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**SOUTH KOREA’S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING KOREAN CULTURE
AND LANGUAGE ABROAD**

Summary of Dissertation

for obtaining educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD)

2.1 Philology

Literature of the people of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia (Contemporary Korean
literature and culture)

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Sofia
2022

The dissertation was discussed and proposed for public defense at an extended meeting of the primary unit – Department of Korean Studies at the Faculty of Classical and New Philologies of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” – on January 20th, 2022.

The dissertation is presented on 214 pages and consists of introduction, four chapters, conclusion, bibliography and appendix. The bibliography includes a total of 204 sources in Bulgaria, English and Korean.

The public defence of the dissertation will be held on June 10th, 2022, at 3:00 p.m.

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I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

1. Up-to-date nature of the researched problematics

Globalization of modern world raises serious issues in terms of preserving people's cultural identity. On one hand, globalization makes it possible for cultural exchange that has proven benefits for the development of the global map. Nevertheless, on the other hand, cultural imperialism of the more influential countries results in reasonable concerns about assimilation, even erasure of original cultures. Thus, the countries that have achieved relative economic stability become oriented towards purposeful preservation and even attempts for expanding their own culture, while using it for the purposes of their "soft power". Republic of Korea serves as good example in this light.

Since the beginning of the XXI century, South Korea established itself as one of the main exporters of cultural products not only in Asia, but also globally. This, by itself, is a feat, because it is in sharp contrast to the situation only several decades ago. The Japanese occupation (1910 – 1945), the separation of Korean Peninsula's territory in halves (1948) and the Korean War that followed (1950 – 1953) left deep traces in each and every aspect of Republic of Korea's life – economy was in collapse, the political situation was unstable, for decades the country was strongly dependent on the international donations it received, and the Korean society felt the painful need of self-proving. The purposeful government policy for strengthening and economic growth based on the development of heavy industry proved fruitful and nowadays the Republic of Korea ranks at one of the leading places in global economy.

At the background of this impressive economic progress the jump made by the South Korean entertainment industry also became apparent, since its products attracted more and more fans initially in the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, and consequently, thanks to Internet, all around the world. Until then, despite its economic success, to many people around the world, the Republic of Korea was an unknown and not quite attractive country, systematically associated with pictures from the not that distant past, such as destruction, poverty and war. The contact with the modern Korean movie industry (including series and motion pictures) and the modern Korean pop music nevertheless brought about interest in Korea and its culture in all its aspects – a phenomenon that at its dawn, in the end of the 90's of the past century was called *Hallyu* (Korean Wave).

The success attributable to *Hallyu* impacted the image of Korean language that from quite unpopular suddenly became modern and attractive. Initially, the economic success of the Republic of Korea brought about interest in Korean language in its capacity of working instrument. Nevertheless, thanks to the dissemination of *Hallyu* we observed an interesting phenomenon – more and more people, at all ages, started studying the language rather from curiosity without it being bound to their present or future career. The dynamics attributable to this approach and the relation between the dissemination of the Korean Wave and the interest in studying Korean language, as well as the absence of more in-depth research of the issue in

Bulgaria, brought about researchers' interest that resulted in the creation of the present doctoral thesis.

2. Objective, tasks, object, subject and hypothesis of the research work

The objective of the doctoral thesis is to research and analyse the national strategy of the Republic of Korea for making popular the Korean culture and language around the world while highlighting the effects of its performance in Bulgaria. For the purposes of the thesis "strategy" would mean the comprehensive concept aimed at particular mission – in this case: making popular the Korean culture and language abroad. It includes political, economic and cultural elements that interact and complement each other and would be considered from integral point of view.

The achievement of the objective would take place via the following main research **tasks**:

1. theoretical analysis of the phenomenon *Hallyu* and presentation of the most significant consequences of its dissemination around the world.
2. summary of the key events that are directly related to the evolution of republic of Korea's national strategy for making popular the Korean culture and language around the world.
3. presentation of the leading government institutions with the highest contribution for the implementation of the Republic of Korea's national strategy for making popular the Korean culture and language around the world.
4. empirical research of the history of dissemination of Korean Wave in Bulgaria via holding and analysing interviews with representative fans of Korean culture in our country.
5. empirical research and analysis of the current interest in Korean culture and language in Bulgaria in three organizations of key importance for Korean language tutoring in our country (18th Secondary school "William Gladstone", Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and King Sejong Institute - Sofia).

Object of the study process is Republic of Korea's national strategy which integrates the *Hallyu* effect with the cultural foreign policy of the country. It is worth mentioning that the perspective of consideration would be through the prism of making popular Korean culture and language among the people of no Korean ethnical roots.

Subject of the research work is studying the relation between the dissemination of *Hallyu* globally and the growth of international interest in Korean culture and language.

The hypothesis of the present doctoral thesis is divided into two parts. **Hypothesis 1:** The dissemination of *Hallyu* is the main reason behind the increased interest in Korean culture and language globally and in Bulgaria in particular. **Hypothesis 2:** *Hallyu's* sustainable development directly results from carefully planned and consistent policy of the South Korean government.

The theoretical approach for proving the hypotheses 1 and 2 is related to: (1) tracking the interrelations between the dissemination of *Hallyu* and the observed increase of interest in Korean culture and language abroad; (2) clarifying the contribution of the South Korean government for the sustainable development of *Hallyu* via overview of the cultural policies of the individual cabinets; (3) research of government apparatus' participation via analysing the

operations of the key government institutions responsible for the expansion of cultural exchange between the Republic of Korea and the countries around the world.

The empirical approach is related to: (1) research of the evolution of Korean Wave's dissemination in Bulgaria via the personal stories of Bulgarians closely related to Korean language tutoring in our country and (2) research of the interest that was up-to-date as of the spring of 2021 in Korean culture and language in Bulgaria highlighting the incentive that brought this interest.

3. Research methodology

In the present theoretical- empirical research work we have used the following main groups of methods:

1. Methods for theoretical research: analysis and synthesis, comparison and summary.
2. Methods for gathering empirical information: interview and inquiry.

The fundamental empirical study is inquiry research whose **objective** is to identify key features related to the interest in Korean culture and the Korean language tuition in Bulgaria. The research was held in the period from April to May 2021 in the three most influential tuition organizations related to studying Korean language in our country – 18th Secondary school “William Gladstone” (the first school in Europe that offers tuition in Korean as first foreign language), Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (the oldest institution of higher education in Bulgaria and the first one that offers tuition in Korean language and culture) and the only branch of the governmental King Sejong Institute for Bulgaria.

Thanks to the inquiry research we implement the following main research **tasks**:

1. establish empirically what is the main motivation that initiated the interest in the Republic of Korea and Korean language tuition.
2. on the grounds of respondents' opinions to establish the presence or absence of relationship between studying Korean language and the resulting *Hallyu* positive attitude towards the Republic of Korea.
3. establish empirically which elements of the Korean culture that bring about the highest interest among Bulgarians who study Korean language as of 2021.
4. based on the data received from the inquired persons, assess the readiness of the three targeted training institutions to prepare well qualified language specialists.
5. research the satisfaction level from the language tuition in the three educational institutions.

The results of the inquiry research were processed thanks to the data statistical processing program SPSS.

In addition to the inquiry, the empirical research also includes analysis of the results accumulated from the held individual interviews with nine representative Bulgarians closely related to the dissemination of *Hallyu* in Bulgaria and/or Korean language tuition in our country.

4. Description of the doctoral thesis

The **introduction** contains arguments about the current nature of the issue and the need of studying it. We have defined the objective, tasks, object, subject and hypothesis of the doctoral thesis. Additionally, we have presented methodology of the research.

The first chapter takes into consideration the essence and features of the phenomenon *Hallyu*. It contains overview and analysis of the history of Korean Wave throughout the world and in Bulgaria, whereas we have considered the features of each of the four phases observed until now; we have presented the key factors that have contributed for the global dissemination of *Hallyu*, as well as the main effects caused by this phenomenon.

In the **second chapter** we have presented and analysed the key events related to the evolution of Republic of Korea's national strategy for making popular the Korean culture and language globally. They have been outlined via summaries of the cultural policies implemented by the individual cabinets that governed the country in the period 1988 – 2021. The period 1900 – 1988 is presented shortly as well.

The third chapter presents and analyses the activity of the most influential governmental institutions related to implementing the considered national strategy.

The fourth chapter presents and analyses the results of the performed empirical study that includes an interview and inquiry research.

Each chapter ends with synthesized summaries and conclusions.

II. ESSENCE AND FEATURES OF *HALLYU*

The term *Hallyu* means growth of Korean culture popularity beyond the borderlines of the Republic of Korea. The beginning was set by Korean series and pop music, yet as time passed by, the sticker *Hallyu* was applied more and more onto other elements of the Korean culture: food, fashion and styling, pop dances, cosmetics, electronic sports, art, literature etc. - in practice, everything Korean that results in making the country popular abroad. Throughout the years the scope of this notion underwent changes. In the very beginning, researchers connected *Hallyu* to the increasing popularity of Korean pop culture in Asia, not globally in general (Kim, 2007; Kim, 2009; Ryoo, 2009). Nevertheless, after 2010 while being assisted by the mass online and social media dissemination, as well as the purposeful foreign policy of the Republic of Korea, the Korean Wave reached lands, further and further from the Peninsula and attracted the eyes of local media and specialists. They perceived the already established term and started talking about “*Hallyu* in Europe”, “*Hallyu* in Latin America”, “*Hallyu* in the Near East” etc. while annulling all kinds of geographic limitations (Hübinette, 2012, Sung, 2013; Oh and Chae, 2013, Marinescu and Balica, 2013, Ko et. al., 2014, Lim and Halpin, 2015).

1. Short overview of *Hallyu*'s history

The beginning of *Hallyu* was set in the end of the 90's of the XX century. It is believed that throughout its history, the phenomenon passed through several distinctive phases that were

called by different names. For the purposes of the doctoral thesis, we would be using the more widespread classification *Hallyu 1.0*, *Hallyu 2.0*, *Hallyu 3.0*, *Hallyu 4.0*.

1.1. Hallyu 1.0

The earliest history of Korean Wave dissemination is related to China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, followed by Japan and the other countries of Easter and South-Eastern Asia. During *Hallyu 1.0*, the Korean series broadcasted by the local TVs were the ones of leading importance for the dissemination of *Hallyu*. The Korean pop music is the second key factor. In many cases, the series viewers discovered the charm of Korean pop music via the soundtracks, accompanying the TV productions. In others – concert performances by the Korean performers and their CD for sale are the ones that managed to attract them. Gradually, the growth of Korean musical companies and their attempt to outgrow the limitations of the local market made the companies get oriented towards strategic targeting of the markets in China and Japan. Thus, they started producing performers whose songs have a Korean and Japanese and/or Chinese version and the people in charge of texts, melody, melody arrangement and choreography were especially selected so that they could create a product to suit the targeted foreign audience.

1.2. Hallyu 2.0

At around 2010, *Hallyu* entered a new phase and the reason behind this is related to the mass Internet dissemination. Several aspects make this phase outstanding, compared to the previous one. Firstly, we are talking about the leading channel for Wave dissemination – whereas in *Hallyu 1.0* the dissemination happened via TV and radio, and in the case of *Hallyu 2.0* the leading factors were websites and social media. The second significance difference is the cultural product that got established as a leading one – the beginning was set by the Korean series, yet consequently Korean pop music became predominant, referred to as K-pop. Thirdly, the symbiosis between Korean musical industry and film industry was outstanding where the ones getting roles systematically were the K-pop performers. Fourthly, outstanding is users' age and the fact that the fans being recruited as younger and younger people that became attractive *Hallyu* promoters in their own country.

The change brought by Internet came just in time because after the middle of the first decade of the XXI century in some countries, such as China, Taiwan and Japan, a kind of anti-*Hallyu* movement rose and government limitations were set in terms of the Korean series, motion pictures and music inflow in order to keep and support the local industry (Kang, 2009; CNN, 2011; The Korea Times, 2013; Chen, 2016; Lim and Giouvris, 2020, Shao, 2020). Somewhat as a result of these limitations, after 2006 the Korean movie industry faced a drastic decrease of sales abroad – the revenues from selling Korean movies abroad went down from \$76 million in 2005 to \$24.5 million in 2006 and the trend was preserved, in order to make it to \$13.5 million in 2010 (Kang, 2018, p.287). The export of K-pop was also severely impacted – the revenues went down from \$34.2 million in 2004 to \$13.8 million in 2007 (Jin, 2014, p.77). Nevertheless, things rapidly changed after the massive Internet penetration and the skilful use of

its potential by the Korean music and movie companies in service of their business. The export of K-pop music jumped from \$13.8 million in 2007 to \$196 million in 2011 (Jin, 2014, pp.77 – 78). These are the values before the phenomenal success of Psy (PSY) and his song Gangnam Style (2012), which in December 2012 turned onto the first video that made it to one billion watches in YouTube and online in general.

