

# Australian Studies in Korea: Its Poverty and Future Direction

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## Introduction

The year of 2011 celebrated the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relationship between Australia and the Republic of Korea which was established in 1961. To mark the occasion, the governments of Australia and the Republic of Korea designated 2011 as a "Year of Friendship" between them. The two countries' economic, political and strategic significance to each other has been enhanced. For Australia, Korea is the fourth largest trading partner after China, Japan and USA<sup>1)</sup>. The two countries' trade is complementary to each other in terms of imported items. Korea imports from Australia some key commodities like minerals (e.g. coal, iron ore and crude petroleum) and agricultural products (e.g. beef) of strategic importance to its economy. Australia imports vehicles, refined petroleum, engineering equipment and electronics from Korea (DFAT, 2013 b).

In recent years, bilateral relations between Australia and the Republic of Korea have been considerably intensified by the two countries' cooperation on international affairs. As fellow-members of the G20, this partnership contributes to rebuilding global governance (DFAT, 2013 b). The relationship between the two countries is not confined to trade, but is also developing and deepening in relation to regional security. In July 2013, the first Korea-Australia Foreign and Defense Ministers (2+2) Meeting was held.

Although the Australia-Korea partnership has been firmly established, there is a lack of understanding about each other. In particular, the Korean public's interest in, and knowledge of, Australia is very limited. Koreans usually associate Australia solely with kangaroos, beach and beef. Those who still keep memories of their school days mention 'The White Australia', a restrictive immigration policy which was officially abolished 40 years ago in early 1970s. This poverty of knowledge on Australia also applies to Korean universities. Unlike other countries in the region,

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1) As of 2012, China takes a 20% share out of the total two-way trading of Australia. It is followed by Japan (11.4%), USA (9%) and Republic of Korea (5.1%) (DFAT, 2013 a).

particularly Japan and China, where there are Australian studies associations, conferences and some tertiary courses, in Korea there is no academic who claims to be an Australian expert. While Korean studies are strongly supported and promoted by the Korean government, there is little support for Australian studies from Australia. Despite the increasing importance of Australia to Korea and their deepening and broadening relationships, there is little research on Australia in Korea. This is problematic. For example, there were a couple of incidents in 2012 where Koreans were attacked in metropolitan cities of Australia within a relatively short period of time. The Korean media approached the incidents from a populist perspective, insisting they were committed by a racist motivation and they were the legacy of the 'White Australia' policy. Whereas many spontaneous and emotional responses were reported in the Korean media, there was no analysis based on a good understanding on the Australian society, regardless agreeing or disagreeing with 'the racist theory'. This is not a desirable situation for both countries.

To improve the situation, we need to know the past and current status of Australian studies in Korea and discuss its challenges. Then we can provide suggestions for further development.

Against this background, this study aims to:

- review studies on Australia (in social sciences and humanities),
- identify the challenges facing the Australian studies community in Korea, and
- discuss how to develop Australian studies.

This review has a value in that it is the first attempt in Korea. We believe this study lays a foundation for further development by showing what has been done and what needs to be developed.

The rest of the paper describes the methods used, and then presents findings on the current status of Australian studies in Korea by two categories: books and academic papers. Then we conclude by discussing reasons for the lack of research and suggestions for improvement.

## Methods

For the literature search for finding publications which specifically deal with Australia from social science and humanity perspectives, the National Assembly Library (NAL) database<sup>2)</sup> was chosen as the main data source and a commercial academic database called DBpia<sup>3)</sup> was used to supplement it. The NAL database is the most comprehensive in collecting publications in any form published in Korea including academic journals and master/doctoral dissertations. As such it is generally accepted as the most reliable and comprehensive database, and widely used for literature search and review. While collecting data from the NAL database, however, we found some publications al-

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2) [http://www.nanet.go.kr/english/01\\_about/01/01/lib\\_welcome.jsp](http://www.nanet.go.kr/english/01_about/01/01/lib_welcome.jsp)

3) <http://www.dbpia.co.kr>

ready known to the authors were not retrieved from the database. Therefore, we used the DBpia which is a prominent academic online service for materials published in Korea including academic journals, conference proceedings, professional journals, etc. (1.4 million articles, as of March 2013<sup>4</sup>). The literature search was conducted in August 2013.

We used the 'keywords search' facility of the two databases. For keywords, four words were chosen: '호주<sup>5</sup> [*hoju*]', '오스트레일리아<sup>6</sup>', 'Australia', and, '濠洲<sup>7</sup>'. All articles and books which have any of the four words in the title were retrieved. All the items were written in the Korean language. This keyword search brings over 4400 items from the NAL DB, and around 1500 items from the DBpia.

