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Five Korean Immigrant Mothers,
Five Korean American Daughters

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Applied Linguistics

by

Sarah Y. Sok

2012

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Five Korean Immigrant Mothers,
Five Korean American Daughters

by

Sarah Y. Sok

Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Susan Plann, Chair

Many Korean households in America are comprised of Korean immigrant parents and their American-born children. As Korean parents raise their children in a land and culture they themselves never grew up in, they confront an important question: Should they make any efforts to teach their children about their heritage culture and language? Previous studies report that most American-born Korean children become English-dominant as they become socialized into the host American culture outside of their homes. This may be due to a combination of factors such as life circumstances, available community resources, and the language ideologies endorsed by the society. These factors all affect the development and outcome of parents' attitudes, beliefs, and practices. This study examines the reflections of five Korean immigrant mothers and their

five Korean American daughters residing in Los Angeles. A comparison of the mothers and daughters' evaluations about the daughters' current language and cultural competence in Korean reveals that the daughters are highly bilingual. However, the daughters seem to have different conceptions about the Korean identity from those of their mothers. Unlike their mothers, the daughters also seem to distinguish between the Korean culture in South Korea and the culture of Korean Americans. By interviewing the mothers about their initial attitudes and efforts to socialize and educate their children in the heritage language (HL), we see how life circumstances, language ideologies, and children's perspectives coincided with parental efforts over the years to bring about the current state. Through this study, we hope to gain insight into how the HL and culture is transmitted in Korean immigrant households while considering both the mothers' and their children's perspectives.

The thesis of Sarah Y. Sok is approved.

John Schumann

Sung-Ock Sohn

Susan Plann, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

To my mother and father,

Sun Hee Sok and Yong Un Sok

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In many immigrant households of America, parents and children not only represent two different generations, but also two different languages and cultures. As immigrants who still carry the memories of their homeland and culture close to their hearts, many parents are tied linguistically, culturally, and emotionally to a place and people that their children never knew. As a generation born and raised in America, the children of these households have experiences that their parents never had, and take up an identity and world view that their parents often do not fully understand. When these differences are left unacknowledged or unmediated, a barrier beyond language can threaten to strand parents and children symbolically or literally continents and cultures apart from each other.

Strong intergenerational relationships are often dependent on strong communication and the ability of both generations to understand the other. Language maintenance in immigrant families helps parents and children not only to communicate, but also to better understand cultural values that are crucial to one's identity and world view. Studies have shown that when second generation children learn and maintain the native language of their parents, family relationships are strengthened (Lee and Shin 2008). Knowledge and use of the language of their parents give children a window into the world that their parents came from. Moreover, as speakers of the language, they themselves become a part of that world and that heritage.

This study hopes to bring light to the issue of heritage language (HL) intergenerational transmission among Korean immigrant mothers and their Korean American daughters residing in Los Angeles. By interviewing five mothers and five daughters, parents and children's

evaluations of the children's current competence in the Korean language and culture are revealed. Both mothers and daughters also reflect about parents' roles in HL education and socialization beginning in the children's early childhood and continuing beyond. These interviews allow for comparisons between mothers' and children's perspectives, and also offer insight into the change and development of parents' expectations, attitudes, and methods over the course of time.

This study consists of 7 chapters. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 provide a review of literature that establishes the background context of this study. Chapter 2 starts by describing the study of HLs, which has developed into a subdiscipline within the field of Applied Linguistics. Chapter 3 reviews the macro, local, and micro-level issues pertaining to Korean as a HL in the United States. Chapter 4 provides additional information about several recent studies on Korean parents' attitudes and strategies. Chapter 5 describes the methodology of the study, including information about the ten participants and how they were interviewed. Chapter 6 presents the findings and the discussion of their implications. Chapter 7 provides a conclusion of the findings.

Chapter 2

Study of Heritage Languages in Applied Linguistics

As a nation founded by immigrants and metaphorically portrayed as a melting pot since its nascent years, the United States has a long history of heritage languages.¹ In the last two decades, the study of HLs in the U.S. has grown and developed into a sub-discipline within the field of Applied Linguistics. Studies in this area address the linguistic, social, and political issues related to HLs and HL learners. These issues are categorized below as macro, local, and micro-level issues.

2.1. Macro-level issues

Studies with a macro-level approach address HLs at the global and national level. The socio-political issues governing HL education, the formation and influence of national policies, the categorizations of HLs and HL groups, and the identification of historical trends in HL maintenance are of central concern. For example, researchers such as Fishman (2001), Valdes (2001), and Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) offer various definitions of HL learners in the US and cast light on the national policies, institutions, and ideologies that surround HL learners. In the American context, the surge of interest in HLs has been partially fueled by the view that HLs are a national resource, an “untapped reservoir of linguistic competence,” that can contribute to the nation’s workforce (Brecht and Ingold 2002: 2). However, most HLs in the United States are replaced by English by the third generation (Fishman, 1991). According to Wiley (2001), the duration of the shift has been shortened to two generations. Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009: 79) assert that this is due to the “the dominant language ideology in contemporary US

¹ After more than three hundred years, a steady flow of immigrants still contributes to the linguistic diversity in America (Migration Policy Institute 2004).

mainstream society [which] is still [foreign] language[s] as a problem, especially with the renewed, escalating English-only movement that has been part of the political landscape since the 1980s.²” Wong Fillmore (2003: 9) confirms that “in recent years, languages other than English have been placed in greater jeopardy than ever before in the United States.” Studies that address these macro-level structures, policies, ideologies, historical trends, and provide general terminology to categorize HL speakers supply the overarching framework in which studies on specific HL groups are situated.

2.2 Local-level issues

Beneath the macro-level, a local-level perspective focuses on the HL community. This perspective explores the role of cultural influences, community-based resources such as heritage language schools, and local ideologies about language circulated within the community. All these factors indicate the ethnolinguistic vitality in the community. The ethnolinguistic vitality of a language alludes to the status and prestige that members of that language ascribe to it (Allard and Landry 1992). The concept of ethnolinguistic vitality overlaps with that of language ideologies, which Silverstein (1979: 193) defined generally as a “set of beliefs about language articulated by users.” In the case of HL studies, ethnolinguistic vitality and local language ideologies have most often been explored in intergroup situations. Amidst the presence of other groups, a certain HL group’s language ideologies and ethnolinguistic vitality determine whether or not a HL group acts as a collective entity (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977).

Low levels of ethnolinguistic vitality paired with the prevalence of assimilationist language ideologies might cause members of the community to abandon all efforts to transmit the HL to the next generation. Lee (2002) and Shin (2005) found that many Korean immigrant

² They refer to the passage of Proposition 227 in California and Proposition 203 in Arizona which banned bilingual education in public schools (Crawford 2000).

parents, preoccupied about their children acquiring English as soon and as successfully as possible, avoided speaking Korean to their children. Low ethnolinguistic vitality also has negative implications for community-based HL schools. As a local community resource, these language schools reflect a community's dedication to teaching their language to the next generation. In addition to providing formal language instruction, they offer spaces and opportunities for social networking and fellowship within the language community. Students enrolled in these schools often engage in cultural activities which result in increased exposure to the language and to literacy activities, and positive views about the language and culture (Hinton 1999; Oh 2003; Tse 2001). In sum, local-level issues dealing with ethnolinguistic vitality and language ideologies reveal the HL community's neighboring context and resources, providing a more focused frame for exploring micro-level issues.

2.3 Micro-level issues

Studies that analyze micro-level issues reveal what goes on in the day-to-day lives of HL learners and their family members, with the focus being on individual HL learners' socialization and education. The themes of identity as well as other sociological factors are pervasive in such studies. Studies that explore HL learners' identity formations and negotiations reveal that multilingual identity is a complex issue involving both the acceptance and rejection of values and identities rooted in each culture and language (Blackledge and Creese 2010). The complexity of identity is heightened by the fact that each HL community and each HL learner displays unique characteristics, agency, and changing ideologies.

Thus far, researchers have been able to draw general connections among factors such as HL learners' ethnic identity, social wellbeing, and school achievement. For example, HL proficiency has been correlated with important psychological and developmental benefits for

language-minority children such as higher self-esteem (Cho 2000), higher academic achievement (Rumberger and Larson 1998; Lee 2002), and better relationships with family members (Tannenbaum 2005). Moreover, higher motivation to learn one's HL has been linked to positive ethnic identity (Cho 2000; Lee 2002; Lee and Shin 2008; Mills 2001; Tse 2000).

Due to globalization and transmigration, there is a rapidly growing population of urban multilingual youths and HL communities in today's society. The consideration of macro, local, and micro-level issues and perspectives are crucial in understanding the transmission of HLs in specific social, political, and historical contexts.

Chapter 3

Korean as a Heritage Language in the United States

Because all human interaction and linguistic practices are situated within local and macro-level contexts, even studies with a micro-level focus cannot avoid addressing the broader social structures that affect and are in turn affected by people's everyday choices, practices, and life circumstances. Therefore, although this study has a micro-level focus as a case-study of Korean immigrant parents and their children residing within the greater Los Angeles area, there is a need to bring to light the context in which the participants are situated. Beginning at the macro-level, the Korean population in the U.S. is described. The term "heritage language" is also defined in the way it applies to the participants. At the local-level, the Korean American community's ethnolinguistic vitality in Los Angeles is explored. Lastly at the micro-level, previous studies on Korean American HL learners are reviewed.