Even though the highlight during this second phase in *Hallyu's* evolution is onto the K-pop music, the Korean series did not remain overshadowed. They kept being strategically performed and presented to the wide audience on the local TVs, sometimes even provided for free at the particular channels as part of the strategy of the Republic of Korea in order to make the country popular (Lee, 2006, as cited by Atanasova, 2007, p.18).

1.3. *Hallyu* 3.0

The next phase of *Hallyu's* evolution could be closely related to the progress of mobile technologies, thanks to which consumers globally started consuming more and more freely *Hallyu* online contents everywhere and anytime. TV also underwent changes. In the beginning it used to be static and viewers were dependent on TV program. As technologies advanced, however, things got more dynamic. Paid platforms where viewers get access to a huge catalogue of international entertainment programs among which they could choose started to appear. The competition between these platforms made them offer their viewers quality exclusive productions. This stimulated them to create original products that are accessible for viewing only at the particular platform. The Netflix¹ policy is a good example in this light. It not only started broadcasting South Korean media contents but took active participation in its creation². The examples are the motion pictures “Okcha”³ (옥자, 2017) by the Oscar-winning director Bong Joon-ho and series such as “Squid game” (오징어 게임, 2021), “Kingdom” (킹덤, 2019), “The King: Eternal monarch” (더 킹: 영원의 군주, 2020) etc. Platform's popularity and its huge number of consumers globally gave a solid push to the legal circulation of South Korean productions. The flow of international capitals improved their quality and reputation, which could be seen from the inclusion of various Korean title in popular movie platforms such as IMDb.

Korean pop music keeps being the leading product that ensures *Hallyu* success. Probably, among the most long-lasting with which *Hallyu* 3.0 would remain in history is the amazing uprising of the Korean pop band BTS. It has huge contribution in making the Republic of Korea popular in general, and the participation of its members in the issuance of a specialized language course entitled “Let's learn Korean with BTS” (The Korea Times, 2020), the band directly supports the national strategy for making Korean language popular around the world. The

¹ Netflix is an American company that is provider of movies and series based on video-streaming. According to the data of its official YouTube channel as of the end of 2020 Netflix had 158 million consumers in 190 countries.

² According to the data provided by Netflix in the period of 2015 – 2020 the company invested nearly \$700 million in South Korean productions. Additionally, in the beginning of 2021, Netflix announced the opening of two shooting centres at the territory of the Republic of Korea, not far away from the capital. More details are available at: <https://about.netflix.com/en/news/expanding-our-presence-in-korea-netflix-production-facilities>

³ The movie is winner of 7 awards and 20 nominations, including nomination for the “Golden palm” award in 2017.

distinctive features of *Hallyu* 3.0 also include the coverage of traditional Korean culture within the scope of the Korean Wave. During *Hallyu* 1.0 the export highlight shifted from cultural heritage and traditional art to modern pop culture. Nevertheless, during *Hallyu* 3.0 traditional Korean culture was once again promoted at full throttle whereas special highlight is put on palace culture (royal palaces and their architecture, palace music, palace cuisine etc.) (Kim et. al, 2016, An, 2017). Last but not least, it is worth mentioning the popularity of the original Korean broadcasts in the so-called *Mokpan* (먹방) pattern that attracted numerous fans in the video streaming channels and are defined as integral part of *Hallyu* 3.0. Their distinctive feature is that they are dedicated to eating – the host consumes for hours live in front of the camera all kinds of foods in quantity that outstrips the capabilities of an ordinary person. He does this while communicating in real time with his audience that comments on his performance via chat.

1.4. *Hallyu* 4.0

There is theory about *Hallyu* 4.0, which is based on the statement that *Hallyu* 1.0 started with the dissemination of Taekwondo outside Korea, and making popular Korean series, motion pictures and pop music accompanied the second phase of the phenomenon – hence the misunderstanding (Jong, 2012). Nevertheless, if we follow the division supported by the South Korean Ministry of culture, sports and tourism, *Hallyu* 4.0 is the next step in Korean Wave's evolution that we are about to witness. The main goal of the new phase of Korean Wave's evolution is the recruitment of more sectors of the national economy underneath the brand *Hallyu*, whereas special highlight is put on electronic sports. Following the example set by the actors and music performers that became famous abroad thanks to Korean series and pop music's popularity the state saw huge potential in making popular the Korean electronic sports and professional players, who attained international glory, thanks to their success in computer games popular worldwide such as StarCraft, League of Legends, Counter-Strike, DotA etc. The ambition is to create a new generation of *Hallyu* – stars – the one of the Korean professional players of electronic sports (The Korea Herald, 2020).

1.5. *Dissemination of Hallyu in Bulgaria*

The story of *Hallyu* in Bulgaria could be traced back to 2008 whereas an Internet forum was created and called Eastern Spirit. That online portal gathered at one and the same location the fans of Asian culture in general and became the first in our country from which we could download for free Bulgarian subtitles of Asian movies and series with translation, made by active fans. The years after 2010 ate outstanding thanks to their eventfulness greatly initiated namely by the fans in the country. In 2012 a group of high school students and university undergraduates known as “Panda Squad” started organizing thematic K-pop parties in music clubs and discotheques in Sofia, flash mobs etc. In the end of the same year, the weekly radio column “Friday Chopsticks” started to Radio “Reaction” of the Faculty of journalism and mass communication of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. It was the only one that broadcasted Korean music until 2018 when a devoted fan together with his colleagues created the first K-pop radio in Bulgaria, called K.Sound – online radio that broadcasts Korean music 24/7. After 2012,

in our country numerous events started being held as annual gatherings. During them fans started acting on stage while trying to make a picturesque cover of popular K-pop songs – events such as Aniventure, AnimeS, Go to Korea etc.

Just like many other countries worldwide and in Bulgaria, Korean TV series were the ones that set the beginning of *Hallyu*, even though in most cases it is not about series broadcasted on TV, but rather the ones watched online. The initial attempts to be broadcasting Korean series on the TV channels in our country were not that successful. In 2011 on the specialized channel “Diema Family” they broadcasted the first Korean series – “Loving you a thousand times” (천만번 사랑해, 2009). The example was followed by the Bulgarian National Television that broadcasted “Pasta” (파스타, 2010) and BTV that broadcasted “Iris” (아이리스, 2009). After some interruption, in 2018 during the primetime, the Bulgarian National Television broadcasted the fourth Korean series in the Bulgarian air – “Jewel in the Palace” thus Bulgaria joined the long list of countries in which this series was presented to the wide audience. The series was followed by “Dr. Romantic” (낭만닥터 김사부, 2016) and “Descendants of the Sun” (태양의 후예, 2016), broadcasted in the same channel and of the hit series “Goblin” (도깨비, 2016-2017), broadcasted in 2020 via the specialized channel BTV Lady. From then on BTV Lady started regularly broadcasting hit Korean series dubbed in Bulgarian.

2. Main factors that contribute for the success of *Hallyu*

2.1. Globalization and progress in technologies

Beyond doubt, one of the more significant theories about the dissemination of Korean Wave is related to the globalization effects and this is quite explainable, bearing in mind that *Hallyu* suggests cross-border flow of cultural products. In the 90’s of the XX century many Asian countries opened their markets for foreign import, including the media one. The reasons behind this are comprehensive – on one hand, as a result of Western forces and international organizations’ pressure, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization and on the other hand – as a result of the broad penetration of satellite and cable TV with numerous channels, whose programs should be filled. Additionally, the Asian financial crisis of 1997 also significantly contributed for Korean media products finding a niche at the Asian market. The lower sale price combined with high quality make them an attractive and highly competitive product in the countries of the region where until then Japanese and Hong Kong productions domineered. Some researchers pay special attention to Republic of Korea’s capacity to penetrate the Asian market thanks to a niche left by Japan as a result of the burden of the Japanese Imperialistic past⁴ (Onishi, 2006; Park, 2006; Levkowitz, 2017). Since Korea has

⁴ The Imperialistic ambitions of Japan in modern history of the country and its policy aimed at expanding its political and military influence in order to ensure access to raw materials, food and workforce resulted in the outbreak of several wars in the region. In the period of 1894 – 1895 the first Chinese-Japanese war was held that ended up with China’s defeat that conceded territory to Japan, the island of Taiwan and undertook to pay huge contribution. In the period of 1904 – 1905 Japan had war with Russia too that also ended up with victory for Japan. In 1910, Japan officially annexed the Korean Peninsula to its territories and in 1937 the Second Chinese-Japanese War broke out that ended up in 1945, little bit after the end of the Second World War. The Second Chinese-Japanese

never been a threat, unlike Japan, the Korean media products were not perceived as potential cultural threat thus they easily penetrated the market of the neighbouring countries.

Specialists do not overlook the contribution of media and online technologies as key factors for making popular the Korean Wave around the world. Before the wide penetration of online dissemination of Korean Wave happened with the exceptional cooperation of mass media (radio and TV) that are highly sensitive to their rating. After broadcasting the pilot Korean series and their success, TVs in Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Japan and other started broadcasting other Korean productions, namely as means for increasing its rating. The radio programs, on the other hand, started including Korean pop music in their broadcasts, once again as means for winning the audience (Kim, 2009; Jang, 2012; Marinescu and Balica, 2013; Kang, 2018). The role of Internet, social media and websites for video sharing is even more significant because they eliminate consumers' dependency. Many researchers outline the contribution of free platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, which provide any people around the world with the first access to Korean media products (Otmazgin and Lyan, 2013; Jung and Shim, 2014; Jin and Yoon, 2016).

2.2. Features of the Hallyu products

More than a few researchers attempted explaining the success of the Korean series with the territorial and/or cultural closeness between the Republic of Korea and the countries that welcomed the Korean Wave (Miller, 2008; The Korea Herald, 2010; Ochieng and Kim, 2019; Chae, Park and Ko, 2020). The key could be sought in the well-distinguishable, in the common social and cultural contents integrated in Korean TV series. According to many scientific studies the similarities in the value system, the beauty standards, the shared elements of Confucianism influence the emotions of the multi-faceted audience and make it see itself in the protagonists somehow. In the earlier research works on *Hallyu* this cultural relation could most often be explained with the territorial closeness between the countries making a direct reference to region's history. Nevertheless, at a later stage the territorial neighbouring that was no longer relevant bearing in mind the extended scope of *Hallyu* was replaced by the demand of cultural closeness based on the common roots (just like in the case with Turkey), similar moral values (just like in the case of Middle Eastern and East African countries), similarities in the social hierarchy (just like in the case of Peru) etc.

The theory of cultural charge could be considered in wider scope. During its history, the Republic of Korea proved to be subsequently under the cultural influence of China, Japan and the USA, whereas each and every of these historical periods left long-lasting traces in country's cultural pallet. The first touch with the Western pop culture happened indirectly – during the Japanese occupation, via the Japanese interpretations of Western culture. After the end of the Second World War and the fall of the occupation regime, the Korean Peninsula became directly exposed to the American pop culture, imported by the American soldiers, positioned in its Southern part. Gradually, the Korean artists (and not only) started assimilating elements of the

War is perceived as the greatest military conflict in Asia in XX century, during which millions of military and civilians died (Paine, 2012; Kitamura and Lim, 2014; Ivanova, 2017).

Western pop culture, while integrating them in their own. Thus started the process of Korean pop culture evolution which would consequently go beyond the borderlines of the country and bring about the *Hallyu* wave.

Beyond doubt, modern Korean productions are strongly influenced by the Western ones in view of their format and style, integrated PR, funding, promoting and targeting the audience. Nevertheless, in view of their contents, they differ from them. One of the most significant difference that the fans of Korean series take into consideration around the world is the conservatism that is invariably present when it comes to showing the relations between the protagonists. Moral and ethics of the protagonists are inevitable part of the plot line and the scenes with violence and sex are minimized so that we do not set our eyes on them. Thanks to these features, the Korean series are well-accepted in the more conservative countries, such as the ones in the Middle East, as well as in more liberal countries like the USA and the countries of Western Europe. Other significant advantage pointed by the fans is related to the number of episodes of the Korean TV productions. The compact characteristics of Korean series and the fact that in most cases they contain 16 to 24 episodes are perceived as advantage to the time-consuming American, Latino American, Indian and Turkish series, broadcasted on TV, including in Bulgaria.

