term Oriental then was deleted in 1974 to change the institution’s name to the Center for Asian and North African Studies, and in 1980 it changed to the present Center for Asian and African Studies (Centro de Estudios de Asia y África: ceaa). Thanks to the sponsorship by the Korea Foundation, the master’s degree program in Korean Studies once was a boom field in Colmex in the mid-1990s with the Korean professor Kim Hyong-ju as the coordinator. However, when kf decided not to extend its sponsorship later, the program immediately lost steam. Colmex was also the Mexican counterpart of the Korean Foundation to co-organize the first meeting of the Korea-Mexico/Mexico-Korea Forum held in Colmex in November 1997. Colmex, however, failed to follow up the Forum by organizing the Mexican delegation for the second meeting. For the time being, Juan Felipe Lopez Aymes remains the only Koreanist in Colmex. His academic interest covers Korean conglomerates in their role played for Korea’s economic development and also in
their behavior in investing in Mexico. Instead of master’s program, Colmex’s Korean studies now may survive through its Academic Committee (Cuerpo Académico: ca) of Asia Pacific Studies, coordinated by Juan José Ramírez Bonilla, which facilitates research and academic exchanges with East Asian countries. Their interest in Korea includes policies related to education, knowledge and technological innovation and their linkage to the national development. Colmex’s Anuario Asia Pacífico (Asia Pacific Annuls) includes a South Korea chapter.

In Unam, Alfredo Romero Castilla remains as the key person of Korean studies. At Unam once was the Center for Oriental Studies without surviving for a number of years. Yet Unam was the first higher education institution in Mexico that offered Korean history and language courses. Currently Sinuhé Damián Castilleja and Sang-hae Chung are in charge of teaching Korean in the Department of Asian and Russian Languages. Among other students, Rocio Salinas conduct research on the Korean-Spanish dictionary. Rather more social scientists at Unam are interested in Korea. Carlos Uscanga Prieto of the Center for International Relations of the School of Political and Social Sciences, who earned his Ph.D. degree in Nagoya, Japan, was involved in the inter-governmental project to study the feasibility of the Mexico-Korea Free Trade Agreement in 2004. Carlos González Mares also studied the same issue independently. But both of them have not gone beyond the topic to study Korea yet. Victor Godínez Zuniga studied Korea’s financial liberalization in a comparative perspective, Alfonso Aragon studies North Korean nuclear arms, and Gustavo Alberto García Rios wrote about Korea’s international context of the nineteenth century. Although not for Korean studies, Unam in recent years has started joint programs with some Korean scientific research institutes. This opened the door for further projects on bio-technology, genetics, neurology, science of the sea, material and nanotechnology, information technology and energy technology. This may contribute ultimately to bringing Korean studies back in due course.

In the University of Colima, the University Center of Studies and Researches on the Pacific Rim (CUEICP) and the APEC Study Center (CEAPEC) belonging to the School of Economics play the pivotal role of promoting Korean Studies. They are formally

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8 Written interview with Juan Felipe López Aymes, August 2009.
two institutions, but behave as one entity within the same house. They organize an Annual Research Seminar where at least one panel is assigned to researches on Korea. The School of Economics runs a doctoral program in Trans-Pacific Relations, where one doctoral student now pursues his dissertation on Korean civic movements. In the School of Economics, more than three students work with their theses on the Korean economy for their licenciatura degrees. It also launched a new program of International Negotiation in August 2009 that included Korea and East Asian countries as Mexico’s trade negotiating partners. The Korean studies courses at CEAPEC are given by Ernesto Rangel Delgado and Angel Licona Michel. In the School of Political and Social Sciences, two courses include the themes on Korea: Seminar on Japan, Korea, Russia and America, and Seminar on Japan, Korea, Russia and Asia. They are given by Su Jin Lim, Maria Elena Romero Ortiz, and Emma Mendoza Martinez.