3.1 Macro-level: the Korean population and Korean as a HL in the U.S.

The technical definition of a "heritage language" widely varies across contexts (Wiley & Valdés, 2000). The broad definition states that a HL is the ancestral language with which one feels a cultural connection, whether or not one was exposed to the language while growing up. For example, Van Deusen-Scholl (2003: 221) describes HL learners as "a heterogeneous group ranging from fluent native speakers to non-speakers who may be generations removed, but who may feel culturally connected to a language". The narrow definition, on the other hand, makes a distinction between cultural and linguistic affiliation to the language. The narrow definition states that a HL is the home language that a person is exposed to in early childhood, before becoming socialized into the host country's dominant language. For example, Valdés (2001:38) describes a HL speaker to be "someone who is raised in a home where a non-English language is

spoken and who speaks or at least understands the language and is to some degree bilingual in the home language and in English.” Valdés’ definition is used in pedagogical settings to distinguish HL students from second language learners. This narrow definition also accurately captures the majority of second generation Korean Americans in the United States (Lee and Shin 2008).

The history of Korean immigration to the U.S. reached a new peak in the 1960s. During the 1960s, the Republic of Korea began to develop economically and industrially. In order to keep the domestic population under control, the government espoused a policy that encouraged emigration (Choi 2003). Thus, many Korean immigrants, mostly urban middle class individuals with a college education, sought new homes and better economic opportunities in more industrialized nations. With the passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, many Korean immigrants came to the U.S. during the 1970s and increasingly more in the 80s and 90s (Lee and Shin 2008). The city of Los Angeles became the most popular destination (US Census 2000). The United States has now become home to the largest overseas Korean population, and currently has a population of over one million Koreans according to the Census in 2000³.

3.2. Local-level: the visible Korean American community in Los Angeles

Among the dense Korean communities found in several large metropolitan areas of the U.S., Los Angeles has by far the largest Korean community⁴. Comprising roughly thirty percent of all Koreans in the U.S., Los Angeles has more than 200 ethnic Korean associations (Choi

³ The Korean government, however, estimates the number to be around two million, considering that most ethnic minorities do not respond to the Census (Choi 2003).

⁴ Other dense Korean communities are located in New York, Chicago, and Washington D.C. (Lee and Shin 2008).

2003). Many Korean community-based language schools are also concentrated in Los Angeles⁵. Koreatown, an area located next to Downtown Los Angeles, is home to various Korean restaurants, markets, hospitals, banks, and Korean ethnic churches.

Min (2000) claims that Koreans in the U.S. tend to reside in highly concentrated ethnic locations, the ideal environment to support HL maintenance. Choi (2003: 16) claims that Korean communities often form associations that “act as a centripetal force, pulling Koreans together” and maintaining the collective identity. Choi also suggests that certain ethnic diasporas display historically consistent patterns of group cohesion and HL maintenance. For example, Chinese overseas communities tend to maintain cohesion and their collective identity, as evident in their “continued commitment to teach the Chinese language to the second and third generations” (2003: 14). Japanese diasporas on the other hand tend to disappear or lose their Japanese ethnic ties along with the Japanese language by the second and third generations (Choi 2003). In the case of Korean groups, however, the link between Korean overseas communities’ group cohesion and language maintenance is in need of more research. In a technical report published in 1981, Kim (p. 17) stated that “it [was] still somewhat early to make any conclusive statement on how successful the Korean immigrant family has been and will be in providing a supportive environment for maintenance of their native language and culture for the younger generation.”

Thirty-one years after Kim’s (1981) technical report, this study hopes to offer an updated perspective on the state of Korean immigrant families and their HL. Given the demographic facts, the Korean American population in Los Angeles seems to confirm previous claims about strong within-group cohesion and collective unity. This study hopes to find out how successful the immigrant generation may be in fostering HL education and socialization for the next American-

⁵ There are around 1,200 Korean community-based language schools in the U.S., enrolling about 60,000 students (Lee and Shin 2008).

born generation. During the time of Kim's report, most Korean immigrants had been in the U.S. for less than ten years and a relatively high proportion was school age children. The time period between then and now has brought multiple waves of new immigrants and seen the growth of the Korean American community. The mothers who are participating in this study are immigrants who have had about twenty years of residence in the U.S.; they represent a new generation of Korean immigrants following the one portrayed in Kim's 1981 report. In comparison, they have had twice the length of residence in the U.S., and their eldest children have reached an adult age. We hope that the findings of this current study can contribute to a report on the current Korean American community.

3.3. Micro-level: Korean Americans and their motivation to learn their HL

In spite of the visibility of the Korean American community, the numerous Korean ethnic associations and language schools, and the perception of Koreans as a cohesive group, successful accounts of Korean language maintenance have not been reported in previous studies. To the contrary, researchers have found Korean Americans to have one of the lowest rates of HL proficiency among Asian Americans (Lopez 1996; Min 2000). Although many second generation Korean Americans are bilingual in Korean and English as youngsters, they usually become English-dominant as they attend American schools (Shin and Milroy 1999). Although Korean immigrant parents remain monolingual and speak almost exclusively Korean to their children, their children respond in English (Hing & Lee, 1996; Min, 2000; Shin, 2005). Min (2000) found that 77% of the second-generation Korean Americans in her study began speaking mostly or exclusively English to their parents after the age of five.

Several studies explore the attitudes, motivations, and instructional needs of adult Korean American HL learners (Cho, Cho, and Tse 1997; Jeon 2001; Jeon 2008; Lee and Kim 2008; Rue

Yang 2003). The participants of these studies resemble the second-generation Korean Americans in Shin and Milroy's (1999) study. Although they had been bilingual as youngsters, by the time these studies were conducted they had lost most of their Korean language ability. Recruited as participants because they were enrolled in Korean heritage language classes, these participants were relearning their HL many years after their early childhood education and socialization. Although the exact stage at which they began to feel a need to regain their HL proficiency is unknown, several students reported having developed their interest in Korean only after they met and befriended other Koreans in college (Cho et al. 1997).

3.3.1 East Coast Study

Lee and Kim (2008) collected data from 101 Korean HL learners at two American universities on the East Coast. After interviewing ten of these students and qualitatively analyzing the data, they found that students were motivated to relearn their HL mainly because they wanted to connect with their family and ethnic community. Unlike students in studies conducted in Southern California (Cho, Cho, and Tse's 1997, Cho 2000) and the Midwest (Rue Yang 2003), none of the students in Lee and Kim's (2008) study mentioned how the Korean language could better their job prospects. Lee and Kim (2008) postulate that the sparse population of Koreans in the East Coast context caused students to perceive of Korean as having little utility and representation, and thus low ethnolinguistic vitality.

3.3.2. West Coast Studies

Cho, Cho, and Tse's (1997) study conducted on the West Coast also interviewed adult HL learners, twenty-four Korean Americans enrolled in a Korean language program. Unlike in Lee and Kim's (2008) study, students had hopes of enhancing their job prospects and their potential clientele through the Korean language. Many expressed a desire to work with Koreans

and Korean families in the future. The fact that these Korean Americans were living in an area with a larger population of ethnic Koreans contributed to higher ethnolinguistic vitality and students' belief that learning Korean would lead to better job opportunities.

However, the most salient motivational factors were again the desires to communicate better with family, relatives, and others in the Korean community. Students expressed the sadness, frustration, and shame they felt at not being able to communicate with their parents in Korean. Many felt that learning Korean would ameliorate and strengthen previously strained parent-child relationships. Moreover, students believed the Korean language to be an integral part of their "ethnicity, culture and heritage" (Cho et al. 1997: 108). Several students expressed the desire to pass on the Korean culture, identity, and language to their children.

3.3.3. Hindrances to HL maintenance: current and past

In spite of high levels of motivation, Korean American students faced obstacles due to low language proficiency and low confidence. These factors caused students to experience emotional and psychological stress when they were interacting with other Koreans. In both studies (Lee and Kim 2008; Cho et al 1997), students' motivations were influenced negatively by anxiety and high expectations from teachers, classmates, and other Koreans. The unrealistic expectations of others were a significant source of discouragement.

Although these studies reveal why Korean Americans of an adult age are motivated to relearn their HL, they leave unanswered the question of why Korean Americans lose their HL in the first place. Studies involving interviews and observations of younger Korean Americans at an elementary or high school age are relatively very few. However, other studies that ask college-level HL learners to reflect on past experiences with their HL reveal more about the factors that may have led to the loss of HL proficiency in young Korean Americans.

3.3.4. Why Korean Americans lose their HL in the first place

3.3.4.1. Language ideologies and language myths

Jeon's (2001; 2008) two studies reveal that assimilationist language ideologies may cause Korean Americans to abandon their HL during their formative years. In 2001 Jeon conducted an ethnographic study about her experience of teaching sixteen college students enrolled in a Korean language course at an American university. Eleven of Jeon's students were Korean Americans who never acquired advanced competency in the Korean language although some of them attended Saturday HL schools during their childhood. After finding out that all but one of her Korean American students opposed the idea of Korean and English two-way immersion programs, she sought to understand the underlying reasons for this opposition. Her data collection methods included interviewing her students, corresponding with them through email, reading their journals, and having discussions about the topic.