The features of the Korean pop groups that after 2000 were also called “Idol groups” also have exceptional contribution for the success of *Hallyu* around the world. The Idol groups that brought *Hallyu* to global heights significantly differ from the Korean pop groups dating back to the 90’s – these consisted of more members, whereas each of them was especially targeted to be liked by a particular audience. Additionally, the members are being trained for years by talent agencies before being selected and before their debut as a group, which is a particular feature of the Korean music industry (Willoughby, 2006; Cha and Kim, 2011; Kim, 2012; Park, 2013a, 2013b). Often in the capacity of members of Idol groups they include performers that are not entirely of Korean ethnical origin or are not Korean at all thus aiming to attract broader fan scope. While expanding the international circle of fans they aim at the performances in a language different from the Korean one. The specific choreography of K-pop music characterized by well-synchronized movements and complex dance configurations also has undoubted contribution for its popularity. The performers not only sing – they amaze the audience with dynamic performance that are in sharp contrast to the static nature typical to the modern Western performers.

2.3. Consumers

Consumers’ role in the dissemination of Korean wave is indisputable and should be perceived mostly from the perspective of their voluntary and active participation in promoting *Hallyu*. Their first contribution is related to intriguing relatives and friends with whom they would like to share their interest in Korean pop culture. Their second merit is secured by the Internet advantages and social media we discussed above – the fans start to gather from small local divisions into larger multitudes without limitations in space thanks to the online fan groups and forums. Their organization, synchronization and engagement (especially the ones of the K-

pop fans) make the *Hallyu* fans significantly differ from the fans of Western music, movies and series and is specific features of the Korean wave. The third merit of fans is related to the offline events that they organize – fan meetings, K-pop events, flash mobs, with which they attracted society’s eyesight to their country. Finally, it is worth mentioning the free translation work related to translating subtitles, song lyrics, articles etc. with which the fans made the Korean media contents accessible to broader scope of people. Thus, fans of Korean music and series voluntarily turn into cultural mediators that are actively occupied with the dissemination of *Hallyu*.

2.4. State support

State apparatus’ contribution in the development, dissemination and making *Hallyu* popular is also an object of special interest in the academic societies. Firstly, the state provides legislative and financial support (the reforms indicative in this light are the reforms initiated by the cabinet of the president Kim Young-sam – these were a sharp turn in country’s national policy which perceived until then the heavy and chemical industry as some of the sectors whose development would provide for the material well-being and prosperity of the nation). Secondly, the state provides for the opportunity for quality education of the necessary personnel to develop the industry. Thirdly, the state promotes the export of *Hallyu* contents and directly binds this export with country’s interests (one of the first cases in which the Republic of Korea uses the products of its entertainment industry for the purposes of its foreign policy is the case with Egypt where in 2004 they exported several Korean series, and one of the main goals of this export was related to building a positive image and provoking empathy with the Koreans at the background of the forthcoming departure of Korean soldiers for Iraq (Kim, 2007, p.53). Fourthly, the state mentors and protects the people who have brought glory to the country in cultural diplomacy – artists, musicians, performers, writers, university lecturers with special contribution for making Korean culture and language popular are awarded with Order for achievements in culture. Additionally, the *Hallyu* stars are often engaged in the campaigns related to promoting the Republic of Korea abroad. This makes specialists and media start relating *Hallyu* directly to the “soft power” of Republic of Korea (Sung, 2010; Nye and Kim, 2013; Kim, Kim and Connolly, 2016; Levkowitz, 2017, Regatieri, 2017). Fifthly, the state undertakes purposeful measures for transforming *Hallyu* into a recognizable brand that includes not only Korean series, movies and music, but that integrates in one versatile products that the Republic of Korea would like to establish at the international market, such as cosmetics, food, national language, literature, electronic sports etc.

3. Effects of *Hallyu*

3.1. New image of the Republic of Korea

In 1988 (35 years after the end of the Korean War), the Republic of Korea hosted the XXIV summer Olympic Games. This was perceived as turning point in country’s history because it noted its official opening to the world; additionally, this was the moment when it became clear how bad the image of the Republic of Korea actually was. The country was massively associated

with negative images left from the near past – war, destruction, poverty, instability, economic lagging. In 1994 (a year after the Hollywood blockbuster “Jurassic Park” accumulated revenues equal to the revenues of the Hyundai concern from the international sales of 1.5 million vehicles) the cabinet of the president Kim Young-sam made a brave step after reconsidering the national policy related to the priority sectors. The country initiated strategic and large-scale funding of the movie industry, while following the successful examples set by USA and Japan. The results of the new national policy were not late to show up – gradually country’s image started transforming from negative into positive, even attractive. Initially, the TV screen, then the PC monitor, and consequently the tablet or phone display turned into the window through which the viewers of the products by the modern Korean entertainment industry managed to take a peek into a modern and greatly idealized Korea. Country’s change of image as a result of the dissemination of *Hallyu* was so palpable that brought about conclusions like “it seems that the series “Winter Sonata” did politically more for the relations between the Republic of Korea and Japan than the World Football Championship jointly hosted by the two countries in 2002” (Ryoo, 2009, p.140), “for less than a year the Korean series and songs achieved more than the diplomats, despite decades of efforts” (KOCIS, 2011, p.22) and the even more loud-speaking “how a really clumsy country turned into the country that sets the fashion pace in Asia” (The Economist, 2017).

3.2. Bloom of tourism in the Republic of Korea

The bloom of tourism in the Republic of Korea is the next significant effect of the Korean Wave dissemination. This is evidenced by the results of the inquiry researches held systematically by the government Korean tourism organization (KTO) – according to the research performed in the winter of 2017 55.6% of the inquired foreign tourists declared they decided to visit the country because they were attracted by what they saw in the Korean series and motion pictures (KOFICE, 2018, p.27). According to data cited by the Korean online edition 헤럴드경제 (Herald Kyongje), in 2019 the share of *Hallyu* tourists amounted to 55.3% of the total share of foreigners who visited the country (Herald Kyongje, 2020), which evidences the stable trend of *Hallyu*’s contribution in the tourism development.

3.3. Raised interest in studying Korean language abroad

After the effects of the *Hallyu* dissemination, especially strongly outstanding is the interest in studying Korean language around the world. According to the data of the U.S. Modern Language Association, in the period 2009 – 2016 the number of American college students that studied Chinese language went down with 11%; the number of those studying German went down with 16%, and the number of those studying Japanese recorded a decrease of 5%. On the account of this, the number of those studying Korean language in the American colleges jumped up with 65% (The ChosunIlbo, 2018). Thus, as of 2017 in the USA around 14 000 college students and students studied Korean language whereas only two decades earlier their number was just 163 (BBC, 2018). Even though data is limited to the United States of America, they depict well the change, namely – Korean language suddenly became popular. Indicative is the

number of those who appear for receiving a certificate of fluency in Korean language TOPIK⁵ – according to the summarized data of statistical agency Statista, in 1997 when the test was held for the first time, 2 692 people enrolled for it; in 2013 (a year after the release of the hit Gangnam Style) the number of those enrolled was 167 856 people; in 2016 the number was already 250 141 people and in 2019 (when the group BTS conquered the American music stage beat record after record) – over 375 000 people (Statista, 2020).

It is worth noting that *Hallyu*'s dissemination brought about serious changes not only about the number of those studying Korean, but the motivation for tutoring the trainees. In the beginning, the language was studied as means that provides advantage at the labour market – it is tightly bound with the future professional realization of the trainees (Fedotoff, 2005; Sotirova, 2014, Sotirova, 2021). Nevertheless, after the mass dissemination of the Korean Wave more and more teenagers and youth started studying Korean not only because of seeing clear perspective and advantage resulting from being fluent in it, but more often because of their love, even passion for Korean pop music and Korean series.

III. KEY EVENTS RELATED TO THE EVOLUTION OF SOUTH KOREA'S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING KOREAN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE ABROAD

1. The period from 1900 to 1988

The diplomacy of the Republic of Korea, oriented towards making popular the Korean culture and language abroad has a long history. In XVII, XVIII and XIX centuries, Korea⁶ implemented policy of isolation and during the Japanese occupation nation's efforts were focused on preserving the national identity, especially at the background of the attempted forceful imposition of Japanese culture and language. After the liberation, the cultural foreign policy remained at the background because the efforts of governors were aimed at consolidating power and controlling the masses; hence censure was levied that initially compromised the process of creating competitive export cultural products. Taekwondo is an exception. In 1966 the International Taekwondo Federation was founded and this sport received state funding, while being promoted abroad.

2. Cabinet of the president Roh Tae-woo (1988 – 1993)

One could say that the foundations of modern cultural policy of the Republic of Korea were laid by the cabinet of the president Roh Tae-woo. Before taking up the president position, Roh Tae-woo headed the committee responsible for the preparation of the XXIV summer Olympic Games, hosted by the Republic of Korea. Additionally, the event noted the first

⁵ TOPIK is the abbreviation of Test of Proficiency in Korean and is a standardized exam for evaluating the fluency degree in Korean language by people who are not native speakers.

⁶ During the defined period, the country was called Choson and spread throughout the Korean Peninsula, while covering the territory of modern North and South Korea.

participation of Taekwondo at the Olympic Games – the most representative martial arts was included as mass synchronous demonstration during the opening ceremony of the Games.

During the mandate of the president Roh some of the leading South Korean institutions were established or transformed, whose subject of activity is directly related to the dissemination of Korean culture around the world. By way of example, we could state the Korean Foundation, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the National Institute for International Education (NIIED) etc. In the years to come, their activity was established as one of key importance for the dissemination of Korean culture around the world.

3. Cabinet of the president Kim Young-sam (1993 – 1998)

The main priority of the cabinet of the president Kim Young-sam became improving the competitiveness of the Republic of Korea at the international market in general. The key role for achieving this was perceived by the president as the development of cultural sector, just like it became clear from his official speech in 1995 in which he declared that “we live in times when culture defines nation’s destiny” (Kim and Jin, 2016, p.5521). During his mandate, they initiated significant reforms in various sectors such as culture, higher education, information and communication technologies, thus initiating the “construction of a new Korea” that was his pre-election moto. Based on the abovementioned, we could accept that namely his cabinet laid the foundations of a comprehensive and purposeful national strategy for making popular the Korean culture around the world, including the interactive political, economic and cultural measures – a strategy supported and additionally developed by the subsequent governments.

4. Cabinet of the president Kim Dae-jung (1998 – 2003)

The reforms initiated by the cabinets of Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam started bearing fruit during the cabinet of the president Kim Dae-jung. Technically speaking, the new cabinet also recognized the cultural industry as a strategic mechanism for achieving high competitiveness that is evident from increasing the budget of cultural sector to over 1% of the national budget and from creating a special fund for promoting the Korean cinema abroad in the period of 1999 – 2003 (Kim and Jin, 2016, p.5522). Special highlight is placed on improving the technological infrastructure that consequently turned the Republic of Korea into one of the most technologically advanced countries worldwide and top runner when it comes to high-speed internet; additionally, these steps are imbedded into the foundations of Korean gaming industry’s future success.

5. Cabinet of the president Roh Moo-hyun (2003 – 2008)

The cabinet of the president Roh Moo-hyun highlighted the cultural exchange as means for deepening the understanding and expansion of cooperation between nations, and they started using *Hallyu* more and more purposeful for stimulating this exchange. Additionally, education and making Korean language popular are highlighted. In 2004, a large-scale project started that was called Study Korea Project, whose main goal was to attract foreign students for tutoring in the country. Thanks to the Korean Wave, which at the time was already enjoying increased interest by the countries of Eastern and South-eastern Asia, country’s economic success, as well

as this project, the Republic of Korea registered significant increase of international students' number. According to the data provided by the South Korean Ministry of Education, their number increased from 4 682 in 2001 to 49 270 in 2007, whereas over 90% were Asians, mainly from China (Byun and Kim, 2011, pp.472 – 474).

In the beginning of the new millennium, the economic success of the Republic of Korea started attracting more and more immigrants towards the country. The inflow of foreigners looking for realization at the labour market in Korea provided the cabinet of the president Moo-hyun to introduce in 2005 the so-called “System for admission at the labour market” (외국인 고용허가제). According to this system, in order to have a work visa issued, the foreign immigrants should successfully pass the TOPIK exam. With the introduction of these new requirements, the country initiated a campaign for making popular and establishing the Korean as a work language. During the same year, the South Korean government voted a Framework Act on Korean Language⁷. Some of its main objectives are to secure the preservation and development of Korean language as cultural heritage and ensure quality Korean language tuition (including, in its capacity of foreign language)⁸. This was the first law in the Republic of Korea especially occupied with the issues related to the national language and its passing was indicative of language's significance for those governing the country. The King Sejong Institute Foundation was founded in 2012 after an amendment of the Framework Act on Korean Language, yet the first King Sejong Institute was founded as early as in 2007. During this pilot year a total of 13 branches of the Institute were founded in 3 countries (Mongolia, China and the USA). As we already mentioned, at the time the Korean Wave had already gathered momentum in Asia and the increase of King Sejong Institute's branches throughout the years was the reply of the Republic of Korea to the ever increasing interest in Korean language and culture abroad.

