

The Role of Parental Support in Heritage Language Maintenance of Korean–Americans

Eun Seon Chung

[Abstract]

Among a number of factors that influence the maintenance or loss of a heritage language (HL), parental support has been found to be a critical predictor of HL maintenance. Despite the pivotal role played by parents in maintaining the HL, many immigrant parents face challenges in their involvement which is more complicated than it seems. By partaking in in-depth semi-structured interviews with second generation Korean-Americans, the present study examined how heritage speakers perceive parental involvement and whether they believe it plays a critical role in the successful maintenance of HL as previously thought. Three themes emerged from the interview data that represented common observable trends in the participants' perceptions of and experience with the HL: (1) transmission of parental attitudes and beliefs was strong regardless of proficiency level and personal goals; (2) formal instruction and ethnic community played a limited role in maintaining and developing the HL; and (3) HL literacy practices in the home was of great importance in HL development and maintenance.

Key Words: Korean as a heritage language, bilingual acquisition, language maintenance, parental support, parental attitude

1. Introduction

Language minority individuals in the United States across a number of language communities are losing their heritage language (HL) with remarkable speed, and the transition to English is generally seen to be completed within three generations (Veltman 1983; Au & Oh 2009). For an immigrant child “who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English” (Valdés 2001, 38), their change of language preference often leads to language shift to English, attrition of HL, and eventually HL loss (Rodriguez, Diaz, Duran, & Espinosa 1995). Research indicates that Korean-Americans (KAs), one of the most rapidly growing ethnic groups in the United States after the passage of the US Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, have also seen their language shift to English despite the fact that they are predominantly late-comers and largely a Korean-speaking group (Shin 2005; Cho 2000).

The challenges of maintaining the HL reflect the strong societal push toward the dominant language and the common misunderstanding that the HL may hinder children from acquiring native proficiency in English, which enables success in the mainstream society. While most Korean parents have a strong desire for their children to retain their HL and Korean cultural traits that are critical for intergenerational communication and participation in the ethnic community, they also tend to emphasize competency in English which is equated with higher social status

and better career opportunities (Shin 2005). Oftentimes, they expect children to first master English before Korean, and some parents go so far as to prohibit the use of HL out of fear that it would hinder successful acquisition of English (Jeon 2010; Shin 2010; Blackledge & Creese 2008). Once the second generation of KAs start school in an English-only environment, language shift usually takes place despite the ethnic community's many endeavors to promote heritage culture and language by establishing ethnic schools, associations, newspapers, and professional organizations (Cho 2000). HL loss is often followed by the loss of intergenerational family closeness and unity as the Korean-speaking parents and English-speaking children lose the ability to openly communicate about deep and critical issues in their everyday lives. Numerous anecdotes and observations of KA families manifest "all sorts of ramifications for family and social dynamics as well as individual well-being" (Shin 2005, 5) that result from the language barrier between parents and children.

As a matter of fact, the benefits of maintaining the HL are evident and uncontested. Many studies have found that HL maintenance brings not only linguistic benefits (i.e., bilingualism) that can be a great asset in the global economy, but also other socio-cultural advantages that promote ethnic cohesiveness. Cho (2000) has found maintenance of the HL to promote a strong ethnic identity, strong connections to the ethnic group, a greater understanding and knowledge of cultural values, ethics, and manners that lead to better relationships with heritage language speakers, and to bring professional advantages of being bilingual. Moreover, in a study that examined the significance of language and cultural identity on academic achievement of Chinese-American and Korean-American students in secondary schools, Lee (2002) found a strong correlation between the students' cultural identity and their academic achievement. He asserts that students with greater interest in their HL and cultural

identity have “greater motivation for diversified learning experience and interest” as well as “superior cognitive, meta-cognitive, and socio-affective strategies to help them do better in school” (Lee 2002, 221). Furthermore, high proficiency in HL can accelerate children’s development of academic English proficiency (Kang 2003; Cummins 2005), lead to greater self-esteem (Cho 2000), and improve familial communication and relationships (Tannenbaum 2005). Such numerous benefits of HL maintenance documented over the years have led to various efforts to promote the HL and help immigrant children to view the HL as a great asset, rather than a liability.

In light of such advantages and importance of HL maintenance, much research has been conducted to identify factors that are influential in the maintenance or loss of HL. Factors such as parental support (Suarez 2007; DeCapua & Wintergerst 2009; Nesteruk 2010), community and institutional support (Shibata 2000; Oriyama 2010), exposure to HL texts (Kim & Pyun 2014), ethnic identity (Kang & Kim 2012; Lee 2013; Jee 2016; Brown 2009), societal attitudes towards language and ethnic group (Bayley, Schecter, & Torres-Ayala 1996), individual motivation (Lee & Kim 2008), and frequent visits to the home country (Krashen 1998) have all been found to play significant roles in HL maintenance. Among these factors, studies have suggested that parents, as the first contact and main source of HL, exert the greatest influence on HL maintenance (Park & Sarkar 2007), and previous literature provides ample evidence that parental efforts and involvement are highly relevant to HL maintenance (DeCapua & Wintergerst 2009; Nesteruk 2010; Park & Sarkar 2007). The present study attempts to add to this body of work by examining the role and importance of parental support seen through the eyes of three Korean-American heritage speakers. By delving into heritage speakers' perspectives and beliefs about parental support and its effect on their proficiency and attitudes towards the HL, this study investigates

whether heritage speakers themselves also view parental involvement as a critical factor in successful maintenance of HL.