Jeon found that her students and their parents had been affected by larger local and macro-level structures and ideologies. During the early education and socialization experiences of her participants, proficiency in Korean without proficiency in the dominant language English had been stigmatized. English was regarded as the language that unified the American people. The term "FOB" (fresh off the boat), which her students used to refer to recently arrived immigrants and non-English speakers, symbolized these Korean American students' perception of Korean as problematic in becoming part of the American society. The word also carried other negative connotations, such as the perception that immigrants were generally poor.

These ideologies overlapped with language myths. Many parents' practices were guided by one of the "common myths surrounding bilingualism" (Shin 2003), the myth that learning two languages simultaneously confuses children. For example, one student, Mike, was never sent to

HL schools because his parents feared that learning English and Korean at the same time would be detrimental to Mike's English acquisition. Another student, Dan, had a father who also believed that learning and maintaining Korean would hinder Dan's acquisition of English. Dan's father believed that in order for Dan to be successful in the American society, Dan only needed to know and learn English. Jeon (2008) points out that the status of English as a global language and the "idea of English as the *de facto* language of the United States" (p. 62) contributes to assimilationist perspectives.

In contrast to assimilationist ideologies, "pluralist" ideologies view competence in both English and Korean as favorable and beneficial in forming strong ethnic identities and increasing job prospects (Jeon 2008). In a study conducted in 2008, Jeon identified several assimilationist ideologies such as those described above, but also found some pluralist perspectives among her participants, which included: (1) first generation ESL learners in a community-based program (2) second generation Korean Americans learning Korean in an American university, and (3) a Korean immigrant family. In households that had a pluralist perspective about language, grandparents taught their grandchildren Korean, and Korean was spoken in the home by parents. Interestingly, Korean became the home language not only when parents wanted to teach their children Korean, but also when parents were afraid of tainting their children's English with their own "incorrect English". As in the case of Dan and Mike, a myth about language informed parents' linguistic practices, although this particular myth led to different results. In sum, Jeon found that language ideologies constantly fluctuate along the continuum between assimilationist and pluralist, leading to various attitudes about the Korean language dependent on time, space, and life circumstances.

3.3.4.2. Life circumstances

In addition to language ideologies, life circumstances are highly influential in HL transmission. Jeon (2008) identified circumstances that hindered HL transmission regardless of the parents' desire to teach and socialize their children in the Korean language. Such circumstances included long working hours of parents, limited community resources, unavailable schooling, and more. Many Korean Americans were given the opportunity to start learning Korean anew when they entered the university because there was a significant change in their life circumstances: they were no longer at a stage of acquiring English, they were exposed to other Korean Americans, and they were able to access Korean language instruction in a legitimate academic and institutional setting.

3.3.4.3. Summary

In sum, these two studies reveal that unfavorable views and ideologies related to the Korean language at the macro and local-level, parents' incorrect knowledge or myths about language acquisition, and life circumstances constitute some of the causes of HL attrition and loss. Therefore, effective HL education is dependent on a myriad of factors surrounding parents. Moreover, any one of these factors is subject to change within a HL learner's lifetime. In light of these findings, this current study hopes to illuminate the following: (1) the ideologies related to language that Korean immigrant mothers may knowingly or unknowingly uphold, (2) the myths or facts of bilingualism that may inform the mothers' child-rearing practices, and (3) particular life circumstances that may either support or hinder children's HL education and socialization. As a reflective study of past experiences, this study also hopes to document any changes in these factors that may have occurred over time.

Chapter 4

Parents' positive attitudes and efforts toward the Korean language

In spite of previous studies (Jeon 2001; Jeon 2008; Lee 2002; Shin 2005) that reveal cases of Korean immigrant parents who avoid speaking Korean to their children, other studies report the contrary. In recent studies, Korean immigrant parents revealed their enthusiasm for teaching and socializing their children in the Korean language (Kim 2011, Kim and Lee 2011, Park and Sarkar 2007).

4.1. Korean parents in Montreal, Canada

Park and Sarkar (2007), for example, conducted a study in which they interviewed nine Korean immigrant parents in Montreal, Canada in the year 2005. All participant parents expressed a strong desire for their children to maintain their heritage language. They equated heritage language maintenance to cultural identity maintenance, and wanted their children to retain cultural identities as Koreans. Two parents wanted their children to be able to communicate with their grandparents, who only spoke Korean. One parent's correct knowledge about language acquisition informed her practices: she believed that a firm foundation in first language skills was necessary for successful second language acquisition (Cummins 2001).

Parents' strategies in HL education and socialization were diverse. All parents spoke Korean at home, regardless of parents' proficiency levels in English and French, the dominant languages of Canada. Parents used Korean books, educational video tapes, dictation, and/or encouraged the use of the Internet. Parents in Montreal reported a lack of community resources that provided systematic support for Korean language instruction; thus they relied mostly on the Korean ethnic church as a venue in which their children could be exposed to and socialized in

the Korean language and culture outside of their homes⁶. This study shows that in spite of the lack of systematic support and community resources, Korean parents were very optimistic and ambitious about educating and socializing their children in Korean.

4.2. Korean parents with children in HL schools

Studies of Korean immigrant parents who send their children to HL schools from early childhood also reveal parents' desire for their children's high proficiency in the Korean language (Kim 2011; Kim and Lee 2011). Parent's desire for HL maintenance are at times coupled by the desire to create a "safety net" for their second generation children. Kim (2011) observed and interviewed seven Korean immigrant mothers, two guardians (grandmothers), and their children for one academic year in a Korean HL school. The Korean mothers reported confronting social and cultural barriers within the dominant American society due to their immigrant status. These barriers were also experienced by their children; as they entered the American school system as preschoolers, some of them had trouble intermingling with other classmates and joining play groups. Parents felt that Korean HL schools were places where their children could play with their peers without the fear of breaking unknown cultural rules or offending other non-Korean children and parents. At the same time, however, parents felt that as their children eventually began to "fit in" and become socialized into the greater American society, their children were growing further away from them. When children began speaking more and more English at home, parents realized that their children were acquiring a language and culture they themselves could not be a part of. Therefore, parents' motivation to teach their children the HL and send them to HL schools stemmed from the fear of losing their children; the HL school became a

⁶ All parents identified the Korean church as an important community resource where their children's HL and cultural maintenance can be encouraged.

place that mitigated detachment and estrangement between immigrant parents and second-generation children (Kim 2011).

4.3. Summary

These parental studies document Korean immigrant parents' enthusiastic and positive attitudes toward their children's HL, despite the lack of community resources in certain cases. Even in cases when being ethnically and culturally Korean and speaking the Korean language could have entailed discrimination, Korean immigrant parents were encouraged to teach their children Korean all the more. This was in order to provide a safe place for them to grow and play, and also to maintain strong bonds with them. However, the parents who participated in these studies are all parents of school age children who are mostly just beginning to send their second-generation children to school (Kim 2011; Kim and Lee 2011; Park and Sarker 2007). There still remains a space for follow-up studies to see whether these parents' enthusiasm and language strategies remained the same, whether they resulted in successful HL transmission, and also how they were perceived by the children. As this current study interviews older parents who have already raised their eldest children to an adult age, we hope to draw comparisons and see how parental attitudes and strategies may evolve over time.

Chapter 5

Method

5.1. Participants

The participants of this study are five Korean immigrant mothers and their daughters, who are in their early twenties. All five daughters are the eldest children in their families. Three of them were born in the U.S., one came to the U.S. at age two, and another came at age eight. All the daughters were raised and educated in the suburbs of Los Angeles for all or most of their lives, and currently attend an American university. The Korean mothers, having arrived in the United States as adults, never received any formal education in the U.S. The participants were recruited through personal contacts.

Mothers	Years of residence in LA	Daughters	Age	Birthplace	Siblings
Mrs. Suh	25	Janet Suh	24	American-born	1 brother (age 20)
Mrs. Kim	22	Evelyn Kim	20	American-born	1 sister (age 12)
Mrs. Park	22	Anna Park	22	American-born	1 sister (age 20), 1 brother (age 17)
Mrs. Hong	21	Mindy Hong	23	Korean-born (Came at age 2)	1 brother (age 12)
Mrs. Cho	12	Grace Cho	20	Korean-born (Came at age 8)	2 brothers (ages 17 and 15)

5.2. Why mothers and daughters?

Mothers rather than fathers were recruited mainly because the mothers were more available for interviews. The fathers of these households are all full-time working men who spend the majority of their weekdays at work. All but one of the mothers are also currently working full time; two of them started to work after their children reached a certain age. The interview questions were designed to ask about parents' roles in general, rather than focusing exclusively on mothers' roles. In this way, mothers were encouraged to remark on the fathers' roles if they believed that the fathers had a notable influence in some aspect of their children's HL education and socialization. This study targeted mothers whose eldest children had reached an adult age. The eldest children, Korean American young adults, were also sought out for interviews. It was by chance that all the Korean American participants were female.