6. Cabinet of the president Lee Myung-bak (2008 – 2013)

Among the priorities of the president Lee Myung-bak was the construction, promotion and establishment of integrated, distinctive national brand that is recognizable abroad⁹. Furthering this, in 2009 he initiated the establishment of the President Council of National Branding (국가브랜드위원회), which was to function under his direct guiding. The main tasks of the council were aimed at correcting the obsolete and stereotypical notions of the Republic of Korea, promotion of the country as economically developed country and provoking respect for its culture, language, production and population. During the same year, they passed the decision

⁷ The text is available at: https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng_mobile/viewer.do?hseq=28092&type=sogan&key=8

⁸ For comparison, in 2004 in the National Assembly of Bulgaria a draft was deposited of the Bulgarian Language Act that settles the mandatory use, pathways for regulating the preservation, enrichment and development of Bulgarian language. The draft-act was not passed and as of 2020 no repeated attempt was made to deposit similar text to be voted in the National Assembly. The text of the draft-act of 2004 is accessible at: <https://parliament.bg/bills/41/154-01-89.pdf>.

⁹ “National brand” is a comprehensive notion that was introduced in the end of the XX century. In its essence, it aims at differentiating a particular country from all the rest, and the basis of such differentiation is its public image (the way it, its citizens and its production are perceived and associated abroad, the degree of trust it creates, including at irrational level).

to build a National museum of the Korean alphabet *Hangul* (국립한글박물관), which could be defined as the next step in establishing *Hangul* as one of the most significant cultural symbols of the country and occasion for national pride. The president Lee directly connected *Hallyu* to the national brand, the international competitiveness of the Republic of Korea and the “soft power” of the country that made him initiate the expansion of its scope. This became obvious from his statement during the economic forum held in 2012 in Seoul:

“I believe that to us it is an exceptional opportunity to communicate with people of other nationalities and influence their senses with *Hallyu*. We should seriously consider how to improve *Hallyu* that represents Korea before the world, so that it turns into sustainable engine for the development of our nation” (quoted by Kim and Jin, 2016, p.5525).

7. Cabinet of the president Park Geun-hye (2013 – 2017)

The president Park also prioritized strengthening the Korean cultural influence globally, whereas she frequently used *Hallyu* for the purposes of public diplomacy. Actually, she was the first South Korean president that delivered a speech (even though in the pattern of video-statement) during an important event devoted to pop culture and in particular, the music awards MAMA¹⁰ in 2014 (Kim and Jin, 2016, pp.5514 – 5515). The event sponsored by one of the large government agencies and broadcasted live in 16 countries clearly demonstrated president’s attitude to using the Korean pop culture for the purposes of national foreign policy. Nevertheless, unlike her predecessors, the president Park undertook a policy of aggressive intervention and even censorship over the work of cultural activists that did not approve of her governance. Officially she declared cinema promotion and other Korean cultural products as her propriety yet unofficially revived dishonest practices used during the rule of her father – General Park Chung-hee (who headed the country in the period of 1961–1979), such as the creation and maintenance of “black” list with the names of people deprived of the opportunity for government funding etc. The widespread scandal related to the disclosure and announcement of this list is perceived as one of the reasons that brought about her impeachment.

8. Cabinet of the president Moon Jae-in (2017 –)

The president Moon also put the development of the cultural industry on focus, and highlighted the significance of the cultural export for the maintenance of country’s international prestige. His words, spoken during an official event in the beginning of January also made it clear 2020: “our country and art bring honour to Korea and make us an honourable country”, “the Korean series such as “Descendents of the Sun” and *Hallyu* stars such as the K-pop group BTS are among the main conversation topics during the high-level meetings with the global leaders. When I am abroad and speak with the leaders of countries around the world, I feel very proud” (Korea.net, 2020). Government’s efforts are aimed as priority towards the development of three main areas that in summary are called “3K” – these are K-content, K-beauty and K-food. Additionally, the cabinet of the president Moon initiated a strategy for supporting the

¹⁰ MAMA (abbreviated for Mnet Asian Music Awards) are prestigious music awards organized by the Korean media giant CJ Group. For the first time, the award-conferring ceremony was held in 1999.

international expansion of the Korean small-sized business entitled “K-promotion” (Hankyoreh, 2020).

In 2018, precisely 30 years after hosting the XXIV summer Olympic Games, the Republic of Korea hosted the Olympics for the second time – this time, the XXIII winter Olympic Games. The international event extensively broadcasted by the media that was aired live worldwide provided Korea once again with the exceptional opportunity to make it to almost every home and establish itself as high-tech country with impressive cultural traditions. The country didn’t save money while attempting to shine and skilfully used the event for the purposes of its cultural expansion and its foreign policy in general. During the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympiad, the Republic of Korea provided the multi-million audience with spectacular entertainment that masterfully integrated country’s traditional face and its modern vision¹¹, and the impressive light show with over 1 200 drones made it to the Guinness book¹².

IV. LEADING GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS RELATED TO THE PERFORMANCE OF SOUTH KOREA’S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING KOREAN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE ABROAD

1. Institutions to the South Korean Ministry of culture, sports and tourism

1.1. Korean Foundation for international cultural exchange (한국국제문화교류진흥원)¹³

The Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange, known with its abbreviation KOFICE¹⁴, was created in 2003 in order to promote the mutual understanding and friendly relations between the Republic of Korea and the other countries, and *Hallyu* is being used as a key instrument for achieving this. In practice, the Foundation is the state agency in charge that integrates the success of the Korean Wave with the national policy aimed at expanding the Korean cultural influence around the world.

1.2. Korean Culture and Information Service (해외문화홍보원)¹⁵

The Korean Culture and Information Service known with its abbreviation KOCIS¹⁶, was created as early as in the end of 1971. Its main mission is to improve the awareness of the global community about the country and correct the imprecise notions of the Republic of Korea.

¹¹ The video with the opening ceremony is accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7eiNnw6Kwc>. The video with the closing ceremony is accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rDxnPkLZMc>.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DL3k3LKiQVA>

¹³ <http://eng.kofice.or.kr/index.asp>

¹⁴ Abbreviation of Foundation for International Cultural Exchange.

¹⁵ <http://www.kocis.go.kr/eng/main.do>

¹⁶ Abbreviation of Korean Culture and Information Service.

1.3. Korea Creative Content Agency (한국콘텐츠진흥원)¹⁷

The agency known with its abbreviation KOCCA¹⁸, was created as early as in 2001. Its main goal is to promote the production of high-quality creative contents, whereas the ambition is for the Republic of Korea to become one of the five leading countries when it comes to production of creative contents worldwide.

1.4. King Sejong Institute Foundation (세종학당재단)¹⁹

The King Sejong Institute Foundation is the leading government organization that promotes Korean language tuition abroad in the pattern of courses for the citizens. This happens thanks to the branches of the educational and cultural centres of the King Sejong Institute opened throughout the world. The main activity of the King Sejong Institute is related to lecturing practical Korean language and expanding the knowledge of international community about the language and culture of Korea, whereas both functions are intrinsically related and integrated.

1.5. National Institute of Korean Language (국립국어원)²⁰

The National Institute of Korean Language is the government body that is occupied with the nomination, development and update of the modern Korean language so its utilization and assimilation are easy and happen according to clear rules, and its use is in conformity with the current speech dynamics of society.

1.6. Literature Translation Institute of Korea (한국문학번역원)²¹

The Institute was founded in 1996. Its main mission is aimed at making popular Korean literature abroad and it reaching wider audience via professional and quality translation. To this end, the Institute provides for purposeful funding of translators and publishing houses for translation and publication of Korean books in humanitarian and social sciences and Korean literature works of art.

1.7. Kukkiwon World Taekwondo Headquarters (국기원)²²

There are a few organizations related to Taekwondo yet the most famous and representative one is *Kukkiwon*. One could say that this is the leading South Korean Taekwondo organization because namely it is responsible for the dan exams and the issuance of certificates for Taekwondo mastering. *Kukkiwon* was created as early as in the beginning of the 70's of XX century and in 1973 it organizes the first global taekwondo championship. In 1974 the

¹⁷ <https://www.kocca.kr/en/main.do>

¹⁸ Abbreviation of Korea Creative Content Agency.

¹⁹ <https://www.sejonghagdang.org/sjcu/home/main.do>

²⁰ <https://www.korean.go.kr/front/main.do>

²¹ <https://www.ltikorea.or.kr/en/main.do>

²² <http://www.kukkiwon.or.kr/front/eng/main2.action>

representative team of *Kukkiwon* was created and its role is to make popular the Korean traditional martial arts via picturesque demonstrations abroad.²³

1.8. Taekwondo Promotion Foundation (태권도진흥재단)²⁴

The foundation was founded in 2005 and its mission is to promote the growth of Taekwondo community around the world. It supports the Taekwondo organizations in order to strengthen the effect of their activity – arranges for the donation of sports Taekwondo clothing in the developing countries where Korean martial arts are still not quite popular; provides for the payment of instructors in Taekwondo who tutor it in the state schools abroad; provides for tuition support to competitors from the developing countries; provides for purposeful funding of embassies in 27 countries for holding regional Taekwondo tournaments and last, but not least, manages the complex Taekwondowon²⁵, defined as the “Taekwondo temple”.

2. Institutions to the South Korean Ministry of foreign affairs

2.1. South Korean embassies

The South Korean embassies scattered around the world are key factors for the implementation of the national strategy for making popular the Korean culture and language abroad. The reason behind that is that the people who coordinate its implementation at local level are actually conductors of the South Korean foreign policy and their more global purpose is aimed at expanding the Korean economic and cultural influence globally.

2.2. Korea Foundation (한국국제교류재단)²⁶

The Korea Foundation was founded in 1991 with the mission to raise the awareness about the Republic of Korea and its culture among the international community and cooperate for the construction and maintenance of strong friendly relations with the other countries around the world. Furthering this, it manages versatile projects in public diplomacy, while being an institution with key role for making popular the Korean culture globally.

2.3. Korea International Cooperation Agency (한국국제협력단)²⁷

The Korea International Cooperation Agency, also known with its abbreviation KOICA²⁸, was created in 1991 in order to coordinate all the programs related to the assistance provided by the Republic of Korea to the developing countries – programs that until then used to be under the

²³ This is also the role of the representative team of another large South Korean taekwondo organization, namely the World Taekwondo. In 2020 the team of World Taekwondo directly won place at the quarter finals of the popular American show America's Got Talent after its brilliant performance during the first round. It is worth mentioning that this representative team visited Bulgaria in 2019 when our country hosted the World Taekwondo Grand Prix. The team performed demonstrations in three Bulgarian cities – Burgas, Varna and Sofia. More details are available at: <http://www.worldtaekwondo.org/wtnews/view.html?nid=132644&mcd=C10>.

²⁴ <https://www.tpf.or.kr/tpf/main/index.do>

²⁵ https://www.tpf.or.kr/t1_eng/main/index.do

²⁶ <https://en.kf.or.kr/?menuno=3722>

²⁷ http://www.koica.go.kr/sites/koica_kr/index.do

²⁸ Abbreviation of Korea International Cooperation Agency.

jurisdiction of various ministries. Its activities are oriented towards sharing the South Korean experience, combatting poverty at global level, establishing sustainable social-economic development in the developing countries and strengthening the friendly relations between the Republic of Korea and the countries being supported.

3. Institutions to the South Korean Ministry of education

3.1. *National Institute for International Education (국립국제교육원)*²⁹

The National Institute for International Education also known with the abbreviation NIIED³⁰, was founded in 1962. This is the leading South Korean state institute in the educational sector whose activity is oriented towards internationalization of South Korean higher education and promotion of cultural exchange. It is in charge for numerous programs aimed at improving the competitiveness of the Korean higher education; attraction of international students for tuition in the Republic of Korea; performance of exchange in education; provision of language support to ethnical Koreans abroad.

3.2 *Academy of Korean Studies (한국학중앙연구원)*³¹

The Academy of Korean Studies was founded in 1978 and its main goal is to research and analyse the Korean culture in-depth from the perspective of social and humanitarian sciences. Throughout the years, its activity had significant contribution for promoting country's image in scientific communities via publishing articles in renown scientific editions, as well as via issuing books and specialized journals. The most significant contribution of the Korean culture and language abroad is nevertheless related to the financial support provided to universities and research centres for the development of their activity, directly related to the Korean studies.

V. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The present chapter presents: (1) the results of held interviews whose main **goal** is to outline the story of Korean Wave dissemination in Bulgaria, in relation to studying Korean language in our country, and (2) the results of the performed inquiry research whole **goal** is to identify the key features related to the current status of interest in Korean culture and language in Bulgaria.

1. Interview

1.1. *Research organization*

For the purposes of the doctoral thesis in the period of the 17th – 23rd of July 2021 in-depth interviews were held with nine people, eight of whom are related to the three targeted educational institutions and one related to the early history of the Korean Wave in Bulgaria. The interviewed people were selected in such manner that they could present not only the popular

²⁹ <http://www.niied.go.kr/main/main.do>

³⁰ Abbreviated from National Institute for International Education.