2. Parental Support and HL Maintenance

When growing up in a social context where one faces heavy pressure to use the majority language on every side, it is believed that HL use in the home is the most important source for HL maintenance. Children's proficiency in the HL is closely correlated to adult language practices in the home, and those fluent in the HL were found to come from homes in which only the HL was spoken (Oh 2003; Bayley, Schecter, & Torres-Ayala 1996). Parents would use various strategies to promote HL development: enforcing a strict HL-only policy in the home, not responding to their children when they speak in English, instructing or correcting children's utterances, enrolling their children in weekend language schools, and paying frequent visits to relatives in the homeland (Krashen 1998; Shin 2010; Shin 2005; Shibata 2000). Moreover, when parents engaged in literacy activities at home such as book reading, character writing, or setting up a print-rich, literacy home environment, children were more likely to develop and retain the HL (Tse 2001; Xiao 2008). In addition to such practices, the parents' attitude toward their children learning the HL and becoming bilingual has been found to be a strong predictor of the children's own attitudes, which in turn influence their language use patterns and language proficiency in the HL (Oh 2003; Shin 2005; Tse 2001).

Despite the overwhelming consensus that a strong commitment and support on the part of the home to use the HL are pivotal in HL maintenance, it has also been pointed out that parental involvement may be far more complicated and

multi-dimensional than previously established (Lao 2004; Brown 2011; Krashen 1998). In fact, discrepancies and contradictions could be found between parents' words and actions (Lao 2004), and parental contributions to children's proficiency and attitudes towards the HL were often seen to be limited by the parents themselves (Krashen 1998; Brown 2011). Nesteruk (2010) observes that even avid parents with positive attitudes and passion for their children's HL learning and development may experience failure once the children start school and become immersed in the schools' majority language. In addition, parents' time restraints and busy working schedules may also hinder them from providing adequate HL resources or teaching their children HL literacy skills. Some parents, despite having positive views and attitudes towards the HL, would not speak the HL at home or enroll their children in language programs because of little time/energy or inconvenience. Studies have found that when parents' beliefs about HL maintenance were compared to their actual behaviors, inconsistencies could be found between the reality and the ideal (Lao 2004; Brown 2011). In a survey of 86 immigrant parents, Lao (2004) found a significant gap between the parents' expectations and language practices. A majority of the parents ended up talking in English to their children at home more frequently than intended and often could not teach the HL systematically if at all due to children's resistance or difficult circumstances. Also, Brown (2011) points out that younger siblings (second and third children in HL families) usually fail to maintain the HL even when the first child of the family maintains it, which raises questions about how exactly the parents are imposing the use of HL at home.

In light of such observations and challenges, the present study investigates how Korean-American heritage speakers perceive the role of parental support in HL maintenance. Most previous studies surveyed/interviewed the parents and/or the children regarding their *own* beliefs and attitudes about HL maintenance, but there is

a dearth of literature that examines the heritage children's personal views and perceptions about their parents' attitude and involvement, which may be different from those of the parents themselves. It is important to examine the heritage speakers' beliefs about parental support because it will inevitably affect their own involvement and attitude towards HL maintenance of their future children. However, it is unclear whether the heritage speakers' perspectives of parental support correspond with those of previous findings that regard it as a critical factor in successful maintenance of HL. Therefore, by partaking in in-depth semi-structured interviews with second generation KAs, the present study examines heritage speakers' views and beliefs about parental involvement and the degree to which they think it determines their proficiency and attitude towards the HL. To be more specific, the present study investigates how much importance Korean-American heritage speakers place on parental support in HL maintenance as compared to other factors such as ethnic community support and formal instruction.

3. Methods

Three second generation Korean-Americans with similar socio-economic and educational backgrounds participated in lengthy semi-structured interviews. They were all born in the U.S. and were enrolled in graduate programs at Harvard University at the time of the interview. They had Korean-speaking parents and were exposed to Korean in the home as children. While they all had varying experiences with formal instruction in HL during childhood, none of them took Korean language classes in college or after graduating from college. All three participants' preferred language was English. They were brought up in middle-class neighborhoods and were

high-achievers in their respective fields of expertise. Table 1 presents the participants' demographics (pseudonyms are used for all participants).