5.3. Data collection: Qualitative analysis

All ten participants were interviewed individually in the language of their choice for roughly half an hour. The semi-structured, open-ended interviews were audio recorded and conducted in participants' homes or in a classroom inside a church. Mothers and daughters were asked not to share the contents of the interview with each other until both had completed their interviews. Mothers and daughters' interviews were later transcribed and compared during analysis.

5.3.1. Mothers' interviews

The five mothers were interviewed in Korean, and their interviews were based on a questionnaire. The questionnaire served as a guide that allowed extended responses. Parents were

first asked to score their English proficiency levels in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Although it was known that the mothers were Korean-dominant, this was done in order to speculate about the ability and likelihood of mothers to communicate with their children in English. Next, the mothers were asked to score their children's Korean language proficiency in the same areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This was done for all of their children, not just their eldest.

The interview then asked mothers about their eldest children's cultural competence. Since cultural competence is more difficult to quantify and rate on a scale, an alternative method was used. Instead of giving a score, mothers were asked to comment on how their daughters might react to several hypothetical scenarios: (1) socializing with monolingual Korean speakers from South Korea, (2) procuring a job in South Korea or a Korean company in America, (3) marrying a Korean spouse, (4) visiting or living in South Korea, (5) teaching Korean to her children, and (6) remaining connected to the Korean American community.

During the second part of the interview, parents were encouraged to reflect on their experiences as they were asked questions about their initial expectations for their children's proficiency in the Korean language and culture, their actual practices, efforts, and strategies, the life circumstances they encountered along the way, and the beliefs and preoccupations they had about language. They were also asked if they were satisfied with the result of their efforts and if they had any lasting regrets. If they had children whose levels of proficiency in Korean differed drastically, they were asked why they thought this was so. In addition, the study asked parents to explain what they thought were the most important factors that promoted a second generation Korean American child's HL maintenance. Lastly, parents were asked what they thought the Korean language meant to their daughters.

5.3.2. Daughters' interviews

The daughters were interviewed in English with a questionnaire similar to the one used for mothers. They were first asked to evaluate their Korean language competence (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and then were asked about their cultural competence with the same method. The children were asked the same questions about parents' expectations, beliefs, and strategies, the factors to which they attributed their own language competence and the competence of their siblings, and the factors they thought were most important for HL maintenance. They were encouraged to voice their thoughts and opinions about what they might do differently as parents, or if they had any lasting regrets about their own HL education and socialization. Finally, they were asked the open-ended question about what the Korean language meant to them.

5.4. Scoring

In rating the language proficiencies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, mothers and daughters used a 100% scale, in which a 100% signified perfect, native-like proficiency. A 50% signified roughly half the ability of a native-speaker, and 0% signified no knowledge of the Korean language. These assessments and evaluations were meant to give a rough sketch of the way parents perceive their children's Korean language and cultural ability, and also a rough idea about the way children evaluate their own abilities. More information about parents and children's thoughts regarding their linguistic abilities was provided by the qualitative content of the interviews.

Chapter 6

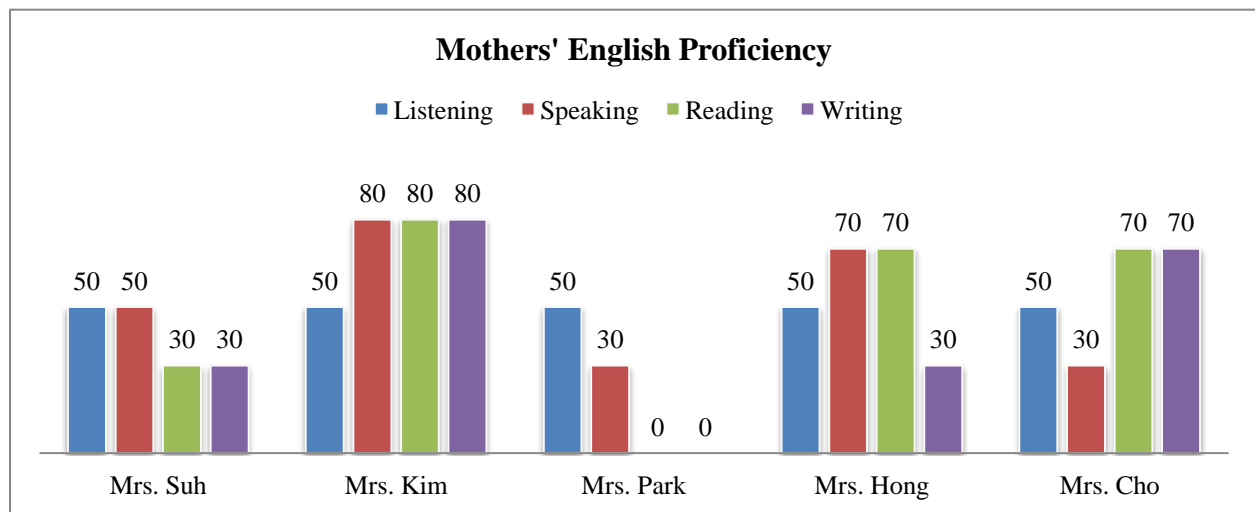
Results and Discussion

The findings are divided into two parts. The first part addresses the mothers and daughters' language and culture proficiency evaluations. The second part addresses their reflections about HL education and socialization

6.1. Results Part 1: language and cultural proficiency evaluations

6.1.1. Mothers' English proficiency

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Mean	50	48	50	42
SD	0	22.8	33.9	32.7



Mothers had varying levels of English proficiency in the four language skills areas. Although they sighed, lightheartedly joked, and chided themselves about their lack of

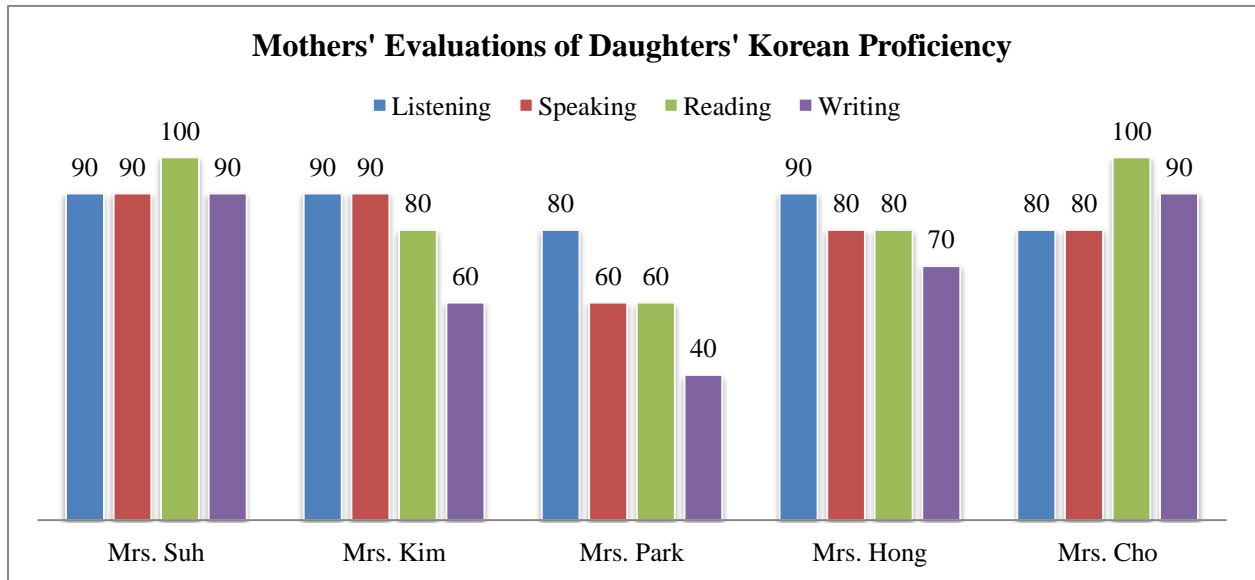
proficiency, they expressed no intention of improving their mastery of English. Mrs. Suh explained that her English proficiency was low but sufficient for her to communicate with her coworkers who were also immigrants, mostly from Mexico. She said she was able to give her assistants instructions in broken English. When asked to rate her listening skills, Mrs. Hong replied “Listening to American people?” This shows that Mrs. Hong did not identify herself as an American person, regardless of the twenty-one years she had spent in the U.S. Throughout her interview, Mrs. Hong often linked the English language to the White race, using phrases like “White-person English” and “blonde-hair English.”

The scores mother gave themselves may be lower than their actual abilities. Mrs. Park replied that she did not read English at all (0%), and that her writing was the worst of all (0%). However, she commented on how her children laughed about her text messages, often laden with misspellings and wrong word choices. Her comments reveal that although she might be at a rudimentary level, Mrs. Park engages in writing and reading English text messages. These abilities most likely merit a higher score than 0%.