What is unique is that at the University of Colima, the Korean language is one of the three compulsory Asian languages—Japanese, Chinese and Korean—for the undergraduate majors in International Relations with focus in Asia at the School of Political and Social Sciences. It does not promote a general approach but a specific country approach with language requirements. Students begin to take the Korean language courses from the fourth semester and continue for five semesters in total. The instructor is Hye Jin Lee. In the School of Foreign Languages, the Korean language is freely open for those who wish to learn it whether students or community residents. This program has been introduced in August 2009 to promote the Korean language, and an exchange student from HUFS, the University of Colima’s partner institution, is in charge. About fifteen students registered for the first course.9

The University of Guadalajara (Udeg) has been the most popular partner institution to Korean universities. The HUFS, Seoul National University, and KyungHee University signed separate agreements with Udeg for student and faculty member exchanges, but only the Udeg-KyungHee Program successfully regularized the annual academic seminar alternating the

9 Written interviews with Ernesto Rangel, Su Jin Lim, and Angel Licona Michel in August 2009.
venues in their campuses. The key persons in the University of Guadalajara include Melba Falck, Enrique Valencia Lomeli, Genevieve Marchini. Their research fields vary from international relations to economic reform to financial structure. Falck focuses on the agrarian policy of Korea, Valencia's academic interest covers Korean government’s economic policies in a comparative perspective while Marchini focuses on financial structure, crisis management, and foreign banks in a comparative perspective. The Korean studies-related courses at Udeg include Economy and Society in South Korea. Udeg’s Department of Pacific Studies publishes academic journal called México y la Cuenca del Pacífico (Mexico and the Pacific Rim) whose first number (Vol. 1 No. 1, 1998) and the 22nd number (Vol. 7 No. 22, 2004) were dedicated to Korea. In its first thirty numbers during 1998-2007, papers written on South Korea numbered eighteen, and those on North Korea were three.\footnote{Written interview with Enrique Valencia Lomeli in December 2009; México y la cuenca del pacífico Índice de contenido 1998-2007, Universidad de Guadalajara Deparmento de Estudios del Pacífico Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades.}

The Monterrey Institute of Technology (ITESM) is one of the largest private higher institutions in Mexico. Its School of Business Administration promotes knowledge of Asian markets through its annual tour program to Japan, China and Korea, called the International Business Leadership Program (IBLP). Its academic depth in Korean studies is still in its infancy, but has the potential to grow as a subfield of the program. Renato Balderrama of the Department of International Relations and Political Science of ITESM Campus Monterrey conducts research on Chinese and Korean industrial clusters in a comparative perspective.

In the Nayarit Autonomous University (UAN), which is located in Tepic of the State of Nayarit, the Korean Studies is run by the Pacific Study and Research Program. The Program has opened a course called Korean Language and Culture. Each semester about thirty students take the course given by the Korean instructor Sang Cheol Yun. The level of Korean language courses, however, tends to be Basic I, and Basic II. In the Program, two more professors, Abel Gomez Gutierrez and Nadia Selene Hernandez Aguiler, are involved to offer the international relations and Pacific Rim approach and the international trade
issues through their International Affairs and Asia Seminar courses. Nadia Selene Hernández Aguilar conducts research on the commercial relations between Korea and Mexico.¹¹

In addition, several other Mexican universities have scholars and interested in Korean studies, but not with institutional infrastructure. They include the Metropolitan Autonomous University at Xochimilco (UAm-Xochimilco), UAm-Iztapalapa, UAm-Azcapotzalco, Iberoamerican University, Sonora Institute of Technology, and University of Valle de Mexico Campus Texcoco. Particularly at UAm-Xochimilco, José Luis León-Manríquez conducts research on Korea in a comparative perspective. One of his recent work includes “The Role of the State in Latin America: A Comparative Perspective” which compares state capacity and performance of Latin American countries with Korea. He also studies Korea-Mexico diplomatic relations, and Jose Luis Estrada writes about the political economy of Korea. The prestigious Economic Research Institute (Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas: CIDE) has exchanged students with HUFS, but not proceeded farther.