However, '호주 [*hoju*]', the name of a country (Australia), in the Korean language has a homonym; it also means a 'patriarchal family system (戶主) [*hoju*]'. As the latter has been a very controversial issue for social, gender and legal debates for decades, so many items retrieved are actually about the family system. Hence, every single item retrieved had to be screened by reviewing its title and abstract to see whether '호주 [*hoju*]' in the article or book means Australia or the family system. This reviewing process gave more credibility to the following analysis. Through this reviewing process, we were able to remove around 4,000 items, and left with around over 1000 items (also after removing those items that appear in both DBs). Then we applied our key criterion ('academic') to these items; that is, media reports (i.e. from newspapers and magazines) were removed. Finally, about 550 (about 400 books and 148 academic papers) remained for the following analysis.

## Findings

We break down the remaining items into two categories: books and journal articles<sup>8</sup>).

### Books

More than 400 books on Australian topics were retrieved, which shows seemingly the richness of research on Australia. However, just a glance over their titles reveals that it is not the case. One half of them are about tour guides, working holiday and immigration, and almost another half is reports from state-run research institutes. Usually those reports deal with a narrow and specific policy

4) <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Helpdesk/AboutDBpia>

5) 호주 [*hoju*]: the Korean word for Australia.

6) 오스트레일리아: Another word for Australia written as pronounced in the Korean language.

7) 濠洲: the Chinese character for Australia, often used particularly in the past, say, from 1960s to 1980s.

8) Three doctoral dissertations were found. We do not include them as a separate category due to the small number. The themes of the dissertations are a policy on children from extramarital relations (Im, 2012), adult education (Park, 2010) and a policy on cinema in 1970s (Kim, 2003).

issue, and have no ISBN (International Standard Book Number). Only a small number of the books retrieved are written for academic purposes. They are still general and remain at an introductory level in an area of the Australian society they cover.

We have found that there are two periods when books on Australia were published in Korea: the late 1900s and early 2010s. In the late 1990s, there were several books written/edited by Hyung-sik Kim at the 'Australian Studies Center' at ChungAng University. They include *Australia's policy on the disabled* (1997), *Australian society and culture* (1997) and *Australia: Reality and Myth* (1997). Other books like *Australia's Party Politics and Election System* (Jang, 2000) were published in this period by the center. The center at ChungAng University was a pioneer<sup>9)</sup> in Australian Studies in Korea. However, it did not last long. The center disappeared, and publication and any other academic activities discontinued.

In early 2010s, two books, "*Understanding Contemporary Australia I*" (Lee and Moon, 2011) and "*Understanding Contemporary Australia II: Australia in Transition*" (Lee and Jang, 2013) were published by the Centre for Australian Studies (CAS hereafter) at Yonsei University. They are edited books, each chapter dealing with an aspect of the Australian society ranging from economy, politics, education, legal system, international relations to multiculturalism, feminism and aboriginal issues. These introductory books on the Australian society are intended to arouse the awareness on the importance of Australia among the general public as well as opinion leaders by delivering updated information on Australia. They are also designed to be used as textbooks for a course on Australia in tertiary education<sup>10)</sup>.

### Journal articles

Academic journals are venues where current issues are debated and research outcomes on the issues are published. Therefore, the presence of a journal on a specific area (i.e. Australia) and the quantity of publications reflect the level of research activity (and quality, to some extent) in the area of the country concerned. In Korea, no academic journal exists which claims a specialist one on Australia<sup>11)</sup>.

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9) There was the first research center on Australia in Konkuk University, called Australian Affairs Research Institute, in late 1960s. However it published no book (at least according to our current criterion), while it made some reports on Australia commissioned by the government (Australian Affairs Research Institute, 1968, 1970, 1973). The finding of this center's existence in late 1960 is one of the contributions this paper makes. And this finding shows the break (or no existence) of the 'Australian studies' tradition in Korean academic communities.

10) Teaching on Australia is discussed in the following section.

11) For information, there are two academic journals in Japan: The Otomon Journal of Australian Studies published by the Center for Australian Studies, Otomon Gakuin University (see <http://www.otemon.ac.jp/cas/english/Ekiyou.html>) and 「オーストラリア研究」 by Australian Studies Association of Japan (<http://www.australianstudies.jp/publish/index.html>).