It was evident that all the mothers, including Mrs. Kim, whose scores were the highest overall, did not use English regularly in their intimate social circles. The mothers’ stance toward English implied that they still perceived themselves as outsiders to the mainstream American society, culture, and language. However, unlike the immigrants in Kim’s 1981 technical report, they did not identify their lack of English proficiency as a major problem; the participants seemed to experience no pressing difficulties in their professional lives because of a language barrier.

6.1.2. Mothers' evaluations of their daughters' Korean proficiency

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Mean	86	80	84	70
SD	5.5	12.2	16.7	21.2



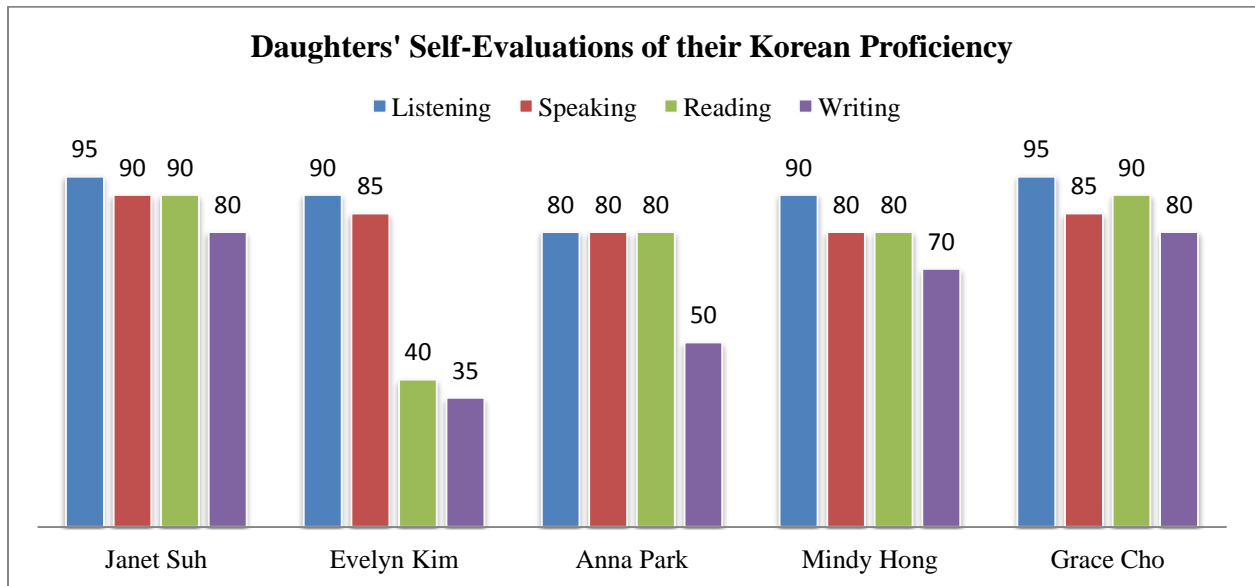
Mothers' evaluations of their eldest children's Korean language proficiency were generally high. Mrs. Suh and Mrs. Kim especially expressed high satisfaction regarding their daughters' Korean competence. Mrs. Suh said that her daughter was not only extremely proficient in conversational Korean, but that she knew 사자성어 s, which are considered difficult⁷. Mrs. Kim also commented that her daughter knew difficult Korean sayings and idioms. The other three mothers also expressed that their daughters were generally highly competent in

⁷ 사자성어's are words consisting of four different characters that originated from Chinese. Put together, these characters allude to specific traditional Korean proverbs and sayings.

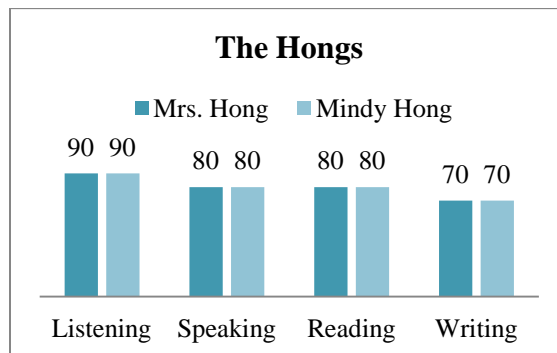
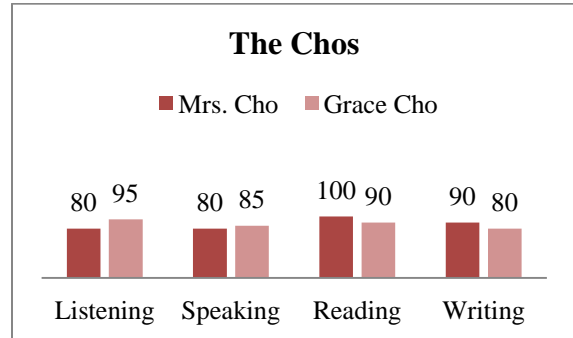
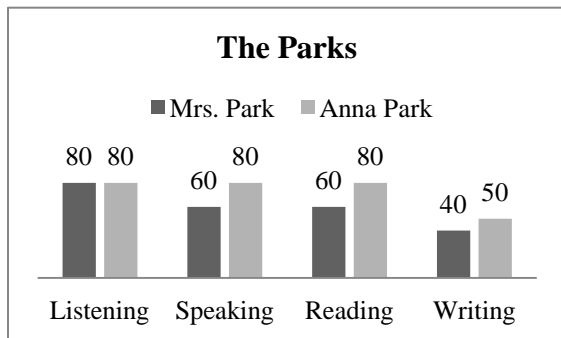
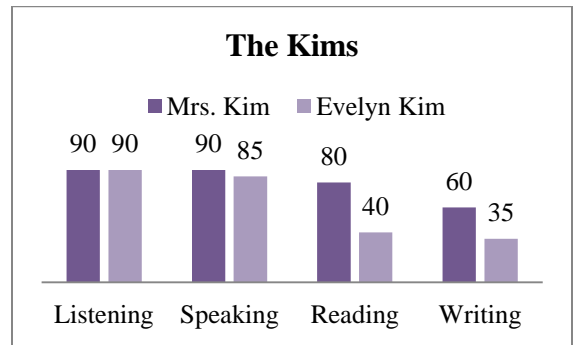
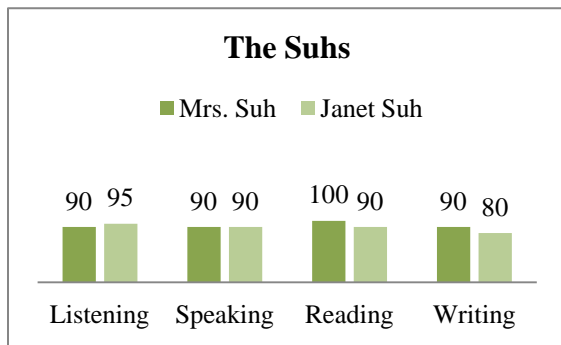
the Korean language and culture. Mrs. Park gave her daughter, Anna, relatively low scores compared to the other four mothers, but her later comments about Anna’s cultural competence in Korean reveal that she believes Anna to be capable of holding conversations in Korean with ease. Mrs. Park also stated that Anna’s current proficiency levels may be higher than the scores she assigned. She thought Anna’s Korean proficiency might have improved recently because Anna was watching more Korean television shows. As she went on to rate her other children’s language proficiency levels, Mrs. Park commented that she does not give high scores. This seems to be true considering that she had also given herself the lowest scores among mothers’ English proficiency evaluations.

6.1.3. Daughters’ evaluations of their Korean proficiency

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Mean	90	84	76	63
SD	11.6	4.2	20.7	19.9



Daughters' self-evaluations of their Korean language proficiency correlated closely with their mothers' evaluations, most ratings falling within ranges of 10% differences. Mindy Hong's ratings exactly matched those of her mother. However, Evelyn Kim's ratings of her reading and writing abilities were considerably lower than her mother's ratings, with a 40% and 25% difference, respectively. On the other hand, Anna Park's evaluations of her speaking and reading skills were 20% higher than her mother's evaluations.



6.1.4. Daughters' Cultural Competence in Korean

In discussing daughters' cultural competence, mothers and daughters had correlating responses for questions about daughters' job prospects in South Korea, their likelihood to visit or live in South Korea, their likelihood to teach their children Korean, and their likelihood to remain connected to the Korean American community. Both mothers and daughters felt that given daughters' high linguistic competence, they would have favorable odds in the job market in South Korea. Comparably, mothers were generally more confident about their children's abilities to function in a professional Korean-using setting. Whereas daughters were generally confident, they expressed minor doubts about encountering difficult technical terms in a Korean-only setting. Both mothers and daughters felt that it was highly likely for the daughters to visit South Korea, but unlikely for them to live there for a prolonged time. They felt they would remain settled in America. Daughters were all determined to teach Korean to their children in the future, and mothers had previous knowledge of this fact. Mothers and daughters both felt that the daughters would remain connected to the Korean American community for the rest of their lives.

The differences between mothers and daughters' perspectives were notable in the following two topics: (1) daughters' socialization with Korean immigrant peers and (2) daughters' marriage prospects with a Korean spouse. These two topics will be explored in depth.