³¹ <http://intl.aks.ac.kr/english/portal.php>

position of “*Hallyu* graduates”, but a more different perspective related to the motivation for Korean language motivation. In order to adhere to the confidentiality principle, the respondents are presented in the text only via their initials yet in order to argument their choice, here we would present a short overview of their relevant biography. For the purposes of the present doctoral thesis, we have interviewed:

1. D. P. (22-year-old, male); has studied Korean language in the King Sejong Institute – Sofia for two years; at present, he is studying for a bachelor’s degree at Dong-A University³² in Pusan (Republic of Korea) under the Global Korea Scholarship program.
2. A. B. (23-year-old, female); has graduated the Korean class in 18th Secondary school “William Gladstone” as top of her class; at present, she is studying for a bachelor’s degree at Yonsei University³³ in Seoul (Republic of Korea) under the Global Korea Scholarship program.
3. P. N. (23-year-old, female); has graduated the Korean class in 18th Secondary school “William Gladstone”; worked for several months with Korean language in international company positioned in Sofia.
4. V. K. (28-year-old, female); graduate of the “Korean Studies” major at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”; had graduated “Society and Culture of Korea” master’s program in the same university; has worked for 4 years with Korean language in international company positioned in Sofia.
5. T. M. (30-year-old, male); graduate of the “Korean Studies” major in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, graduated with honours; graduated master’s program in the Yonsei University in the Republic of Korea under the Global Korea Scholarship program; at present, he lives and works in the Republic of Korea.
6. M. F. (37-year-old, female); one of the first Bulgarians who passed all the eight tuition levels in the King Sejong Institute – Sofia; among the creators of the first K-pop radio in Bulgaria, called K.Sound.
7. I. S. (43-year-old, female); graduate of the second class of the “Korean Studies” major in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”; at present, she is a lecturer in the “Korean Studies” department of the same university.
8. M. Z. (47-year-old, female); graduate of the first class of the “Korean Studies” major in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”; at present, she is a lecturer in the “Korean Studies” department of the same university.
9. P. Y. (54-year-old, female); a long-term fan of Korean drama series, with long history of her hobby and one of the earliest members of the sub-culture in Bulgaria.

The interviews have been realized in the pattern of individual, semi-structured³⁴ interview held in online environment whereas to this end we have used the platform Zoom, which

³² In Korean 동아대학교.

³³ In Korean 연세대학교.

³⁴ In the case of semi-structured interview we outline particular sub-topics with several leading questions that are asked to all the interviewed respondents. Depending on the answers provided to these questions nevertheless

makes it possible to record the meeting. All the participants answer four leading questions and their individual answers provoke additional, deepening questions. The four questions are:

1. Do you remember what brought about your interest in Korea and when did this happen?
2. What did you know about Korea, before your interest was provoked and before you started looking for additional information about the country?
3. When did you start your Korean language tuition, did you have any clearer idea where to implement your knowledge afterwards?
4. In what way did you improve your practical language knowledge during your tuition in Bulgaria?

1.2. Presentation and analysis of held interviews' results

The first question of the interview (*Do you remember what brought about your interest in Korea and when did this happen?*) aims at outlining the main parameters related to the evolution of interest in Korea, in our country. The first graduates of the “Korean Studies” major presented the interest in the country as quite an exotic endeavour. Thus, for example, M. Z. who is a graduate of the first class of the “Korean Studies” major shared the following:

“The motivation to enrol for “Korean Studies” in my case was mainly related to the fact that the major was newly opened which I perceived as a chance and opportunity – opportunity to be one of the first specialists in this sector, in Bulgaria. At the time, the Republic of Korea was too exotic, too distant as a culture and language and we knew almost nothing about it. Before undertaking my studies, I had some vague interest in the country yet it was not quite motivated. What brought me to the “Korean Studies” major was rather my interest in foreign languages and the decision to undertake Eastern language tuition“.

Some of these first graduates saw the tight connection between the newly opened major and newly created work niche, thanks to Daewoo and of its satellite companies that in the beginning of the 90’s stepped at the Bulgarian market. This is supported by the words of I. S., a graduate of the second class of the “Korean Studies” major who shares the following:

“My interest in Korea was part of my interest in East Asia in general – I was interested in China, as well as in Japan and in Korea. Nevertheless, in view of the perspective for the future career development I was of the opinion it is better to be occupied with Korea since at the time it was entering the Bulgarian market as a hit. Additionally, “Korean Studies” was a new major while “Japan Studies” and “Chinese Studies” were already established and there were quite a few specialists in these two philological directions. I would say, this was the long-term perspective. The shorter perspective was related to the opportunities for travelling, getting to know a new world and specialization abroad. I had a friend in the first class of the “Korean Studies” major that during his first year as a

additional, improvised one are being asked (and frequently – different in every case) aimed at specifying, deepening and expanding the accumulated information.

student went to Korea on a short-term tuition and returned enriched with colourful impressions and new ideas. At the time, travelling abroad was very difficult – not long before that Bulgaria has opened up to the world and the people neither had the resources nor the information how to do this. The opportunity of going to the other side of the world and get to know first-hand such a different culture, was exceptional and definitely attracted me”.

Unlike the situation in the 90’s of the XX century and the first years of the new millennium, at around 2010 an accelerated transition from labour-motivated choice to choice based on provoked cultural interest started. The contrast is outstanding even more at the background of Daewoo bankruptcy after the collapse of the parent-company in 1999 and the subsequent withdrawn of Korean companies from the Bulgarian market. We observed an interim period depicted by the memories of V. K.:

“When I was admitted to the “Korean Studies” major back in 2011, the Republic of Korea was still not that popular. I admit that I happened to be there by chance. I remember that during our presentation at academic year’s opening in the department, many colleagues shared that the major was not their first wish, but they were actually unsuccessfully admitted Japanese studies students. Consequently, I figured out that this is a frequent statement in recent years. At the time, the “Japanese Studies” major was perceived as more prestigious and its admission score was higher than the one for the “Korean Studies”. Yet, after the start of our tuition, it became clear that most colleagues are fans of Korean series and pop music and despite their unsuccessful admission in view of their first admission, they were happy studying Korean language because of their interest in Korean pop culture”.

These words are indicative of the situation following the withdrawal of the Korean business from Bulgaria and precedes the mass inflow of *Hallyu* in our country. It is observed in the “Korean Studies” major of Sofia University, as well as in the class with profiled study of Korean language in the 18th school, and we could say that as a result of the strong influence of Japanese culture that spread throughout the world³⁵ a decade before the dissemination of *Hallyu*. As a result of this Japanese cultural influence that made it to Bulgaria, just several years ago oftentimes in the major/class people were enrolled that perceived studying Korean language as a compromise.

The dissemination of *Hallyu* around the world is perfectly combined with the economic achievements of the Republic of Korea that after 2010 undertook more active role on the global political stage. 2012 proved to be quite the turning point because for the first time in history of Korean popular music a Korean performer managed to broadcast an indisputable international hit. At the time, the Republic of Korea already had enviable achievements behind its back and the

³⁵ The thing that could be called “Japanese Wave”, also *Hallyu* uses the American market as a trampoline. One of the leading channels for disseminating Japanese culture worldwide in the 90’s was provided by Hollywood and in particular by Columbia and Universal – two of the popular Hollywood movie studios. The reason is that both were purchased by Japanese companies (in 1989 Sony purchased Columbia, and in 1990 Matsushita purchased Universal) (Iwabuchi, 2002, p.29).

success of this pilot Korean global hit just provided the country with the opportunity to disseminate them among the intrigued international community. To many people around the world, until then the Republic of Korea was overshadowed, yet the unexpected success of Gangnam Style brought about curiosity and initiated at least a superficial online survey. This, in itself, is not a historical precedent – it has happened before, it would happen in the future – a music hit would conquer the world and would bring about interest in a particular country. What is different in this case is that thanks to what was achieved so far economically, politically, educationally, socially, culturally, technologically, the Republic of Korea not only proved to be under the floodlights for a moment, but had the resource and capacity it took to keep the international attention. In this light, a good example is the case of T. M., who defined himself as a “non-typical Korean Studies student”:

“Before I enrolled for the “Korean Studies” major, I studied “Public administration”. At the time, one of our leading lecturers was great fan of politics and economic development of the Republic of Korea. As part of his course in 2011, he assigned us to write an essay with which to join a public competition organized by the embassy of the Republic of Korea in our country. Back then, for the first time I researched the country and its culture and thought that this could be a perspective field for development to me – combining the “Public administration” major with the tuition in Eastern language like the Korean one. Additionally, in the summer of 2012 – the year in which I enrolled for “Korean Studies” as a second major – the Gangnam Style was released at the market and this gave me additional confidence. As if I felt that the Republic of Korea was gathering speed and was about to soon gain a more important role at the global stage. Most of my colleagues have enrolled studying Korean language due to their interest in the Korean popular culture, hence one could say that I was slightly the Korean Studies student “out-of-the-box” yet I cannot deny that in my case *Hallyu* played some role too”.

The situation with D. P. is similar, who started his tuition in 2016:

“Initially, my interest in the Republic of Korea was provoked by K-pop. In the summer of 2016 a friend of mine showed me a video by G-Dragon and to my greatest surprise I established that the music actually sounded interesting, slightly exotic and quite different from what we were used consuming on media. I knew almost nothing about Korea, so I superficially surveyed online and things happened somewhat like the snowball effect³⁶. Back in that summer, I was on crossroad, because I was about to start the 12th grade, and after it I had to have a ready action plan where and what I would like to study. My major in high school was “Entrepreneurship and management” and the discovery that from a poor country the Republic of Korea suddenly became one of the most developed countries in the region, totally won my attention. In the autumn I decided to test Korean language after enrolling a course in the King Sejong Institute and see where this would

³⁶ *The snowball effect* describes what happens when something small or insignificant accelerates and is fast to become bigger and more meaningful.

bring me. So, it brought me to Korea. I wanted to study abroad, yet thanks to *Hallyu* discovered an opportunity of whose existence I was unaware”.

The story of D. P. is quite indicative about the role of Korean Wave for making popular the education in the Republic of Korea. Just like in the case of D. P., in the one of T. M. *Hallyu* played the “missionary” role that nevertheless would have not been successful should the Republic of Korea had not achieved competitiveness at the international market.

Based on the summarized answers by all the interview respondents it becomes clear that in Bulgaria key role for the dissemination of *Hallyu* was played by the fans. Once they get to like something Korean, they feel the urge to recommend it to someone else. Furthermore – in his interview, V. K. even tells how while presenting the Korean series and music to her relatives and friends she felt she has served her duty. Thus, from mouth to mouth, *Hallyu* started circulating while attracting more and more people. Some of them, just like P. Yu. Discovered in the face of the Korean entertainment industry a window for a foreign culture and opportunity to expand one’s perception of the world. Others, just like D. P., initially saw exotic and allure in what is different from what we are used to, and consequently opportunity for their future. Third, just like M. F., saw the cherished alternative to the American mainstream that had been domineering the media for decades:

“I grew up while watching American movies and series and listening to American music. Nevertheless, at some time I got fed up with all this. I got sick of sexualisation – there was sex everywhere. One day, a friend of mine recommended me something different – she recommended me a Korean series – and while watching it, I could not help it but be amazed by the relations between the protagonists. There was the tender, emotional love I was missing and looking for. I watched all the 24 episodes in just two days, and on the third, somehow impulsively, I enrolled for a course in Korean language. To me, this first series was a turning point – I not only “discovered” Korea, I fell in love with it. This was the beginning of a huge change in my life”.

The second question (*What did you know about Korea, before your interest was provoked and before you started looking for additional information about the country?*) aims at researching Bulgarians’ awareness about the Republic of Korea before the collision with country’s economic success and *Hallyu*. Based on interview participants’ replies we could conclude that our general culture about the country is very low, whereas this is mostly due to our Europe-centered educational system that leaves Asia in the shadow. The respondents declare that their knowledge of the country, before their interest was provoked, were quite limited mainly to knowledge about the geographic location of the Korean Peninsula and the existence of North and South Korea, fragmented information about the Korean War and in the case of younger participants in the interview – some knowledge about Koreans’ success in the team computer games and production of technology (with highlight on smartphones).

The third question (*When did you start your Korean language tuition, did you have any clearer idea where to implement your knowledge afterwards?*) aims at studying the motivation

for learning Korean language retrospectively. M. Z. started her tuition in the distant year of 1995 and shares the following:

“At the time I was not making plans. I have never thought my future career would be bound with Korea and Korean language, and honestly speaking, back then I personally didn’t see so clearly outlined perspectives for working with Korean language. To me and to my colleagues the main principle seemed to be related to the hypothetical opportunities unlocked by the new major”.