**Australian Studies in Korea (1960s~2012)**

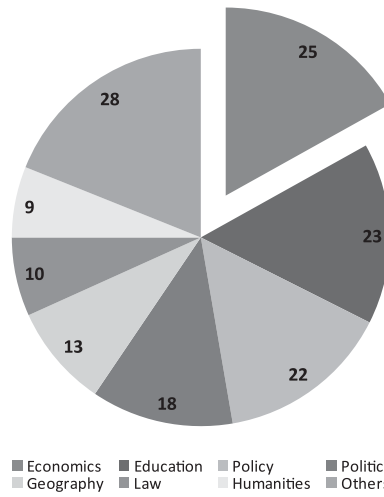


Figure 1 Australian Studies in Korea by discipline (1960s~2012)

From 1960s to 2012, a total of 148 papers were retrieved from the two databases. They are ‘papers on an aspect of Australia’ in social sciences and humanities. These papers were classified by the academic discipline, theme and publication year, and examined to identify the current status and trends in research in the past and future. In general, there is a lack of academic research on Australia in Korea.

The number of journal articles is not big enough to break down the articles by an independent discipline. So related disciplines are grouped; ‘economics’ includes related disciplines such as business, trade and industry studies; ‘policy’ covers government and policy issues; ‘politics’ contains international relations (diplomacy) and domestic politics; ‘humanities’ has literature, history, and religion; ‘others’ includes agriculture, architecture, tourism, sociology, media, environment, and so on. Figure 1 shows the number of articles in each group and gives a general idea of the distribution. Although ‘economics’ has the largest number, the articles are fairly evenly distributed without any particular discipline dominating.

Table 1 shows the number of articles by discipline and year. When we look at the number of articles per year (the last column), we may say the study on Australia only started in the 21st century. When we examine the number by discipline and year, we find something interesting. While until 1990s the Australian study was led by ‘economics’, recently (in 2000s) papers from ‘economics’ are only a few. Many of them come from ‘education’, ‘policy’ and ‘politics’.

It is partly explained by Table 2 showing the number of papers on each theme<sup>12)</sup> and Table 3 on the number of papers by year and theme. The most popular theme is ‘multiculturalism’ which

12) Themes that appear more than once are selected for analysis.

Table 1 Australian Studies in Korea by year and discipline (1960s~2012)

Study Year	Economics	Education	Policy	Politics	Geography	Law	Humanities	Others	Total (each year)
2000s									
2012		3	2	4		2	1	3	15
2011		5	2				3	1	11
2010	1	2	1	2	1			2	9
2009	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	13
2008	1	1	2	1	1			3	9
2007	1	2		1	1	2		3	10
2006					2			1	3
2005		3	1		1	1		2	8
2004	1		2	1		1		1	6
2003	1	1	5			2		3	12
2002			1				1	1	3
2001		1	1				1	1	4
2000	3		1				1	1	6
1990s									
1999~1996	8	1		4	5			3	21
1995~1990	1	2	1	2	1			1	8
1980s	4		1					1	6
1970s	1			1		1			3
1960s				1					1
<b>Total</b>									148

Table 2 Themes of Australian studies in Korea

Theme	Number
Multiculturalism	14
Welfare	6
Agriculture	6
Aborigenes	5
Vocation	5
Labor	5
Asia	4
Environment	4
FTA	4
Media	3
Refugee	3
Koreans in Australia	3
Mid-Power	2
Total	64

Note: Two papers on multi-culture have another theme of 'refugee'; one paper on multiculturalism has 'aborigenes'.

Table 3 Australian Studies in Korea by year and theme

Theme Year	Multi- culture	Walfare	Agricul- ture	Aborige- ne	Vocation	Labor	Asia	Environ- ment	FTA	Media	Refugee	Koreans	Mid- Power	
2000s													1	
2012	2	1		2			1			1	1			
2011	4		1	1				1			1	2		
2010	2				1		1							
2009	1	1		1	1	1			2	1				
2008	1	2							1					
2007	2		1						1					
2006												1		
2005					2			1			1			
2004	1													
2003	1				1	2								
2002				1		1								
2001		1												
2000														
1990s														
1999~1996			4					1		1			1	
1995~1990		1				1	1	1						
1980s														
1970s							1							
1960s														
Total	14	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	64

appears 14 times, more than double of the following themes like ‘welfare’, ‘agriculture’, ‘aborigines’, etc. As the Korean society enters a new phase where the number of foreigners increases at a fast rate, multiculturalism becomes a hot issue not only in policy but also in academia. Researchers in ‘education’, ‘policy’ and ‘politics’ are leading this trend. This trend is clearly identified when we look at Table 3 which shows the number of articles by year and theme. Papers on multiculturalism continue to appear from 2007.