6.1.4.1. Socialization with Korean immigrant peers

Mothers unanimously stated that their daughters would socialize with monolingual Korean speakers and recent immigrants excellently. When asked if their daughters would face any barriers or difficulties, they said they would experience "no problem at all". Mrs. Park said,

“Are you talking about FOBs⁸? [Anna] gets along well with Koreans. I think she’s really close to the Korean culture.” Daughters on the other hand, gave a slightly different response. Although all daughters said they would be able to communicate with monolingual Koreans, they added that there would be some restrictions due to cultural differences.

For example, Janet Suh said, “There’s a barrier but not too big... not language barrier, cultural more.” Mindy Hong also said that although she didn’t have a language barrier with monolingual Koreans, “[the barrier] is more like culture. Yeah because we are so Americanized and South Korea is a total different culture. So you come and you speak the same language but how you perceive things is more different.” Even so, when asked if she had any friends who were recent immigrants, she replied that she did, especially because there was a large population of immigrant students attending her university. Grace Cho described Korean immigrants: “They are a lot different from people here. It’s like they do different things. They dress differently...” When asked if she experienced barriers because of these differences, she replied, “I don’t think there would be a ‘barrier’ but it’d be different. But I can still get along with FOBs”. Evelyn Kim said she experienced a little bit of both language and cultural barriers, but that she was also able to get along with Korean international students at her school “just fine.” Anna Park, on the other hand stated, “[It’s] kind of awkward [socializing with Korean immigrants] because I know we will never be best friends.”

Mindy, Grace, Evelyn, and Anna felt that these cultural differences were mitigated when they were among family members from Korea, however. Mindy replied that she did not

⁸ As mentioned in the literature review (pg. 14) the term FOB is an acronym for “Fresh Off the Boat,” and is used to refer to recent immigrants. Although at times carrying negative connotations, this term has become so widely used that it is often used without negative intentions. Here, for example, it seems that Mrs. Park chose this term to clarify what the interviewer meant by “Korean speakers”.

experience any of these barriers when speaking with their grandparents or relatives “because we’re just family so we all like just get along.” Tying back to her previous comment on how she felt she was “Americanized,” she added, “Just because we live in America doesn’t mean that we’re completely Americanized. The culture is in your home.” Anna stated that she did not feel “awkward” with her grandparents, and that they understood what she and her siblings were saying. However, she pointed out that she did not speak much with her grandparents in the first place.

These findings allude to the cultural differences that exist between two peer groups within the same ethnic Korean culture: “American-born Korean Americans (ABKA)” and “Korean-born Korean Americans (KBKAs)” (Palmer 2007). Palmer’s (2007) study on the identity negotiations of six KBKA high school students found that KBKAs felt they were stereotyped and marginalized by their ABKA peers. The relationship between these two groups was filled with tension as each group perceived itself as the “elite” one in the relationship. KBKAs generally thought of their ABKA peers as “sell-outs and White wannabes” and ABKAs generally thought of KBKAs as “foreigners.” Both groups thought of each other as never being able to gain an “authentic” American identity.

The responses of my five Korean American participants, two of which were born in Korea but had come at a very early age (two and eight), reveal that they also perceive recent Korean immigrants “straight out of South Korea” as being different from themselves. However, perhaps because these participants are at a higher age and maturational state than the high school participants of Palmer’s (2007) study, they seem to demonstrate understanding and acceptance of these differences in their ability to become friends with their “different” peers. All of the

participants stated that they had many Korean immigrant friends, and that they were able to get along in spite of the cultural differences. However, while they did not display superior attitudes toward the other peer group, they seemed to feel that there was a limit to the intimacy of the friendship that they could build.

Palmer's (2007) study revealed that the two peer groups' perceptions of and interaction with one another affected their identity negotiations and language practices. ABKAs displayed feelings of shame and embarrassment about the Korean language and culture which paralleled their unfavorable attitudes toward and unwillingness to socialize with the KBKAs. This most likely reinforced the ABKAs HL loss. In light of this, my participants reveal a comparably much more accepting and favorable attitude toward the Korean culture and the Korean people in general. Perhaps this stance toward Korean people and their culture aided in the development of my participants' high Korean language proficiency. And conversely, their high proficiency may have resulted in the development of their deeper understanding and appreciation for the culture. In spite of being highly bilingual and so experiencing minimal barriers linguistically, it is evident that my Korean American participants have formed identities as Korean Americans who are a distinct group from other Koreans.

Mothers, however, seemed to not notice the distinct identity groups that their daughters are a part of in their daily social lives. They seemed to not perceive that their daughters face a salient cultural difference when they encounter Korean immigrant peers. This may be because they never see their daughters in the actual social setting among peer groups such as in the daughters' schools. Since four of the daughters indicated that they were able to socialize with their family members and grandparents with relative ease, mothers who only see these

interactions may assume that their children experience no difficulty. This explains why Mrs. Park thought her daughter Anna had many “FOB” friends who she got along with, while Anna made an assertive statement about how she was certain that they would “never be best friends.”

6.1.4.2. Marriage to a Korean spouse

Mothers all desired for their daughters to marry Korean spouses. Their reasons were twofold: they wanted their daughters to maintain the Korean identity and lineage, and they wanted to communicate and get along with their future sons-in-laws. They admitted the possibility that their daughters might meet a non-Korean spouse, but they strongly hoped against it and thought that it was more probable that they would marry Koreans.

Janet, Grace, and Anna thought that they would eventually marry Korean Americans. They rejected the possibility of marrying Koreans living in South Korea. Mindy said that she did not have a preference for ethnicity. Evelyn adamantly believed that she would not marry an ethnically Korean spouse, whether that person was from South Korea or was born and raised in the United States. However, she was determined to remain connected to the Korean community and to teach her children Korean even if her husband did not speak the language.

To mothers, the maintenance of the Korean identity seemed to be an important factor when thinking about their daughters’ future families. The question of whether the person was a Korean from Korea or a Korean born in America was irrelevant. For the daughters, their thoughts about their future spouses were more of a question of personal preference, communication, and comfort level rather than a matter of Korean identity maintenance.

6.1.4.3. Mothers' conceptions of Korean identity rooted in Korean history?

The mothers' strong identification with the Korean identity contains signs of nationalism. Nationalistic sentiments regarding the Korean identity, language, and culture may be attributed to events in Korean history. Choi (2003: 15) describes Koreans as a people who were historically "strongly rooted in their homeland;" few people left Korea before it was colonized by Japan in 1910. In 1945, the end of WWII and the termination of the Japanese occupation of Korea brought a long-yearned-for political, cultural, and linguistic liberation. Koreans were now free to teach their heritage and language in schools and public institutions⁹. Consequently, "Korean language education played the most important role in the post-war education policy that was geared to implant nationalism in the minds of young generations" (Kim 1981: 32). Furthermore, the accounts of Korean linguists who fought to maintain the Korean language during colonization received high national acclaim. In present-day Korea, a historical figure who is regarded as a great national hero is King Sejong of the Lee Dynasty; he created the Korean alphabet "Hangul" in 1446 with a group of linguists in order to encourage literacy of the masses. Therefore, the Korean people's cultural history has a particularly meaningful connection with the Korean language. Perhaps this unique history, and the socialization of Korean immigrant parents within the Korean culture and education system prior to immigration, affect their settlement patterns in the U.S., their present-day language ideologies, and their attitudes and practices regarding their children's HL (Kim 1981).

⁹ During the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945) Koreans were forced to speak Japanese in schools, adopt Japanese-style surnames, and discontinue the publishing of Korean newspapers and magazines.

6.2. Results Part 2: HL education and socialization

There are a total of six questions related with HL education and socialization which will be explored: (1) What were mothers' initial hopes and expectations for their children's HL proficiency? (2) What were the reasons behind their expectations and hopes? (3) What were the methods and practices parents used to teach and socialize their children in the HL? (4) What were the outcomes of parental efforts and are the parents and children satisfied? (5) Are there notable differences of proficiency among siblings? (6) What do parents and children think are the most important factors that help to maintain a HL in the second generation?

6.2.1. Parents' early expectations about children's HL

Parents' early expectations for their children's linguistic and cultural competence in Korean were extremely high. Mrs. Suh, Mrs. Kim, and Mrs. Hong were explicitly aware of their own expectations for their children's HL, and made early decisions and plans to socialize and educate their children in the Korean language and culture. "My expectations were that they really spoke Korean perfectly, wrote Korean letters perfectly, and also came to know Korean history," Mrs. Kim said. Mrs. Suh, Mrs. Kim, and Mrs. Hong sought out external educational resources and also invested in home practices right away. They believed that these efforts were necessary for their children to maintain their HL.

Compared to these three mothers who were determined to prevent HL loss from the beginning, Mrs. Park and Mrs. Cho were not as actively invested in their children's HL education from early on. Mrs. Park desired and expected that her children speak and communicate in Korean, but she did not have explicit plans about educating her children in Korean. She assumed that all her children would learn Korean because it was the only language

she and their father spoke. Before they grew up, she never considered the possibility that her children might not know how to speak Korean.