V. K., started her tuition in Korean language sixteen years later (in 2011), shares something similar:

“I had no idea what I was diving in. Korea was still not that popular; I even remember the reactions of the people surrounding me when I was telling them what I was studying – most of them got surprised and asked me what I was about to do with this Korean. Nevertheless, deep inside me I knew I didn’t want to study another Western language what almost everyone is fluent in. I wanted something rarer and knew that if I mastered it well, then I would have no difficulties finding a well-paid job”.

D. P., who started his tuition in the autumn of 2016 complemented the picture sharing that in 2016 the Korean language was still not enjoying increased popularity that could be seen among young people today:

“In the summer of 2016 I decided to start studying one more language, I was somewhat bored whereas I had to make my mind between the popular Asian languages. Chinese was not attracting me due to its pronunciation and rhythm. On the other hand, Japanese was quite famous thanks to manga and anime and many young people knew Japanese. I wanted to be outstanding among the others somehow, that is why I chose the Korean, which thanks to music sounded quite interesting to me”.

When it comes to juxtaposing and summarizing the replies provided by respondents on the issue several aspects are outstanding. Firstly, the majority of those that were interviewed shared directly or indirectly that their decision to study Korean language was greeted with misunderstanding by their surroundings. The main reason behind this reaction, they say, is the low awareness of Korea. Secondly, most of them declare that in the very beginning of their tuition they had no clear idea of the future application of their knowledge in Korean. Nevertheless, in what they were convinced is that knowledge of such a rare language would inevitably provide them with advantage at the labour market. Thirdly, for a starting point in the beginning they all use the labour market of Bulgaria. Nevertheless, consequently the subsequent graduates set their eyes onto the international labour market that could be explained by the accelerating globalization. Fourthly, all the respondents declare that the workplaces with Korean language in Bulgaria are insufficient. As an argument for their desire to be working abroad they state not the lack of opportunities for realization in our country, but concerns such as the political and economic situation in the country, principles of market economy etc.

The last, the **fourth question** (*In what way did you improve your practical language knowledge during your tuition in Bulgaria?*) aims at surveying the manners in which people

being tutored in Korean language in Bulgaria exercise their practical skills outside the classroom, as well as the difficulties they encounter while trying to practice the language. Their replies are indicative of the situation which is inherent to more or less all the people who have decided to study Korean language in a country that is geographically remote from the Korean Peninsula and that lacks a well-manifested Korean presence.

According to the summarized opinion of the interviewed people, territorial distance is one of the most significant hindrances to trainees. As a result of the research, we established that the opportunities for listening to Korean speech in Bulgaria are limited mostly to watching Korean series/movies/reality show-programs and listening K-pop music online and not on TV (because there Korean series are presented as dubbed). The personal contact is rather rare that is partly due to the poorly expressed Korean presence in our country and partly to something that the respondents define as reticence of Korean diaspora. The opportunities for speaking are even scarcer than the listening opportunities. In this light, A. B. shares the following:

“Koreans abroad are quite peculiar because they still have this culture of being a community; their own community. It is very hard to approach them, because they stick to their team”.

Nevertheless, some get lucky. This is the case with T. M. who during his tuition in Korean language managed to establish a friendly relation with the language carriers. Nevertheless it is worth mentioning that his relation is with Korean students studying in the department “Bulgarian studies” in Korean university, who have arrived in Bulgaria on student exchange. I.e. it is not about emigrants but people interested in Bulgaria that are open to creating friendships, at least because of the opportunity for practicing the Bulgarian language they study. Yet cases like the one of T. M. are rather exceptions. In their attempt to counteract the limitations related to practicing Korean language in Bulgaria, most of the interview respondents declare they took advantage mostly of the opportunities provided by the Internet and social networks. D. P. shares the following:

“I, myself was using the mobile application with which you could get in touch with people all over the world. There were options for Koreans and I decided to test it. Thus I met several language carriers who live in Korea and we started exchanging messages – on daily basis, conversational phrases, nothing in-deep. Outside the application and the Institute I have not used Korean”.

A. B., who in the end of her tuition in the 18th school managed to defend TOPIK 4th level (one point down 5th level) – an enviable achievement even to a student in “Korean Studies” – shared her approach in the following manner:

“I, myself, talked a lot with people online. I was looking for a pen pal, just to be able to talk. It didn’t matter who came from what place, I just wanted to practice. I guess I was a great pain in the ass with my poor Korean yet I didn’t give up – when they gave me the red flag, I just found someone else with whom to talk. I was not looking for close friendships, but the opportunity to improve my skills. I attempted finding friends in Bulgaria. Together with my classmates, on several occasions we went on the annual

sports events organized by the Korean community in Sofia, where we tried making friends with people of our age – children of the Koreans who live in Bulgaria. Nevertheless the problem was they didn't want to speak in Korean; they wanted to speak English or at least I didn't happen to meet someone who wanted to talk in Korean”.

The earliest graduates of the “Korean Studies” major who had started their tuition at the times before Internet, when Google, Youtube and the social media didn't existed, and smartphones were simply a project of the future, were not lucky enough to easily make up for the absence of extracurricular practice opportunism. In this light, M. Z. shares the following:

“Our opportunities for improvement and in general for practicing Korean language outside University were quite limited. To many of us, the only Koreans with whom we used to communicate were out two lecturers. Nevertheless there were colleagues that wanted to work for Korean families, while assisting them with the accommodation in Bulgaria, their adaptation to living in our country, with all kinds of domestic questions. Even though in most cases these contacts were not long-term, thanks to them the colleagues progressed remarkably with the language”.

Little bit different perspective on the issue is presented by I. S., who started her studies just one year later:

“We worked a lot with Koreans and our Korean lecturers constantly urged us to be doing this. To this end, they put us through to the language carriers who have arrived in Bulgaria and to whom we became something like associates or assistants and the tasks we performed for them were versatile – from translations to trivial things like taking care for their children for a while. The nice thing about this system was that you work for one and the same person for long time and get used to the phrases he or she uses, his or her manner of expression, the topics you need to interpret. They were contacting us all the time to be interpreting for KOTRA³⁷”.

Based on the answers provided by the interviewed respondents we could conclude that proactivity is of key importance for improving the practical skills in handling the language. All the respondents unanimously declare that they were looking for ways to practice Korean outside the classroom on their own – online or via personal contact with the language carrier, and namely thanks to this entrepreneurship they were able to achieve the particular level of language fluency.

2. Inquiry research

2. 1. Research organization

The inquiry research was held in the period from May – June 2021 in the three most influential educational organizations related to studying Korean language in Bulgaria – 18th Secondary school “William Gladstone” (the first school in Europe that offered Korean language tuition as first foreign language), Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (the oldest institution of higher education in Bulgaria and the first one that offered tuition in Korean language and

³⁷ Abbreviated from Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency.

culture) and the only branch of the governmental King Sejong Institute for Bulgaria. In the 18th Secondary school “William Gladstone” the target group consisted of the students of the high school stage (8th – 12th grade) whereas the pupils of the primary and pre-high school stage were purposefully excluded from the research. The argument behind this decision is related to the fact that the students of high school stage are free to be choosing their educational direction, whereas during the primary and pre-high school stage the decision is most often made by the parents. In Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” the target group consisted of the students of the “Korean Studies” major (bachelors and masters) and the students of the “South, East and South-Eastern Asia” major who have chosen to study Korean language. In the King Sejong Institute the target group consisted of the undergraduates in the regular courses, as well as the undergraduates of the specialized course in business Korean language.

Due to the levied measures that are related to the attempts for limiting the dissemination of Covid-19 in Bulgaria, the inquiry card was disseminated online (in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and in the King Sejong Institute where classes take place remotely) as well as on paper (in the 18th Secondary school “William Gladstone” where in June 2021 the attendance tuition was restored). The research work includes a total of 169 people who at present study Korean language, of whom: 85 students³⁸; 56 students³⁹ and 28 course attendees⁴⁰.

The inquiry card was specifically elaborated for the purposes of the doctoral thesis. It is anonymous and partially standardized whereas it includes 15 issues of which three are with closed answers, eight are with open answers and four are of demographic nature. Processing the results from the performed research was done with the data statistical processing program SPSS.

2.2 Presentation of results from the inquiry research

The first two questions of the inquiry card are aimed at researching *Hallyu*'s history in Bulgaria. When it comes to **question 1** (*For how long have you been interested in the Republic of Korea?*) the respondents were able to choose among five options (“for around a year”, “for around 2 years”, “for around 3 years”, “for around 4 years” and “for more than 5 years”). According to the results of the inquiry research, the greatest share is attributable to those who have answered with “for around 4 years” (35.1%), followed by “for more than 5 years” (31.5%) and “for around 3 years” (16.1%). When juxtaposing the results from question 1 to the demographic feature “sex” the outstanding fact is that in the case of male the first ranking reply is “for around a year” (36.8%), whereas in the case of female the first ranking is “for around 4 years” (36.7%). Additionally, what is indicative is juxtaposing the results from question 1 to the indicator “educational institution” – in this case, the outstanding fact is that in the case of students the aggregate share of answers “for around 4 years” and “for more than 5 years” takes up little bit than 80% of all the answers. In the case of course attendees and pupils, the aggregate

³⁸ 24 people of the 8th grade, 13 – of the 9th grade, 25 – of the 10th grade and 23 – of the 11th grade.

³⁹ 40 bachelors of the “Korean Studies” major, 14 bachelors in “South, East and South-Eastern Asia” major and 2 masters of the “Korean Studies” major.

⁴⁰ 1 of the group of business Korean studies; 11, trainees according to the first textbook (level 1A); 7, trainees according to the second textbook (level 1B); 3, trainees according to the fourth textbook (level 2B); 3, trainees according to the sixth textbook (level 3B) and 3, trainees according to the seventh textbook (level 4A).

share of these two answers is almost equal (60.7% and 59.6%, correspondingly), even though the ratio is different – in the case of course attendees the highest share is for “more than 5 years” (46.4%), whereas in the case of pupils the greatest share is attributable to “for around 4 years” (41.7%).

Question 2 (*Do you remember what provoked your interest in the Republic of Korea?*) is with open answers and provides the opportunity to freely call the individual initiating factor that in many cases is not just one (this is the reason for the aggregate of per cent not to equal 100). According to the summarized data, 70.7% of the respondents define “K-pop music and dances” as a factor that unlocks their interest. The second ranking is for “Korean TV series and motion pictures” (27.4%), followed by “other” (8.3%)⁴¹, “Korean culture” (6.4%), “Korean food” and “Korean language” (with equal shares of 5.1%), “Korean economic and technological success” (2.5%) and “Taekwondo” (1.9%). 14% of all the respondents add that their first touch to Korean culture was initiated by a friend or a relative that directly corresponds to the conclusions drawn within the theoretical staging that fans play key role in disseminating *Hallyu* at local level.

If we juxtapose the answers of question 2 to the demographic feature “sex” the following could be highlighted: in the case of female respondents the leading answers are two – “K-pop music and dances” (75.0%) and “Korean TV series and motion pictures” (27.9%), while the other options have a share of less than 10% each⁴². In the case of male respondents the distribution is more balanced whereas the first ranking is once again “K-pop music and dances” yet its share is only 26.7%; “Korean TV series and motion pictures”, “Korean language” and “other” have equal share (20.0%), “Korean food” and “Taekwondo” are of equal shares (13.3%), and the ones of the lowest share are “Korean economic and technological success” (6.7%).

Question 3 (*To which of the abovementioned you are most interested at present?*) aims at researching the snapshot as of 2021 of the interest in the Republic of Korea and Korean culture in Bulgaria. The respondents could choose between 10 proposed options (“K-pop”, “Korean series”, “Korean motion pictures”, “Taekwondo”, “Korean art”, “Korean literature”, “Korean food”, “Korean policy”, “Korean economics”, “Korean electronic sports”) and an additional option designated as “other (please specify what)”, aiming at covering all the other possible answers. Only one answer is possible.

According to the results of the performed research, with 30.4% the highest share is the one of “K-pop” followed by “Korean series” and “Korean food” with equal shares of 18.6%. Third come the respondents with 9.9% who choose “Other” where they state answers like: Korean language, Korean history, Korean culture, K-beauty & K-fashion etc. Fourth comes “Korean literature” (8.1%), followed by “Korean art” (4.3%), “Korean motion pictures” (3.7%), “Korean electronic sports” (2.5%), “Korean policy”, “Korean economics” and “taekwondo” (the three of them with equal share of 1.2%).

⁴¹ “Other” includes sporadic answers such as: “interest in Asia in general”, “interest in Asian languages”, “interest in Korean history”, “K-fashion” etc.

⁴² “Korean culture” and “other” have equal shares (7.1%), followed by “Korean food” (4.3%), “Korean language” (3.6%), “Korean economic and technological success” (2.1%) and “Taekwondo” (0.7%).