Table 1. Summary of the Participants

	Jinny	Tess	Kathy
Age	29	25	26
Self-perceived Proficiency in Korean	High	Low	Intermediate
Sibling order	Oldest	Oldest	Oldest
Formal instruction in HL	3 years (elementary school)	2-3 weeks	6 years (elementary & high school)
Size of ethnic community	Small	Big	Big
Visits to Korea	7 short trips (2-3 weeks) to visit relatives	6 short trips to visit relatives	2 short trips to visit relatives

Among the three participants, Jinny had the highest self-perceived proficiency in Korean and exhibited strong pride in her heritage language and culture. Her flawless pronunciation and fluency in Korean made it hard to believe that she was born and raised in the U.S. Jinny said she feels completely comfortable with Korean in all four language domains (speaking, listening, writing, and reading) but is not so fluent when it comes to academic textbooks or political discussions. At the opposite end was Tess whose self-perceived proficiency was the lowest among the three participants and who was rarely comfortable speaking, reading, or writing in Korean. Tess exhibited an ambiguous attitude towards HL maintenance and explained that her learning and using Korean as a KA was more about being able to communicate with her parents and older family members than maintaining her culture or heritage. She

did not support bilingual education and claimed to have never been interested in or proud of the Korean language and heritage. Kathy, the third participant, reported that she feels somewhat comfortable listening and speaking but never feels comfortable reading and writing in Korean. While she understood the importance of HL maintenance and had a strong pride in the heritage culture, she showed reservations about learning the Korean language and was not altogether positive about enrolling her future children in bilingual programs.

Each participant was interviewed in English for about an hour, and the interview questions mainly addressed their perception of parents' involvement along with various other issues such as community support, language use patterns in the home, language use with peer groups, access to and interaction with print in Korean, frequency of Korean literacy activities, frequency of visits to Korea, participation in formal instruction in Korean, and their attitude towards maintaining the Korean language as KAs. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed.

4. Interview Data: Findings

The interviews of three KA participants revealed varying language experiences and perspectives that reflected different personal goals, attitudes, desired proficiency levels, and thoughts on bilingualism. Despite belonging to the same ethnic group and having similar socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, the participants exhibited different levels of proficiency and contrasting attitudes towards the Korean language, culture, and ethnicity. The interviews revealed that the KA participants regarded parental support to be an influential factor in HL development and maintenance especially when accompanied by frequent literacy practices at home. On the other

hand, strong community support and ethnic pride did not necessarily lead to an interest in HL maintenance, and all three participants perceived the role of formal instruction to be minimal. Three themes emerged from the interview data that represented common observable trends in the participants' perceptions of and experience with the HL: (1) transmission of parental attitudes and beliefs was strong regardless of proficiency level and personal goals; (2) formal instruction and ethnic community played a limited role in maintaining and developing the HL; and (3) HL literacy practices in the home were of great importance in HL development and maintenance.

4.1 Transmission of Parental Attitudes and Beliefs

The interview data suggests that parental attitudes and beliefs are one of the strongest factors that affect heritage speakers' views on the value and importance of the heritage language. Jinny, whose parents were strongly committed to and extremely strict about HL maintenance, always used Korean in the home:

JINNY: My dad was very strict and scolded me and my brother once when we were young for speaking English to each other. Since then, we never thought twice about speaking Korean in the home—it was a given. I used Korean with all my family members, even with my brother who was more dominant in English than Korean. It was only natural since my parents spoke Korean to us as well.

Jinny expressed that such strong enforcement of using Korean in the home led her to prioritize the heritage language and culture. When asked about the importance of maintaining the HL, she emphatically expressed her opinion as the following:

JINNY: Language is the most powerful medium through which culture is expressed, and Korean is our heritage. For one thing, it is the language and culture of our families, and I think it is a shame that most 2nd generation KAs are so distanced from their families—including their parents—because of the language/culture barrier. Even later as we become 3rd and 4th generation KAs and more of our relatives speak English, I still think it is important to understand your heritage and history. I think appreciation and awareness of our heritage makes us more thoughtful American citizens, and gives us more to contribute to American culture, identity, and political discourse. This is the one culture that I feel I can truly possess as my own; it is who I am. I guess it's this sense of ownership that motivates me to be fluent in the language and culture.

As such, Jinny exhibited a strong pride in her heritage and claimed that her feelings towards her heritage have intensified over the years. Such attitude towards the Korean language and culture, she thinks, is very much influenced by her parents as “a result of her upbringing.” Reflecting her parents’ affirmative attitude toward and strong enforcement of the HL, Jinny showed much enthusiasm for Korean-English two-way immersion programs and said it would be important to enroll her future children in bilingual programs where they can be exposed to a bilingual lifestyle from an early age. Although Jinny’s conscious efforts to use the HL, interactions with Korean-speaking peers, and frequent homeland visits were all helpful in maintaining the HL, she identified her parent’s strong enforcement of the HL in the home as the most significant factor that helped her acquire an impressive native-like fluency in the HL and possess a strong cultural and ethnic identity.