Mrs. Cho had a different perspective because she and her family did not initially expect or plan to stay in the U.S. when they first came. They expected to return to South Korea, where all the children had been born. Therefore, Mrs. Cho also did not think about the possibility of HL loss. However, once the family decided to stay in the U.S., she wanted her children to maintain Korean and started to think more deeply about different educational methods and strategies, especially as the children grew up and began to lose their HL skills.

Daughters confirmed that their parents had high expectations for their Korean language. Janet, Evelyn, Mindy, and Grace believed that their parents put a lot of effort into raising and educating them to know the Korean language, culture, and traditions. Anna believed that her parents expected her and her siblings to be able to communicate with family members and know basic Korean traditions such as bowing and showing respect to elders. However, unlike the other daughters who pointed out how their parents sent them to language schools or taught them Korean, Anna felt her parents were not as strict about Korean language education. She said her parents did not force her and her siblings to learn Korean, but raised them in the Korean language and culture simply because they were immigrants and Korean was the only language they knew. Anna's response correlates with the response of her mother, Mrs. Park, who was not as concerned about and determined to counter HL loss as much as the other parents.

6.2.2. Reasons for wanting their children to learn Korean

When asked about the reasons behind mothers' high expectations, and the motivation which fueled their education and socialization methods in Korean, mothers unanimously alluded

to the Korean identity. “Because she is a Korean person, she should know the Korean language” was the primary answer that mothers gave for wanting their children to know Korean. The Korean language was viewed as a vital element of the Korean identity which mothers unquestioningly assigned to their daughters. “Even though we are in America, we are Korean people and we must speak Korean well and write Korean well,” said Mrs. Kim. When speaking about her future grandchildren, she asserted once again, “Even if the child is raised in America, in the inside there is a Korean-ness. The blood is Korean, the child is Korean in the inside.” Mothers seemed to feel that the Korean identity, which they themselves were rooted in, was something that they had passed on to their children like a biological trait. Furthermore, a Korean identity came with the duty of being competent in the Korean language. Being a Korean person who could not speak Korean was considered a shameful thing.

Mrs. Suh also prized elements of the Korean culture that she wanted to pass on to her children along with the language. She said, “Because Mom and Dad are Korean, I wanted my children to learn the Korean culture... they are different from kids here. The tightly-knit [Korean] family. Here people are selfish. I wanted my kids to know how to respect elders and have the Korean warmth and compassion.” Other mothers also expressed a general sense of pride in Korean cultural values and customs. Mothers also mentioned some pragmatic reasons why their children should know their HL. These included the ability to communicate with family, the possibility of meeting Korean people in the future, and the advantage bilingualism could give their children in the job market.

Daughters had varying opinions about why their mothers wanted them to learn Korean. Grace replicated most of the mothers’ words when she said her parents wanted her to learn

Korean “because I’m Korean. They were like, even if you live in America we’re still Korean.” Grace admitted that her parents repeatedly instilled in her and her siblings the importance of maintaining the Korean identity, which entailed maintaining the language.

Other daughters alluded to other primary reasons. Janet said her parents’ high expectations for her Korean came from their desire to communicate with her, and also their wish for her to “have a different idea, to have a different perspective of everything.” However, when asked if her parents’ expectations for her to acquire the Korean culture were high as well, she replied that the expectations were “not high... they came to America because they wanted me to have that [different] lifestyle. Be more independent and not follow the crowd.” This contrasted with her mother, Mrs. Suh’s, statements about how she wanted her children to acquire Korean cultural customs, rather than the cultural customs of America, which she viewed as being “selfish”.

Evelyn and Mindy both said that their parents wanted them to learn Korean because it would be such a shameful thing for them not to. Evelyn said that her parents and grandparents did not “want to be embarrassed.” She mentioned how grandparents often liked to boast about their grandchildren who were highly proficient in Korean. Mindy said, “My dad is traditional, in the sense that ‘oh I can't have a daughter who doesn't speak Korean.’” Anna thought her parents taught her Korean primarily for the practical matter of communicating with her, given that they did not comfortably speak English.

The responses of mothers reveal that mothers automatically assume a strong connection between the Korean language, the Korean ethnicity, and the pride and responsibility that comes with being a Korean person. Although daughters seem to understand that their parents ascribe a

high value in the ability to speak Korean, whether they themselves have adopted the same beliefs is unclear. None of the daughters asserted that they would personally feel ashamed if they did not speak Korean, nor did they voice such strong opinions about the “duty” to speak Korean. It is unclear whether the daughters who mentioned that their parents would feel ashamed if they did not know Korean realized that knowing Korean is a cultural value that is important to their parents, or if they perceive it simply as the parents’ need to “save face” among other relatives.

6.2.3. Parents’ efforts, strategies and practices

Parents used a variety of strategies to educate and socialize their children in Korean. The mothers, Mrs. Suh, Mrs. Kim, and Mrs. Hong, who had been most determined to prevent their children’s HL attrition from early on, all made plans for formal Korean language education. Mrs. Suh sent her children to a Korean language school¹⁰ (six years for Janet) in which she herself volunteered. Mrs. Kim arranged for her daughters to receive private tutoring working with a Korean language program kit. At that time, Mrs. Kim was the owner of an after-school center that provided instruction in Korean as well as other academic subjects. Mrs. Hong said that Mr. Hong himself taught Mindy Korean letters at home using instructional books. At that time, both Mr. and Mrs. Hong also volunteered to teach Korean in a Korean ethnic church every Sunday. These mothers also mentioned informal ways they and their husbands tried to teach their children the Korean language and culture, which included using Korean daily in the home, reading Korean folktales and bedtime stories to them in Korean, and watching Korean television with them. They also mentioned that the parents’ membership in Korean social groups and ethnic

¹⁰ By “Korean language school” I refer to the community schools offering Korean instruction on Saturdays. These schools typically begin around nine in the morning and end around noon.

associations such as the Korean church provided a natural way to expose their children to the Korean community.

Mrs. Park replied that she initially did not plan to send her children to receive formal language instruction. She thought that it was sufficient for her and her husband to use the Korean language in speaking to their children. She also read them Korean storybooks when they were young, not with an intention to teach them Korean letters, but simply because those were stories she herself had grown up with as a child. When free Korean language lessons were offered at the church she was attending at the time, she sent her children there. However, as her youngest son became a teenager she realized that he had the lowest Korean proficiency among her children and that a communication barrier was forming between him and her. She then sent him to the Korean language school offered at the local high school, where he learned to read and write Korean letters. However, he only attended for a short while and did not improve much in his ability to communicate.

Mrs. Cho did not send her eldest daughter Grace to a Korean language school because Grace had already acquired the basics of writing and reading in Korea before coming to the U.S. at the age of 8. However, once she realized her family was staying in America, she sent her two younger sons to the language school housed at a local church for a short while, where both of them learned Korean letters. When her sons complained about attending the school, she eventually stopped sending them. However, she tried to speak often with her children at home, and had her children write difficult Korean letters on her hand whenever they encountered the words by chance. She also tried to watch Korean television shows with them, hoping that her

children would find them entertaining. Her husband taught them biblical stories in Korean as well.

The five daughters' responses about their mothers' strategies all matched their mothers' descriptions. The Suh, Kim, and Hong daughters recognized their parents' ambitious attitudes toward their HL education. Janet Suh for example said, "They sent me to Korean school religiously for six years." Evelyn Kim also mentioned the effectiveness of the Korean language program kit she had used with her private tutor. Mindy said her father "tried to drill [Korean] into me."

Anna Park's assessment that her mother did not "force" her to learn Korean, and did not send her to Korean language schools beyond the more casual lessons offered at church corresponded with Mrs. Park's response. Anna also mentioned how the case was different for her brother, whose low proficiency caused their parents to send him to Korean school. Grace's response also reflected her mothers' sentiments about not being deeply concerned about Grace's Korean, but being more worried about her younger sons' Korean. She said, "I think for me my parents didn't have to try as hard... I think [they had to try hard] more for my brothers because they came when they were younger and my parents emphasized that they learn the culture and language. They sent them to Korean school... [When] my parents knew Korean school wouldn't work they encouraged them to watch Korean dramas... My dad would try to make them read the Bible in Korean."

In all of these households, the Korean language school or other form of Korean instruction appears to have been a readily available community resource. The parents also showed high involvement in the Korean community. As predicted, the Los Angeles setting

provided these households with a rich variety of resources and opportunities to expose their children to the Korean language and culture. Within the home, Korean storybooks and Korean television were available as tools. All parents regularly spoke Korean in the home, and tried to maintain strong communication and bonds among family members. Three households incorporated formal Korean instruction from early on, whereas the other two households resorted to formal instruction when they realized the severity of HL attrition in the younger children.

6.2.4. Parents' satisfaction levels and the outcome of their efforts

In regard to their daughters, mothers were generally satisfied with their Korean language and cultural competence. Mrs. Suh, Kim, and Hong especially showed contentment about their daughters' HL and believed that their early efforts to educate them had been successful. Mrs. Suh believed that her daughter had fulfilled her highest expectations. Mrs. Kim was also extremely pleased with Evelyn's Korean ability. However, she expressed a tinge of regret about not being able to help her acquire a language teaching license. She said, "Evelyn is great, but there's one more thing I wanted to do for her... there's a Korean language test that government officials take. With the certificate you get when you pass, you are licensed to teach Korean anywhere in the world. But this is me being selfish." Mrs. Cho believed that her daughter Grace was proficient enough, but also expressed some regrets: "It's not as much as my expectations. That much is enough, I think, but it's not as much as I had hoped."