If we are to juxtapose the results of question 3 to the demographic feature “sex” the following could be highlighted: in the case of female we observe an outstanding domination of three answers – “K-pop” (32.6%), “Korean series” (19.9%) and “Korean food” (17.7%), being 70.2% of all the answers of female respondents. In the case of male, on the other hand, the distribution is more even – in this case, the leading answer is “Korean food” (27.8%), followed by “Korean electronic sports” (22.2%), “other” (16.7%), “K-pop” and “Korean series” (with equal per cent of 11.1%).

Additionally, if we juxtapose in view of the “age” indicator the fact that at present the inquired men do not demonstrate special interest in K-pop that is at present the main engine behind the *Hallyu* wave in Bulgaria, as well as worldwide is astonishing. K-pop is present solely in the share of men aged “between 16 and 20” and nowhere else. Interest in Korean series is demonstrated by men only in the age groups “between 26 and 30” and “over 31”. At the same time, in the case of women, K-pop music and Korean series are present everywhere, with high shares.

If we are to juxtapose respondents’ answers to where they study at present, we could find something else that is interesting: of the three outlined groups, the greatest interest is demonstrated in Korean food by the pupils (28.2%), where the greatest share is attributable to K-pop (33.3%). The greatest interest in Korean series is demonstrated by the course attendees (28.6%). The interest in Korean literature is with almost equal shares of course attendees (10.7%) and pupils (10.3%), whereas in the case of students it is only 3.6%.

Question 4 (*Where do you study Korean language right now?*) and **Question 5** (*How long have you been studying Korean language in the present educational institution?*) are of demographic nature and aim at summarizing the individual groups of respondents. The greatest share is attributable to pupils (50.3%), followed by students (33.1%) and course attendees (16.6%). The pupils in the 8th class amount to 14.2% of all the inquired, students in the 9th grade – 7.7%, students in the 10th grade – 14.8%, students in the 11th grade – 13.6%; 1st year students in the “Korean Studies” major amount to 10.1% of all the inquired respondents, the 2nd year students – 4.7%, the 3rd year students – 4.1%, the 4th year students – 4.7%; the 1st and the 2nd year students in the “South, East and South-Eastern Asia” major are with equal ratio – 4.1%; the masters studying in the “Korean Studies” department amount to 1.2% of the inquired persons; the King Sejong Institute attendees of level 1A amount to 6.5%, the attendees of level 1B – 4.1%, the attendees of level 2B, 3B and 4B are of equal ratio – 1.8%, and the course attendees of the specialized Business Korean language course make up 0.6% of all the inquired persons.

Question 6 (*When applying in the present educational institution, was Korean language your first wish?*) is addressed to the students and pupils that at the time of applying in the particular educational institution should rank their wishes according to their priority. The question aims at researching the degree to which the class/major with profiled tuition in Korean language and culture attracts and accumulates highly motivated people to whom Korean language tuition is a first wish, not a second option.

According to the results of the inquiry research 77.9% of the inquired students and pupils declare that tuition in Korean language and culture was their first wish when applying. 22.1% have enrolled after unsuccessful ranking according to their first wish.

If we are to juxtapose the answers of question 6 to the educational institution, in which the inquired respondents study at present, we could see that the higher share is the one of those enrolled according to their first wish in university (94.5%), whereas in school we observe a significant per cent of those enrolled according to their second wish (32.9%) after unsuccessful ranking according to their first wish.

When juxtaposing the answers to question 6 with the specifying demographic feature “class/course”, we noted the clear trend towards share of people who enrol in the class/major not in view of their first, but second wish melting. This could be seen especially in pupils’ answers (39.1% of the inquired students in the 11th grade declare that the class with Korean language was not their first wish; in the 10th grade the share was 36%; in the 9th grade – 30.8%, and in the 8th grade – 25%). When it comes to the results of the “South, East and South-Eastern Asia” major (SESEA) these could be interpreted as impossibility to rank in the “Korean Studies” major chosen as first wish (14.3% of the inquired in the 1st course, SESEA major declare this was not their first wish).

Question 7 (*Why did you decide to start studying Korean language?*) aims at establishing the motivation of the Bulgarian *Hallyu* fans for starting a tuition in Korean language. The question is with open answers and allows naming more than one reason hence the total aggregate of per cent is not equal to 100.

According to the summarized results, the highest share is the one of people defined as motive their general interest in Korean culture (26.7%). Second ranking with equal per cent is the interest in foreign/Asian languages in general and the interest brought about in Korean language in particular (18.2%). The third one pointed by the respondents is the way the language sounds (17.6%), followed by the desire to be using the language as work instrument in the future (14.5%). The fifth ranking motivating factor is the interest in K-pop music (13.3%), followed by: other reason (12.7%)⁴³, rarity/exotic nature of the language (11.5%), the desire to be using the language while travelling/ studying in Korea (6.7%), the desire to emigrate in Korea (6.7%) and the desire to understand on your own what the songs/series/reality show-programs are saying (4.8%).

We juxtaposed the answers to question 7 with the indicator “educational institution” in order to establish the leading motives in the three educational institutions. On the basis of the juxtaposition we established that in the three institutions the leading factors are different. According to the results of the inquiry research, the three leading motives in the university are: “due to interest in Korean culture” (37%), “in order to be using the language as working instrument” and “thanks to language sound” (with equal shares of 27.8%). Among pupils, the

⁴³ Here we include sporadic or one-time answers such as: interest in Korean alphabet; interest in Eastern philosophy and culture; initial sensation that Korean is easier to master than the other popular Asian languages; a recommendation issued by a parent, interest in taekwondo, hobby and desire to compare Japan and Korea.

leading place is shared by “due to interest in Korean culture” and “because language seemed interesting to me” (with equal shares of 21.7%), followed by “because of my interest in K-pop” (18.1%). In the case of course attendees, the leading motive was “interest in foreign/Asian languages” (32.1%), followed by “interest in Korean culture” (21.4%) and “thanks to language sound” (17.9%).

Question 8 (*Before you started studying Korean language in the present educational institution, have you studied the language at another place?*) and **question 9** (*Have you studied Korean language by yourselves (based on self-tuition), before you began your tuition in the present educational institution?*) aim at surveying the readiness of respondents to manifest educational self-initiative led by their interest in the language. The questions are with open answers.

According to the results of the inquiry research, 89.3% of the respondents have not studied Korean language at another location before enrolling in the particular educational institution. The other 10.7% have studied at various locations, such as: 18th Secondary school “William Gladstone”, King Sejong Institute, Korean cultural centre in Sofia, private language schools, at school in the pattern of liberal studies etc. 52.7% of all the inquired persons didn’t attempt learning the language by their own before the start of their tuition in the present educational institution. Only few of them define as reason for this their concerns not to learn something in the wrong way. The other 47.3% have used mainly generally accessible and free online resources for relatively short period of time.

Question 10 (*Has your attitude changed towards the Republic of Korea since you started studying Korean language? How? What brings about this change, according to you?*) is with open answer and aims at researching the degree to which the Korean language tuition influences the comprehensive attitude towards the Republic of Korea. It is worth highlighting that all the three target tuition institutions combine Korean language tuition and lecturing various aspects of Korean culture, whereas cultural classes take place in Bulgarian and are not part of trainees’ language preparation. As a result of this integral approach towards tuition, the respondents find it difficult to assign prospective change of their attitude towards the country of Korean language tuition, but rather believe this is due to knowledge that exceeds their awareness of the country and its culture.

According to the results of the inquiry research, 70.7% declare that after starting their tuition in Korean language in the competent educational institution, their attitude towards the country changed. Of all the 116 people who stated “yes” as a reply to this question, only 9 declared that they felt withdrawal and change in negative direction. The other 107 people noted that thanks to their tuition they developed even greater interest in the Republic of Korea, whereas some add that their desire to visit the country immensely grew up. Others state that thanks to the newly acquired knowledge of its culture they started feeling Korean people closer and feel empathy for them. The majority is of the same opinion that thanks to its tuition it acquired more realistic notion of the country and got rid of the idealized and romantic attitudes established by the *Hallyu* wave that nevertheless was not in prejudice of country’s honour.

29.3% of the respondents answer that Korean language (and culture) tuition has not changed their attitude towards the country. Many of the inquired persons who provided this answer also add that before starting their tuition, they were sincerely interested in it and still are.

Question 11 (*Do you practice the language outside the tuition environment at present? Where?*) is with open answer and aims at researching the degree to which trainees could apply their language knowledge at present. According to the results of the performed research, 75.6% of the inquired persons do not practice the language at some place. The rest 24.4%, who declare that they practice it outside the tuition environment note that most often this happens in online environment while writing with the language carriers with whom they are in touch via the social networks. Very few use the language in work environment.

Question 12 (*Do you intend using Korean language in your job, in the time to come?*) aims at establishing the degree to which the trainees in the three most influential academic institutions related to lecturing Korean language and culture in Bulgaria perceive as perspective learning the language for their future professional realization. The question is with open answer.

According to the results of the performed research, 87.2% of all the inquired persons would like or are of the firm intention to be using the language as an advantage at the labour market. Only 12.8% declare they do not relate their Korean language tuition with their professional pathway.

When it comes to juxtaposing the answers to question 12 to the demographic feature “sex” we see the following: women are more willing to bind their career pathway with Korean language tuition than men. 89.3% of the female respondents that firmly answered the question declare that they intend using their knowledge in Korean language in their job. The per cent of positive answers provided by men is 70.6%.

When it comes to juxtaposing the answers to question 12 to the educational institution in which respondents study at present, it becomes clear that the highest share is the one of those that would like to be using Korean language when working with the students (90.7%), whereas in the case of pupils and course attendees this share is almost equal (85.3% and 85.2%, correspondingly).

Question 13 (*According to you, does the educational institution in which you study Korean language at present, provide you with sufficiently in-depth knowledge so that you could be using the language in your (future) work?*) is with open answer and aims at researching how the trainees assess the quality of the language tuition they receive in the particular educational institution and what is their satisfaction level. According to the research results, 68.9% of all the inquired persons are satisfied with their tuition and believe that the acquired language knowledge would be sufficient for the follow-up language use at work level. Many respondents who have answered positively add that they believe their personal engagement and individual preparation are decisive whereas the educational institution rather provides them with the mandatory foundation without which they could not improve the language individually.

31.1% of all the inquired persons provide negative answer to question 13. As a reason for their critical opinion they define the absence of sufficient practical language classes that brings about serious deficits in their skills for freely using the language at verbal level.

When it comes to juxtaposing the answers of question 13 to the demographic aspect “age” the following is outstanding: the most critical is the age group “between 21 and 25-year-old” whereas the per cent ratio is 55.6% to 44.4% supporting the “No” answer.

When juxtaposing the answers to question 13 to the particular educational institution, it becomes clear that the highest satisfaction level is in King Sejong Institute (96%), and the lowest one is in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (60%). In the case of pupils, the share of those who answered positively is 66.2%.

When juxtaposing the results to the specifying indicator “class/course/level” it becomes clear that as tuition advances, the satisfaction level in school and at university goes down, whereas in the case of Institute such change is not observed.

At the time of juxtaposing the answers to question 13 with the answers of question 12 (*Do you intend using Korean language in your job, in the time to come?*) we observe something interesting – 72.4% of the people who have declared their wish to be using Korean for work, are happy with the level of language knowledge they get in the educational institution in which they study at present. In the case of respondents who do not intend using language in their career pathway on the other hand, the dissatisfaction level goes up to 50%.

The last two questions – **question 14** and **question 15** – are of demographic character and aim at differentiating the respondents in view of their sex and age. In view of the results, 88% of all the inquired respondents are women and men are just 12%.

In terms of the indication “age” 15.5% are aged below 15, 1.9% are aged between 16 and 20, 16.1% are aged between 21 and 25, 3% are aged between 26 and 30 and 3.6% are aged over 31.

2.3 Analysis of the results of the inquiry research

Based on the results of the performed inquiry research, we could outline several conclusions when it comes to the current status of interest in Korean culture and language in Bulgaria. At the very beginning, it is worth mentioning that the target group of the present research are the Bulgarians who have decided to start studying Korean language in an established educational institution and not the Bulgarian *Hallyu* fans in general. The decision on similar narrowing of the target group is motivated by the understanding that readiness to invest time, effort and resources in assimilating the language is indicative of more serious and in-depth interest in the Republic of Korea.