In contrast to Jinny, Tess reported that HL was hardly enforced at home, if at all, and her parents made every effort to allow their children to do “what all the other

‘American’ kids did.” Tess’s parents were not strict about speaking Korean in the home and often inserted English words and phrases themselves when communicating with their children. Although her parents generally spoke in Korean, Tess rarely spoke Korean to her parents or peers, and even now, speaks only English with them.

TESS: I ONLY used English growing up. Even at my church where I grew up and where everyone was Korean-American, everyone spoke in English. And even now, I rarely use Korean. In fact, my Korean is pretty awful.

Tess was not particularly interested in the “whole maintaining [her] culture/heritage aspect” and learning Korean was more about being able to communicate with family members. When asked about what motivates her to learn Korean, she expressed her desire to speak Korean fluently with her future in-laws, but her desired proficiency in Korean did not extend to acquiring a higher level of literacy. She admitted that her indifferent attitude towards the Korean language and culture has not changed over the years and does not see it changing in the future, for she has never been interested in “Korean pride” or her Korean heritage. This, she thinks, is largely influenced by her parents’ attitude who made extra efforts to “Americanize” their children and were one of the few Korean parents in the neighborhood who did not force their children to attend Korean language schools. Likewise, Tess’s response to the question of enrolling children in Korean-English bilingual programs was centered on children learning English than Korean, and she did not feel the need to send her own (future) children to such programs:

TESS: Maybe for immediate immigrants [Korean-English bilingual programs] would be okay. But kids may need more support in learning English. I guess I wouldn’t mind that type of program as long as it didn’t detract them from learning English. And it would also depend on if my

children were fully Korean-American. But my initial inclination is to say no.

Despite her parents' weak enforcement of the HL, when asked about what was most helpful in maintaining her HL overall, Tess identified her parents' use of Korean in the home as the most helpful factor.

Similar to Tess's parents, Kathy's parents did not enforce the use of the HL in the home and allowed their children to speak English although they themselves always spoke in Korean. During childhood, Kathy remembers speaking Korean with parents, relatives, and church adults but now speaks English or mixes Korean and English with them because they now speak fluent English. Throughout her life, her close peer groups had mostly been KAs with whom she always spoke English. She exuded a lot of "Korean pride" in her heritage culture although it did not necessarily lead to an interest in learning the Korean language. She claimed that she has only recently become motivated to be more proficient in Korean not only for her business and career in which bilingualism is deeply valued, but also for her future children to have "Korean pride" and be able to communicate with her parents and grandparents. However, similar to Tess, her desired proficiency in Korean was fluency in the spoken form and did not extend to literacy skills. Unlike the other participants, Kathy implied in the interview that her parents did not play an important role in shaping her present attitude towards the Korean culture and language, but had there been more parental support in the home, she may have recognized the importance of HL maintenance sooner:

KATHY: Growing up I always kept in tune with the Korean pop culture with other KA peers and wanted to create Korean awareness so took an active role as the Korean Club president in college, organized Korean

food nights, raised money for funds etc. Now that I think about it, it used to be blind pride, but now it is more of claiming my heritage culture. As Korean-Americans, we have a responsibility to carry a legacy of our ethnic roots that goes beyond just enjoying the food and pop culture. We need to remember and understand the language and culture of our parents and ancestors. But without being able to speak the language, you miss out on a huge part of cultural understanding. I realized this when I was in college but wish I had thought about it sooner. Maybe my parents could have helped?

As such, the interviews revealed that heritage speakers perceive parents' language enforcement and attitudes in the home to be an influential factor in developing their proficiency in the HL and shaping their overall attitude towards HL maintenance. Jinny and Tess both identified parental involvement to be most helpful but showed widely different HL proficiencies and attitudes that reflected their own parents' views and beliefs about HL maintenance. Kathy, whose parents did not enforce HL use in the home, showed indifference to learning the language during childhood, which she thinks could have been different had there been more parental support.

4.2 Formal Instruction and Community Support

Similar to Brown's (2011) findings that point to the minimal effect of Korean HL schools, the present interview data also revealed that heritage speakers do not think formal instruction in the HL and ethnic community support significantly contribute to HL development. In fact, all three participants described participating in Korean language schools as "ineffective."

Jinny grew up in Bellevue, Washington close to Seattle where there were a couple

of Korean families in the neighborhood but very few Koreans at the school she attended. Although the Korean community grew fairly rapidly over the years, it was quite small when she was young, and her school did not provide any HL support. However, she attended Korean classes offered by the Korean church in her community for three years during elementary school, which she describes as “useless” because it was too easy.

JINNY: My family did attend a Korean church which had a Korean school, but it was too easy, and all of the 2nd generation Korean children hardly spoke any Korean. The children attended separate services in English on Sundays (youth service), and only the adults attended the main Korean service. So the church was not very supportive in creating a Korean-speaking environment for 2nd generation children.