Recommendations

As a general rule, scholarship advances in the context of peer group activities. The larger the group and the more frequent their interaction, the better the scholarship progresses. Academic associations’ activities and journal publications facilitate the field advancement. However, Korean studies in Mexico are not equipped with such conditions. The number of scholars in Korean studies may be comparatively larger than in Argentina and in Chile. But they are scattered without frequent interaction and without national conferences. There should be several suggestions to cope with the circumstances.

First of all, AMESCO may be the future. It should be encouraged to achieve stable progress in the years to come. While the field of Korean studies is not a strong one but a significant one to developing countries, some institutional support and promotion may bear fruit shortly. Such sponsorship should enhance not only the association, but also publication. On the other hand, it will be a good initiative to run a webpage to illustrate all the homepages of different universities, research

¹¹ Written interview with Sang Cheol Yun in September 2009.
institutions, organizations in Latin America or the rest of the world that dedicate themselves to Korean studies so that they may share what they are doing and pursuing and link one with another. It will be recommendable to upload all the materials to be presented in the conferences funded by the promoting agencies. This must help enlarge the peers’ horizon of Korean studies.

Secondly, while the absolute number of Koreanist scholars in Mexico is small, such limitation should be overcome by encouraging exchange programs between Mexican scholars and Korean scholars, and by facilitating field studies in Korea by Mexican Koreanists. The University of Guadalajara and KyungHee University Program should be modeled for other institutional collaboration. The old Unam-hufs Program has been inactive in recent years, and instead hufs has now received doctoral or post-doctoral scholars and exchanged students from the University of Colima’s Ceapec, School of Political and Social Sciences, School of International Trade, and School of Business Administration. Many of those studying Korea in Mexico are interested in advancing to higher degree programs in Korea or in conducting field research in Korea. There should be ways to finance such academic initiatives. Currently, Korea and Mexico are members of the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (Umap), which is the organization founded in 1993 as a voluntary association of government and non-government representatives of the higher education sector in the region. There are five slots each as student scholarships for Korea and Mexico, but they have been underutilized due to miss-arrangements. While the program should be better focused, there is also the demand to extend the slots to advanced scholars interested in field study and research.

Thirdly, the scattered nature of Koreanists in Mexico should be considered in designing programs. Korean authorities’ official programs tend to be channeled through the Korean Embassies. Local institutions in the capitals may benefit from convenience of distance not only for short-term programs such as special lectures but also for program grants. It should be noted, however, that those institutions in the capitals though prestigious in most cases are also involved with many other country/area studies than Korean Studies. That means the limited marginal utility of Korean Studies to be added to the
whole scholarship of foreign studies. On the contrary, non-capital-located academic institutions tend to be discriminated due to its geographic disadvantage despite the possibly higher marginality. Thus one may consider promoting Korean studies by concentrating on good academic institutions out of the capital, or attempt to strike balance between institutions regardless of geographic locations.

Fourthly, the scholarship cannot be understood independent of the context. For the reason above mentioned, Korea is approached as one of the Asian countries that may interest local academics. This brings comparative perspective more often than country-specific focus. All this means that the promotion of Korean Studies is easier to make from those practical fields as Mexico’s international frontier. Thus the Korean studies promotion policy should accommodate the local needs and interest to go at times away from its own traditional program focuses. Such should be the case also with books and publication donations. Mexican universities lack of Korea-related books and materials. Many of them look forward to annual contributions from Korean studies promoting agencies and from key research institutions in Korea. Original works of Korean studies in Spanish are rare. Publications in Spanish should be further promoted with consideration of the local interest.

Lastly but not the least, the Korean studies promotion agencies should be consistent and long-term based in their programs. Many local scholars in Mexico complain that the Academy of Korean Studies or the Korea Foundation have failed to regularize cooperation relations with local research institutions that focus on Asia, and include them in their research projects.