### Discussion and Concluding Remarks

As seen in the preceding sections, Australian studies in Korea is characterized by a lack of research. Given the size of trade, the long history of exchanges (celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the diplomatic relationship in 2011) and the increasing number of visitors to each other, we think it is not a sound or healthy condition that there are only several books written and only one hundred or so academic papers published for more than a half century. Here we reflect why there is little interest and research, and how this situation can be improved.

### **Why lack of interest and research?**

We approach this question from two perspectives, which we call macro and micro. From the macro (and historical) perspective, to the authors' knowledge, there have been no conflicts and no issues for serious controversy between the two countries; the relationship is simply stable and friendly. This stability and friendliness makes people from each country indifferent to each other; they don't see each other as a serious object of inquiry and understanding. Recently, there have been some hiccups related to FTA negotiations, but the Australia-Korea FTA finally was completed in December 2013.

By the micro perspective, we mean individuals' behavior and attitude. An increasing number of Korean students are studying in Australian universities, including master and doctoral level ones in social sciences. Accordingly, knowledge on Australia seems to be accumulated. But by and large those in doctoral programs in social sciences do not study about Australia. They tend to write a thesis on Korea, which is common among doctoral students studying in western countries like US and UK. Furthermore, in fact, it is widely perceived and accepted that studying about Australia and in Australia does not give an advantage in their career development in Korean universities which are under the strong influence of American universities. These all contribute to not trying to understand the Australian society from academic or scientific viewpoints.

### **Challenges**

Related to the above reasons for lack of research and interest, Australian studies in Korea have the following challenges. First of all, there is a lack of resources for research on Australia in Korea. As mentioned in the introduction, the Korean government promotes Korean studies and provides resources for those working overseas in the area, whereas there is few, if any, program to promote Australian studies. This lack of resources leads to the difficulty in forming a community for Australian studies. In Korea, there is no association for Australian studies, and no journal on it.

Furthermore, as Australia is represented by and large as images of a place for fun, beach and clean nature, there are few students and researchers who have intellectual curiosity on the society. Nowadays this aspect is improving. Multiculturalism is taken as a key theme for research by Korean scholars on the Australian society as the Korean society becomes a multicultural society at a faster pace.

Though not directly related, it seems that a low recognition of Australian universities in Korea also contributes to the lack of research and interest, particularly in the long-term perspective. Some Australian universities like the University of Melbourne and ANU (Australian National University) are ranked high in the world university league tables. However, it is not well known in Korea in general as well as in Korean academic communities. Therefore, Australian universities are not considered as a destination for PhD pursuit among top-talented students who can contribute to the en-



hancement of Australian studies in Korea in the future.

### **How to improve?**

To address the challenges and thereby to improve the situation, we make the following suggestions. First of all, teaching on Australia needs to be offered at universities. Currently no teaching course on Australia is offered in Korea, particularly at the postgraduate level. By offering a teaching course, we can educate young students who may become more interested in Australian studies and go for further studies. Recently there is a development in this area. By the support of the Australia-Korea Foundation (AKF), the Centre for Australian Studies at Yonsei University will offer a course on Australia in coming years.

Secondly, a community for Australian studies needs to be formed. As seen in the findings, books were published when dedicated centers for Australian studies existed. The centers became a hub for those interested in Australia for various reasons and helped form an academic community. This led to production of useful reports and books. Currently the Centre for Australian Studies at Yonsei University tries to play this role, but more efforts need to be made.

Last but not least, collaboration among Australian centers in the region needs to be sought after. The Australian studies community in each country is constrained by the shortage of its resources so that Australian studies are rarely visible. For this reason, collaboration can help them to enhance the visibility of Australian studies and achieve what they cannot achieve individually. For instance, they can jointly apply for national funding bodies like ARC (Australian Research Council), and develop exchange programs at the postgraduate level for research. Here there is a good sign for progress. The Center for Australian Studies at Otemon Gakuin University organized a regional symposium titled "Australian studies in Asia" in September 2013. Researchers from Korea, China, Thailand and Malaysia discussed how to develop Australian studies in the region.

Australian studies in Korea have been almost invisible until recently. However, a signal of development is noticeable. A center has been working for research and networking. It survives a longer period of time than the two predecessors. And a new teaching program will start in 2014. By collaboration with researchers in other countries, it will build up capabilities for teaching and research.

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