While such negative experience may have been due to inadequate curriculum and insufficient community support for Jinny, the other two participants, for whom ample support was given from the community, also indicated that attending Korean language schools played an insignificant role in their HL development. Tess grew up in Southern California, where there was a big Korean community that offered Korean language classes and rich cultural support. Although not many Korean families lived in her immediate neighborhood, many Korean immigrants in the community at large were very much in tune with the heritage language and culture. Despite the available linguistic and cultural support from the ethnic community, Tess did not feel the need to receive formal instruction and attended Korean language classes only very briefly (2-3 weeks), which contributed little to her HL development. Like Tess, Kathy also grew up in Southern California in a neighborhood (Fullerton, Orange County) where there were many other Korean families. The student body in her high school was

38% Korean, and Kathy described the Korean students as having much “power” in her school. The school often played Korean pop music and provided Korean food during lunch time, and Korean parents assumed important roles. The community offered much HL support, and almost all children in Kathy’s neighborhood went to Saturday Korean schools as did Kathy herself who took Saturday language classes for about three years in elementary school. She also took three years of formal Korean classes that were offered as part of the curriculum in high school, but the classes were considered a “joke” among students as they were not very helpful. For Kathy, despite the concerted efforts of her community to provide language classes, formal instruction was not very effective in improving her Korean. Kathy admitted that despite the abundant cultural support in the KA community that helped her develop a sense of “Korean pride” for her ethnic identity, she had been quite indifferent to developing her HL as evidenced by her dominant use of English.

As a reviewer rightly points out, formal instruction during childhood is usually predetermined by parents, and thus this factor may be a byproduct of parental attitude and beliefs about HL maintenance. For example, Tess’s lack of willingness to receive formal instruction despite rich community support could have been heavily influenced by her parents’ lack of enthusiasm for HL maintenance. Also, the curriculum at community language schools, as in the case of Jinny, may not be very well-equipped and fail to represent an accurate picture of “formal instruction.” Considering such confounding variables, the present interview data cannot directly argue against the effectiveness of formal instruction. However, it appears that heritage speakers in the study think that community support and formal instruction played a minimal role in HL maintenance. Whether it be due to the inefficacy of the system or the lack of motivation and interest in learning the language, all three participants expressed negative views on Korean classes and did not feel that taking them made

much difference in developing their Korean.

4.3 Importance of Literacy Practices in the Home

The importance of access to print and literacy experiences in the home is uncontested, and many previous studies have found a significant correlation between home literacy practices and proficiency in the HL (Tse 2001; Zhang & Koda 2011; Xiao 2008). The present interview data suggests that heritage speakers are aware of the importance of literacy practices in the home and identifies it as an influential form of parental support that could help improve their HL.

Jinny reported that her active participation in various literacy activities and adequate literacy support piqued her interest in HL and also boosted her HL proficiency as a whole. Early on, Jinny had access to a fair amount of Korean print such as children's books, comic books, bibles, and newspapers that she would occasionally read or browse. Unlike other children in her church who attended English services on Sundays, Jinny's parents made her attend Korean adult services to improve her reading skills in Korean as she had to read the Korean bible every week. She initially learned to read and write from her mother and then learned mostly through comic books that her father brought home from business trips, lyrics to K-pop songs, journal-writing in Korean, and letter-writing to cousins and friends in Korea. Her parents highly encouraged such literacy practices and provided consistent feedback and support. Such literacy development in the home made it possible for Jinny to edit and write articles in Korean in college for a KA journal that was affiliated with Seoul National University. Writing for university students in Korea was challenging, but her Korean writing skills improved tremendously through this process:

JINNY: When I was younger, my mom would often help me write letters in Korean. Then I gradually got more comfortable with writing and just had her proofread my letters. Once I got to college, I was comfortable writing on my own although I generally asked my parents or friends to proofread articles. When people ask me how and where I have learned Korean, I tell them that speaking, reading, and writing at home was all there was to it. Also, the English-Korean dictionary was a great resource!

While Tess and Kathy also had access to various Korean prints like Jinny, literacy activities were neither consistent nor encouraged. Tess reported that among various Korean prints such as picture books, hymnals, and newspapers, she mainly interacted with hymnals, which she read at church. Having learned the Korean alphabet from her mother, she wrote cards in Korean to her parents or grandparents but made numerous mistakes and errors that went uncorrected. Apart from the initial help in acquiring the alphabet, she received no help from an adult and did not feel the need or have adequate resources to develop her literacy skills any further. Thus, when she could not think of the right word or expression in Korean, she refrained from using it altogether and avoided written forms of the HL.

TESS: I only wrote in Korean when sending cards to my parents or grandparents. And the grammar and spelling would be just AWFUL, but my family can just sort of pick out what I'm trying to say, so I just wrote everything phonetically. No one really helped me, and I didn't use any resource. If I couldn't think of the right word, then I didn't use it.