The first thing that strikes us is related to *Hallyu* in Bulgaria. If we juxtapose the leading answer to question 1 (*How long have you been interested in the Republic of Korea?*), and, in particular, the answer “for around 4 years”, to the corresponding year versus 2021, when the present analysis was drawn, we could conclude that the time which the majority defines as a starting point of its provoked interest in the Republic of Korea coincides with the dawn of the international uprising of the group BTS. Namely in 2017, BTS became the first Asian group that

was invited to perform live at the ceremony of conferring the American Music Awards and made its first record-breaking at the international music stage. If we juxtapose this to the results of question 2 (*Do you remember what provoked your interest in the Republic of Korea?*), whereas 70.7% of all the inquired defined “K-pop music and dances” we could draw the conclusion that namely K-pop and in particular, the group BTS, played decisive importance for the productive increase in the interest towards the Republic of Korea in recent years in Bulgaria.

The next thing that strikes us is that the results of the performed research indisputably prove the statement that at present we observe strongly expressed feminization of the Korean Wave. Of a total of 169 inquired persons, only 20 were men⁴⁴. Of them 8 are students, 7 pupils and 5 course attendees. The research work depicts the reason behind this feminization. Just like we commented in the theoretical setting of the doctoral thesis, the fans of K-pop music and Korean movie industry are much more inclined to developing interest in Korean culture in all its versatility of fans of electronic sports. Nevertheless the research results make it clear that men do not demonstrate specific interest in K-pop and Korean series – K-pop is present solely in the share of men of the age group “between 16 and 20-year-old” (with share of 20%), and the Korean series and motion pictures are present only in the age groups “between 26 and 30” (with share of 50%) and “over 31-year-old” (once again, with share of 50%). At the same time, in the case of women, K-pop music and Korean series are intrinsically present, with high shares.

It is interesting to monitor the motivation for studying Korean language that could be analysed on the basis of answers provided to questions 6 (*At the time of applying in the present educational institution, was Korean language your first wish?*) and 7 (*Why did you decide to start studying Korean language?*). When reviewing the data, we could highlight the high motivation for enrolment in the particular educational institution – for 77.9% of all the inquired respondents Korean language tuition is first wish, whereas in the last couple of years the share of people to whom Korean is a backup option significantly went down. Additionally, we should state that some of the inquired persons for whom Korean language was not a first wish, wrote down that at present they are happy they were admitted in Korean class/major. The results could be inevitably assigned to *Hallyu* uprising thanks to the international success of bands such as BTS and Blackpink that in recent years enjoy huge popularity all over the world, including in Bulgaria. Additionally, the research shows that motivation for studying Korean language in university is highest (94.5% of those studying in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” declare they were admitted learning Korean language as their first wish). This is the institution in which people with long-term interest in the Republic of Korea study – 80.3% of the inquired students have been interested in Korea and Korean culture for at least 4 years. These results could be explained by people of this age group striving for professional orientation and narrower specialization. Additionally, this is supported by the fact that highest is the per cent of people who declare that they would be using Korean language for work, namely in the case of students.

After reviewing the results of the performed research in greater detail and the direct relation between presenting the products of Korean entertainment industry and the interest in

⁴⁴ Two of the inquired persons are of non-specified sex.

Korean language. When it comes to question 7, directly targeted at researching the motivation for studying Korean language, the inquired respondents declared motives such as: interest in Korean culture, curiosity about the language itself, attraction due to language sound or orthography of the alphabet – all these are things that directly result from the touch with language and culture via what was seen and heard via the products of the Korean entertainment industry. Opposite to the statement that more teenagers and youth started studying Korean not because seeing clear perspective, but just because of their love, even passion for Korean pop music and Korean series, the research results show that nearly 90% of the trainees who participated in the research hope or state their firm decisiveness to use Korean language for the purposes of their labour realization.

The interest in Korean culture inspires interest in Korean language yet the results of the inquiry research make it clear that the opposite is also in effect – the tuition in Korean language reflects the manner of perceiving the country. One of the main reasons behind this is the principle of integrated tuition that is inherent to the three targeted organizations where not only language classes take place, but tuition in Korean culture is foreseen. As a matter of fact, most people enrol in the particular class/major/course after being influenced in advance. Nevertheless, just like the research undoubtedly shows, culture knowledge make it possible not only to cultivate this interest but to transform it into an objective knowledge of the country that is to be used afterwards for the purposes of the career pathway. It is not by chance these are interwoven within the whole tuition course to a degree that makes it hard for the respondents to distinguish the effect of language preparation and the effect of cultural tuition.

Additionally, it would be interesting to analyse the satisfaction level of those studying Korean language in the three organizations. The research shows that the greatest satisfaction degree is the one of course attendees in the King Sejong Institute where nevertheless is the lowest per cent of people who declared their intention to be using the language for work purposes. On the other hand, the lowest degree of satisfaction was noted among students⁴⁵, where we have the highest per cent of expressed desire to assimilate a work language whereas the dissatisfaction per cent rises as the tuition advances. This is the right time to mention that oftentimes, in the case of stated satisfaction from the language tuition, the respondents add the organization provides them with rather priceless basic knowledge that should be improved afterwards. According to what the respondents say, unfortunately this does not happen in the particular institution but they should find ways how to achieve it. Similar answers could be interpreted as a veiled dissatisfaction.

The mismatch between expectations and ambitions could be explained in the following manner: students/pupils start their tuition in Korean most often from scratch, hoping to learn the

⁴⁵ It is worth noting that of all the 84 inquired pupils, 17 refused to answer the question 13 (*According to you, does the educational institution in which you study Korean language at present, provide you with sufficiently in-depth knowledge so that you could be using the language in your (future) work?*). The reasons behind this could be different, yet one of them could be dissatisfaction that they are afraid to express because of concerns that the answer could impact them negatively somehow (even though the inquiry card is anonymous, the research in the 18th Secondary school “William Gladstone” was held with the cooperation of class teachers or the Korean language teacher). In the case of students, only one didn’t answer this question.

language rapidly and easily, whereas during the fixed years of their tuition they would like to achieve a level of fluency in the Western language that they have mastered at high level. A measure by itself is this Western language they have studied most often in combination (at school and in private language schools) for years. The problem is that the demanded results are unattainable because of several reasons that could be summarized to six. Firstly, because of the short tuition term compared to the time for assimilating the Western language. Secondly, because of the number of hours foreseen according to curriculum in practical Korean language, which prove insufficient, at least because the university curriculum includes many accompanying subjects that aim at expanding students' knowledge about Korea and the region, and the school curriculum includes numerous subjects that are part of the curriculum of the Ministry of education and science. Thirdly, because of the absence of opportunities for informal or formal practicing outside the academic environment, also confirmed by the answers to the question 11 (*Do you practice the language outside the tuition environment at present?*). Fourthly, because of language complexity. Fifthly, because of the absence of proactivity on behalf of the trainees. Sixthly, because of the lack of desire or impossibility of the trainees to take part in exchange programs that would put them for certain period of time in the language environment. Oftentimes, after the unsuccessful attempt for using Korean as a work language the students/pupils realize their serious deficits and remain disappointed that drastically cuts down their level of satisfaction from the tuition institution. This also impacts their confidence that in the future they would be able to use the language for work purposes.

CONCLUSION

In recent years we have witnessed unseen increase of interest in the Republic of Korea, in the Korean culture and the Korean language tuition globally, as well as in Bulgaria in particular. This phenomenon, also known as *Hallyu*, could be used as etalon because it sets the example how a country of small territory, with dramatic modern history, manages to achieve cultural expansion that goes beyond our wildest dreams. The research of *Hallyu*, its prehistory and cause and effect brings about precious knowledge that could be used for the purposes of the Bulgarian diplomacy, especially at the background of similarities between both countries. Bulgaria and the Republic of Korea are of approximately the same territory⁴⁶; both parties are located at an important crossroad locked between strong neighbours and during their history they have been subjected to foreign encroachments; Bulgaria as well as Korea loses its sovereignty; both countries started drastic reforms in the end of the 80's and the beginning of the 90's of the past century. The results achieved in our modern history are nevertheless totally different – while Bulgaria's transition to democracy and market economy has not been finalized and our country is not especially competitive at the international market, the Republic of Korea has managed to establish itself as one of the leading economies worldwide, as a country with high international rating and one of the largest exporters of cultural products in their region and worldwide in

⁴⁶ The territory of Bulgaria amounts to 110 994 km², and of the Republic of Korea – 100 210 km².

general. This contrast brings about research interest in the topic that is directly aimed at state's role and the government apparatus for the achievement of national prosperity. Of course, we do not underestimate the influence of factors such as globalization, capitalism, technological revolution etc., yet the focus is set as priority onto the steps subordinate to the state power and government apparatus.

The hypothesis of the doctoral thesis is in two parts, namely:

- 1) The dissemination of *Hallyu* is the main reason for the increase of interest in Korean culture and language around the world and in Bulgaria in particular.
- 2) The sustainable development of *Hallyu* is a direct result of carefully planned and consistent policy of the South Korean government.

The objective is to prove that namely the state (represented by the government) and the government apparatus (represented by the government institutions) play key role in the achievement of cultural expansion that we witness at present, being a simple consequence of combining favourable external factors.

The data of the performed research (theoretical and empirical) confirm the hypotheses and provide grounds for drawing several leading conclusions:

- 1) The state policy and the responsible activity of government institutions play decisive role in evolution and sustainable international success of *Hallyu*. This role covers the provision of the suitable prerequisites for the development, as well as the timely elimination of the prospective and/or real (legislative) hindrances that create limitations to evolution and dissemination of *Hallyu*.
- 2) The state and the competent government institutions on the one hand promote *Hallyu* in its capacity of commercial product and on the other hand – they use *Hallyu* for the purposes of country's "soft power".
- 3) The achieved results are brought about by the inherited policy whereas each and every subsequent cabinet upgrades what was achieved by the previous one. This is the key to phenomenon's sustainability that was initially forecasted as instantaneous and not to last.
- 4) Special attention is paid to the local centres that provide Korean language tuition (schools, universities, institutes) because they become direct conductors of Korean cultural influence. The scholars of these educational institutions start acting as cultural moderators that directly or indirectly make the Republic of Korea popular at local level and not only (in the case they enter the international labour market).
- 5) Republic of Korea demonstrates quite obviously how important it is to borrow other country's best practices. What it achieved is not unprecedented – before it, such thing was done by countries like the USA and Japan. Being the good student it is, the Republic of Korea borrowed the proven successful model, adapted it, improved and "commissioned" it.

The doctoral thesis does not claim to be exhaustive when it comes to the researched features and measurements of Republic of Korea's national strategy for making popular the Korean culture and language around the world. Many questions remain open for example, the

one about the future of *Hallyu* and how and to what degree the South Korean government would manage to establish it as a sustainable phenomenon (unlike Japanese who could not keep the effect of the Japanese Wave). At the same time, the research raises new unknown factors, mostly related to the opportunities for implementing the South Korean model in Bulgaria. According to these guidelines we could undertake additional research works mainly of practical and applicable character.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DOCTORAL RESEARCH

The present doctoral research is the first scientific work elaborated in Bulgaria that studies the international phenomenon *Hallyu* whereas its focus is on the features of its dissemination in our country. It satisfies the interest of modern society and the academic community brought about by the unrepresented success of the Republic of Korea in international diplomacy that we witnessed in the last decade.

The most significant scientific contributions of the doctoral thesis could be summarized in the following manner:

1. The doctoral thesis is the first of its kind in Bulgaria and in Europe comprehensive research of the topic on the Korean model for promoting the national culture and language abroad.

2. It contains summary and analysis of the main features of the phenomenon *Hallyu*; it presents the process of its evolution, factors that have secured its success and the main effects of its dissemination among which the central place is taken up by making Korean culture and language popular in recent years, in our country and globally.

3. It outlines the consistent steps undertaken by the government of the Republic of Korea that prove the thesis the government plays key role in improving, managing and massively disseminating *Hallyu*.

4. It presents the most influential government institutions that make up the foundations of implementing the national strategy for making popular Korean culture and language around the world.

5. It presents analyses of the results of the empirical research performed in two parts – interview and inquiry research.

6. As part of the empirical research, for the first time in our country an in-depth research was performed of interest in Korean culture and language's evolution in Bulgaria, as well as the motivation for studying Korean language among the Bulgarians.

7. The empirical research makes a pilot attempt for in-depth research and analysis of satisfaction level among the trainees in the three institutions that are of key importance to Korean language tuition in our country.

The results presented in this doctoral thesis could serve as valuable resource for the purposes of adapting the *Hallyu* example to the features of every country (including Bulgaria) as well as in the case of future planning of program or project activity aimed at reproducing the success achieved by the Republic of Korea. The results of the empirical research, in turn could serve as basis for improving the tuition practices in our country.

PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DOCTORAL RESEARCH

1. A Case Study on the Evolution of K-pop and K-drama Related Fandom in Bulgaria. *Manas: Studies into Asia and Africa*, 2020, 6(1).
2. The Korean Wave in Bulgarian Context. In S. Karteva-Dancheva & S. Y. Kim (Eds.). *Globalization in Korea: On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Korea*, 2020. St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 146 – 151.
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