As such, the initial literacy support was helpful in acquiring a rudimentary knowledge of Korean, but with no further feedback and encouragement, literacy skills

gradually became irrelevant and were avoided. Tess suspected that pursuing literacy skills back then would have definitely helped her improve her Korean, but her and her parents were neither interested nor motivated to do so.

Like Tess, Kathy had access to Korean print such as folktale sets, bible, and newspaper, but she neither interacted with these resources nor engaged in any literacy activities in Korean at home. No adult help was provided. She reported that she never felt comfortable reading and writing in Korean and was quite indifferent to interacting with the available prints. What helped her most with literacy in Korean was the karaoke because she was forced to read Korean words on the screen while singing Korean pop songs with her friends. Although the lack of literacy support in the home was somewhat compensated by receiving cultural support from peers and the ethnic community, Kathy exhibited low confidence and proficiency especially with written forms of the language. She ruminated that even now with her renewed motivation to be more proficient in Korean for her career, she would rather work on her speaking skills because she did not have adequate literacy skills in Korean. She also admitted that the absence of literacy experiences and her unwillingness to go beyond spoken forms of the language may be holding her back from advancing to a higher level of proficiency.

5. Conclusion

In light of the complexities and challenges many immigrant parents face in their contributions to HL maintenance, this study examined three second generation Korean-American heritage speakers' perception of parental support compared to other factors such as ethnic community support and formal instruction by conducting

in-depth interviews.

As already established in previous studies, parental commitment was seen to play a crucial role in HL maintenance. Jinny and Tess both attributed their HL maintenance to their parents' language use in the home and recognized their parents' attitudes as being the most influential in shaping their own attitude towards the HL, but their Korean proficiency and attitudes were at great odds with each other. While Jinny's parent's strong commitment to the use of Korean in the home helped her acquire an impressive native-like fluency in the HL and possess a strong cultural and ethnic identity, Tess's parents' indifference towards HL and efforts to mainstream their children were transmitted to Tess who also became indifferent to learning the Korean language and culture. In the contrasting language experiences of Jinny and Tess, we can see that the parents' attitude toward the HL significantly influences the ways in which they socialize their children to view, learn, and use the language. Unlike these two participants, Kathy felt that her parents did not play an important role in shaping her attitude towards the Korean culture and language. As insignificant a role as Kathy thought her parents played, it was implied in the interview that had their enforcement of the HL been stronger, she would have developed a greater interest in the HL.

While previous studies have pointed to ethnic community support and ethnic identity as pivotal factors in HL maintenance (Oriyama 2010; Kang & Kim 2012; Lee 2013), the present findings suggest that rich cultural support and strong ethnic identity may not necessarily lead to a strong interest in learning and maintaining the HL. While Tess was reluctant to take advantage of the linguistic and cultural support provided by her community altogether, Kathy was fully immersed in the KA community and was able to develop a sense of "Korean pride" for her heritage and ethnic identity. Kathy's experience shows that the demographic composition of a

community affects the nature of the student body in schools, which in turn could affect students' attitudes toward ethnic and linguistic diversity. Participating in the Korean pop culture with other KA peers in a supportive community was helpful in developing a positive ethnic identity, but this did not lead Kathy to be interested in HL maintenance. That is, Kathy's strong biculturalism was not always matched with an equivalent enthusiasm for the Korean language, and she was reluctant to use Korean with her family and peers. The findings of this study thus support Oriyama's (2010) claim that for community support to be fully effective in maintaining the HL, it must be accompanied especially by support in the home. As for the efficacy of formal instruction provided by the community, all participants unanimously perceived it as ineffective, describing it as "useless" (Jinny, Tess) or a "joke" (Kathy). Although such perceptions of formal instruction may not provide an accurate assessment of formal instruction per se, it was evident that heritage speakers in the study did not consider Korean language classes influential nor helpful in maintaining the language.

Lastly, the present findings suggest that engaging in rich literacy activities at home could lead to independent language activities and advanced proficiency in the HL. In her work on Chinese heritage learners' attainment of Chinese language, Xiao (2008) identified four variables related to the home literacy environment: (a) home literacy resources; (b) parent-child literacy-related activities; (c) learners' independent literacy-related activities; and (d) the parents' Chinese education. Positive correlations were found between the learners' HL proficiency and the richness of the home literacy environment, which suggests the importance of literacy practices in HL development and maintenance. Similarly, through shared reading practices and consistent and meaningful interactions with Korean print at home, Jinny was eventually able to read and write on her own and even write articles for a Korean

audience. While many other forms of parental support such as strict enforcement of HL use are also highly relevant to HL maintenance, Jinny's successful development and maintenance of HL in all four basic language skills highlight the importance of adequate literacy support at home that can help heritage speakers become independent learners of the language. In contrast, when literacy support was rarely provided at home, emergent literacy skills (i.e., acquisition of the alphabet) were not pursued any further resulting in avoidance of print and low confidence in reading and writing which could have also led to diminished use of the language.

The present study is not without limitations as the small number of participants is not sufficient to provide broad generalizations of language use and HL maintenance by KAs. Also, the interview data should be supplemented with other types of data that could provide a more systematic and accurate picture of the participants' perceptions and beliefs. The participants' self-perceived proficiency is also somewhat subjective and should be measured using an established proficiency test in Korean. However, despite its limitations, the findings of this study contribute to the literature by investigating whether the heritage children's *personal* views about parental involvement (which may be different from those of the parents) are similar to what we already know about the role of parental support in maintenance of HL. That is, by examining the role of parental support through the eyes of heritage speaker children, the present study gauges the importance that heritage speakers place on parental support which can thence affect their own involvement in HL maintenance with future generations.

To sum up, the heritage speakers in this study reported that their HL proficiency and attitudes towards the HL were heavily influenced by parents in particular in contrast to formal instruction and community support that did not necessarily lead to improvement or interest in the HL. Rather than formal Korean classes, frequent

literacy practices and experiences in the home, which can help one to become an independent learner of the language, were seen to play a significant role in developing confidence in and improving one's HL.

Works Cited

- Au, Terry, and Janet S. Oh. "Korean as a Heritage Language." *Handbook of East Asian Psycholinguistics*. Vol. 3. Ed. Chungmin Lee, Greg B. Simpson, and Youngjin Kim, London: Cambridge UP, 2009. 268-75. Print.
- Bayley, Robert, Sandra R. Schecter, and Buenaventura Torres-Ayala. "Strategies for Bilingual Maintenance: Case Studies of Mexican-Origin Families in Texas." *Linguistics and Education* 8 (1996): 389-408. Print.
- Blackledge Adrian, et al. "Contesting 'Language' as 'Heritage': Negotiation of Identities in Late Modernity." *Applied Linguistics* 29.4 (2008): 533-54. Print.
- Brown, Clara. L. "Heritage Language and Ethnic Identity: A Case Study of Korean-American College Students." *International Journal of Multicultural Education* 11.1 (2009): 1-16. Print.
- _____. "Maintaining Heritage Language: Perspectives of Korean Parents." *Multicultural Education* 19.1 (2011): 31-37. Print.
- Cho, Grace. "The Role of Heritage Language in Social Interactions and Relationships: Reflections from a Language Minority Group." *Bilingual Research Journal* 24.4 (2000): 333-48. Print.
- Cummins, Jim. "A Proposal for Action: Strategies for Recognizing Heritage Language Competence as a Teaming Resource within the Mainstream Classroom." *Modern Language Journal* 89 (2005): 585-92. Print.
- DeCapua, Andrea, and Ann C. Wintergerst. "Second-Generation Language Maintenance and Identity: A Case Study." *Bilingual Research Journal* 32.1 (2009): 5-25. Print.
- Jee, Min Jung. "Korean-American Students' Beliefs about Language Learning: the Effect of Perceived Identity." *Journal of Korean Language Education* 27.2

(2016): 275-302. Print.

- Jeon, Mihyon. "Korean Language and Ethnicity in the United States: Views from Within and Across." *The Modern Language Journal* 94.1 (2010): 43-55. Print.
- Kang, Hyun-Sook, and In-sop Kim. "Perceived and Actual Competence and Ethnic Identity in Heritage Language Learning: A Case of Korean-American College Students." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 15.3 (2012): 279-94. Print.
- Kang, Paul Y. "The Effects of Heritage Language Use and Free Voluntary Reading in English upon the Acquisition of Academic English by Korean American Students." Diss. U of Southern California, 2003. Print.
- Kim, Catherine E., and Danielle O. Pyun. "Heritage Language Literacy Maintenance: A Study of Korean-American Heritage Learners." *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 27.3 (2014): 294-315. Print.
- Krashen, Stephen D. "Heritage Language Development: Some Practical Arguments." *Heritage Language Development*. Ed. Stephen D. Krashen, Lucy Tse, and Jeff McQuillan. Culver City, CA: Language Education Associates, 1998. 3-13. Print.
- Lao, Christy. "Parents' Attitudes toward Chinese-English Bilingual Education and Chinese-Language Use." *Bilingual Research Journal* 28.1 (2004): 99-121. Print.
- Lee, Boh Young. "Heritage Language Maintenance and Cultural Identity Formation: The Case of Korean Immigrant Parents and their Children in the USA." *Early Child Development and Care* 183.11 (2013): 1576-88. Print.
- Lee, Jin Sook, and Hae-Young Kim. "Heritage Language Learners' Attitudes, Motivations, and Instructional Needs: The Case of Post-Secondary Korean Language Learners." *Teaching Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Heritage*

- Language Students: Curriculum Needs, Materials, and Assessment*. Ed. Kim Kondo-Brown, and James D. Brown. New York: Erlbaum, 2008. 158-85. Print.
- Lee, Steven K. "The Significance of Language and Cultural Education on Secondary Achievement: A Survey of Chinese-American and Korean-American Students." *Bilingual Research Journal* 26.2 (2002): 213-24. Print.
- Nesteruk, Olena. "Heritage Language Maintenance and Loss among Children of Eastern European Immigrants in the USA." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 31.3 (2010): 271-86. Print.
- Oh, Janet S. "Raising Bilingual Children: Factors in Maintaining a Heritage Language." Diss. U of California Los Angeles, 2003. Print.
- Oriyama, Kaya. "Heritage Language Maintenance and Japanese Identity Formation: What Role Can Schooling and Ethnic Community Contact Play?" *Heritage Language Journal* 7.2 (2010): 76-111. Print.
- Park, Seong Man, and Mela Sarkar. "Parents' Attitudes toward Heritage Language Maintenance of their Children and their Efforts to Help their Children Maintain the Heritage Language: A Case Study of Korean-Canadian Immigrants." *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 20.3 (2007): 223-35. Print.
- Rodriguez, James L, Rafael M. Diaz, David Duran, and Linda Espinosa. "The Impact of Bilingual Preschool Education on the Language Development of Spanish-Speaking Children." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 10.4 (1995): 475-90. Print.
- Shibata, Setsue. "Opening a Japanese Saturday School in a Small Town in the United States: Community Collaboration to Teach Japanese as a Heritage Language." *Bilingual Research Journal* 24.2 (2000): 465-74. Print.
- Shin, Sarah J. *Developing in Two Languages: Korean Children in America*. New

- York: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2005. Print.
- _____. "What about me? I am not Chinese but I am not like Americans: Heritage Language Learning and Identity of Mixed Heritage Adults." *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* 9.3 (2010): 203-19. Print.
- Suarez, Debra. "Second and Third Generation Heritage Language Speakers: HL Scholarship's Relevance to the Research Needs and Future Directions of TESOL." *Heritage Language Journal* 5.1 (2007): 27-49. Print.
- Tannenbaum, Michal. "Viewing family relations through a linguistic lens: Symbolic aspects of language maintenance in immigrant families." *Journal of Family Communication* 5.3 (2005): 229-52. Print.
- Tse, Lucy. "Resisting and Reversing Language shift: Heritage-Language Resilience among U.S. Native Bilinguals." *Harvard Educational Review* 71.4 (2001): 676-708. Print.
- Valdés. Guadalupe. "Heritage Language Students: Profiles and Possibilities." *Heritage Language in America: Preserving a National Resource*. Ed. Joy. K. Peyton, Donald. A. Ranard, and Scott McGinnis. McHenry, IL & Washington, DC: Delta Systems and Center for Applied Linguistics, 2001. 37-77. Print.
- Veltman, Calvin. *Language Shift in the United States*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983. Print.
- Xiao, Yun. "Home Literacy Environment in CHL Development." *Chinese as a Heritage Language: Fostering Rooted World Citizenry*. Ed. Yun Xian and Agnes W. He. Honolulu: U of Hawaii, National Foreign Language Resource Center, 2008. 151-66. Print.
- Zhang, Dongbo, and Keiko Koda. "Home Literacy Environment and Word Knowledge Development: A Study of Young Learners of Chinese as a Heritage Language." *Bilingual Research Journal* 34.1 (2011): 4-18. Print.

국문초록

계승어로서의 한국어 유지에서 부모의 역할

정 은 선 (서울시립대)

계승어 계발과 유지에 있어 부모의 지원과 태도가 중요하다는 것은 논란의 여지가 없지만 이민자 부모의 역할에는 다양한 요소들과 어려움이 작용하여 부모의 개입이 복잡하고 다차원적일 수 있다고 지적되어 왔다. 이 연구에서는 미국에서 태어난 세 명의 재미교포와의 심층적인 인터뷰를 통해 부모의 참여와 지원이 어떻게 인식되고 있으며 부모의 지원이 계승어로서의 한국어의 성공적인 유지에 중요한 역할을 한다고 믿는지의 여부를 조사하였다. 인터뷰를 분석해 본 결과 참가자의 인식과 경험에 공통적으로 세 가지 결과를 관찰할 수 있었다. 첫째, 참가자의 언어 능숙도 및 목표 의식에 관계 없이 부모의 태도와 지원이 계승어 유지에 지대한 영향을 미쳤다. 둘째, 한국어 수업 및 공식적으로 이루어지는 언어 교육은 계승어 계발 및 유지에 제한적인 역할을 했다. 마지막으로 가정에서 읽고 쓰는 연습 및 경험은 독립적인 학습자로 계승어를 유지하는 데에 결정적인 역할을 했다.

주제어: 계승어로서의 한국어, 이중언어 습득, 언어유지, 부모지원, 부모태도

논문접수일: 2019.01.15

심사완료일: 2019.02.03

게재확정일: 2019.02.13

이름: 정은선 (객원교수)

소속: 서울시립대학교

이메일: prolingesc@gmail.com