Although all mothers stated that their expectations were high and that they wanted their children to speak Korean near-perfectly, there is a distinction between parents who had realistic goals as opposed to parents who had idealized goals. The Suhs, Kims, Hongs, and Parks seem to have never expected their children to truly emanate the abilities of monolingual Korean speakers

from South Korea. Given their daughters' current Korean abilities, which were rated mostly above 80%, the parents were highly satisfied. When asked if she had any regrets, Mrs. Suh replied with a smile, "No, I think I've tried my best." On the other hand, Mrs. Cho's expectations seem to have been more idealistic in wanting her daughter to exhibit abilities even beyond her current ones (Mrs. Cho had given Grace an 80% in listening, 80% in speaking, 100% in reading, and 90% in writing). This may be related to the fact that the Cho family came to America with plans to return to Korea. If they had returned to Korea as planned, Mrs. Cho's expectations would not be deemed "idealistic." When asked if she had regrets, she replied that despite all her efforts, she might have missed the "right timing." By "right timing" she meant the time during which her children were still young: "Even if learning two languages might have been hard at first for them, I should still have taught them but I missed the right timing."

Daughters were all also generally content with their current levels in Korean. They all stated that there was room for improvement, but that for now their current abilities were sufficient. When asked if she thought her parents' efforts had been successful, Janet replied, "Yeah, they always tell me." Grace said, "I'm not as good as my parents but I'm above average." Similarly, Mindy said, "I don't feel like I'm super great at Korean but I know I don't completely suck... I'm content where I am." Anna said, "I wish I was better but [I'm] satisfied... I mean, it's not like I have to talk in Korean all the time. At school I never speak Korean."

One of the areas in which the daughters saw room for improvement was in writing. When asked if she would do anything different as a parent, Evelyn said she would start teaching writing from early on. Mindy also said, "I wish I can write better." Another area that they identified was difficult Korean vocabulary. Mindy said "Sometimes I don't understand... certain words. I wish

I knew Chinese characters because everything is based in that.” Grace also said, “There are some words that I can’t understand. Like when I read the Bible, English is sometimes more convenient.” Anna stated that she wanted to have a better Korean accent when she spoke Korean. Janet, on the other hand, mentioned that she felt her bilingualism might be interfering with her English abilities. She not only felt that she had a Korean accent when speaking English, but that she was deficient in a lot of English vocabulary compared to some of her other monolingual friends: “I feel like I’m kind of in between...” When asked if she would do anything different as a parent, she said that she would try to teach English to her children first, and then teach them Korean by sending them to Korean school. However, when asked if she would send them to Korean school as “religiously” as her mom sent her, she said that she would most likely not be as strict.

6.2.5. Sibling differences

In the case of their younger children, mothers’ experiences with the HL were different. In each household, the eldest child had the highest level of proficiency while the youngest child had the lowest. This corresponds with the pattern seen in most immigrant households, in which birth order seems to be an important factor in determining proficiency levels (Shin 2002). When mothers were asked why they thought their younger children’s Korean language and cultural competence was not as high as their older sisters, mothers had several answers.

6.2.5.1. Mothers’ younger children and why their Korean is not as good

In the case of Mrs. Suh, she explained that Janet’s younger brother Jin did not attend the Korean language school as long as Janet had. She also attributed the difference to Janet and Jin’s personal affinities and motivation. She thought Janet was more interested in the Korean culture

and willing to learn whereas Jin had no interest and grudgingly attended the Korean language school. However, she stressed that she still had hope that Jin's Korean competence would improve once he met more Korean friends in college.

Mrs. Kim also mentioned how the Korean language learning program kit she had used for Evelyn was temporarily unavailable when her other daughter, Emma, was young. However, she attributed Emma's comparably low Korean competence to Emma's personality. Compared the Evelyn, who had been a timid, obedient and submissive daughter, Emma was outgoing and strong-willed. While Evelyn followed her mother's lead in educational matters, Emma was less willing to comply. However, like Mrs. Suh's hopes for Jin, Mrs. Kim's hopes for Emma's improvement in Korean were not quelled. "I still expect and hope she will learn Korean and become perfect like Evelyn. Not only that, I am still teaching her Korean, having her use Korean at home, reading stories to her..."

Although Jin and Emma's Korean language and cultural competence were not as high as that of their older siblings, they were still moderately bilingual, and capable of carrying on conversations with their parents. When asked if she felt a communication barrier with Jin, Mrs. Suh replied that she did not because regardless of the language, both of them shared a strong familial bond. Mrs. Kim also stressed that Emma was greatly improving in her Korean and although English was easier for her, she was spending a lot of time with Mrs. Kim reading Korean books together. Mrs. Suh and Mrs. Kim therefore had reasons for their hopes; they both saw great potential in their second children's willingness to try to communicate in Korean and comply to Korean instruction, despite their preferences for English.

Mrs. Hong and Mrs. Park, on the other hand, were concerned about their sons Christian and Eric, respectively, whose Korean language competence was so low that they felt a communication barrier with them. Mrs. Hong admitted that when Christian was young, Mr. Hong was too busy with work to teach Korean to him as he had done for Mindy. When Christian's Korean ability was noticeably worsening, she tried sending him to Korean school to no success. "But what's the use of sending him to Korean school when he comes home learning nothing," said Mrs. Hong. Mrs. Park, who had not employed assertive methods in teaching her first two children Korean, did the same for her youngest child until it became clear that his Korean language ability was far lower than that of her other two children. "When he was younger, I didn't know it would be so serious," Mrs. Park said, referring to Eric's Korean. "Now he can read and write because of Korean school, but he can't understand anything," Mrs. Park said. Both Mrs. Hong and Mrs. Park did not think it was probable that their sons would drastically improve in their Korean language and culture.

When asked why she thought Christian's Korean was low, Mrs. Hong attributed it to gender differences. "It's the same way in other homes. The girl is always better at Korean than the boy," Mrs. Hong said. She further added that while Mindy was interested in the Korean culture, Korean pop media, and soap operas, Christian had absolutely no interest. Mrs. Park also agreed with this view when she said that compared to her daughters, Eric had no interest at all in the Korean culture and media. She also added that while Eric socialized mostly with Korean American friends, none of them were highly competent in Korean.

In Mrs. Cho's case, her youngest son James had the lowest Korean proficiency of her three children. She attributed this largely to the different environments that her children had been

exposed to at a young age. Because Grace came to America when she was eight, she had been socialized solely in Korean for the first few years of her life. Her second child, Bruce, had also attended preschool in Korean and had learned the basic Korean letters. However, James was only four years old when the family moved to America, and so James received all of his formal schooling in English. When asked if she felt communication barriers with her children, Mrs. Cho said that the barrier was strongest with James. Although they were able to communicate, she was unable to talk to James about deep emotional issues. While Bruce was also not as competent as Grace, he was willing to learn and was actively trying to improve his Korean. However, Mrs. Cho felt that James had no motivation to learn Korean, especially because all of his friends, even his Korean American friends, spoke English.

6.2.5.2. Oldest child's role as an interpreter

A consequence of siblings' HL proficiency differences was that the first children often assumed the role of the interpreter in the family, mediating between their English-dominant younger siblings and their Korean-dominant parents. The family dynamics were such that the parents would always speak in Korean to their children, the first children would respond back in Korean, and the younger children would attempt to respond with their limited Korean and often resort to English. When parents and the younger children were unable to understand one another, the first children would interpret.

When asked about possible reasons for their siblings' lower Korean language proficiencies, all of the daughters believed the primary reason to be the presence of an older sibling who spoke English. While they themselves had no one in the home to speak to in English while they were young, their younger siblings were able to speak in English to them. All

daughters had had experiences translating and interpreting for their siblings during family dinners and activities. They also believed that they had a comparably more positive view about the Korean culture, and mentioned watching Korean television as an enjoyable pastime. In contrast, their younger siblings did not watch Korean television. Daughters felt sorry that their younger siblings often were left out during family conversations and experienced a barrier with their parents, often not understanding their Korean viewpoints.

6.2.5.3. Summary

There seems to be a definite “birth order effect” in HL households; younger children of Korean households tend to have lower proficiencies in their HL than older children. In analyzing why the birth order effect might be so salient, it is clear that the environments that each child grew up in was different. The differences can be categorized into educational factors, cultural factors, social factors, and family dynamics.

In the case of HL education, parents’ responses revealed that educational factors were often unequal. Even in the case of Mrs. Kim and Mrs. Suh, who were just as ambitious for their younger children’s Korean language education as they had been for their first born, life circumstances prevented them from executing the same exact methods in the same course of time. In the case of Mrs. Hong, who had been ambitious for her first child’s Korean language education at home, her efforts to educate Christian, nine years younger than Mindy, had been more lax. Moreover, Mr. Hong, who had been mainly in charge of Korean language instruction for Mindy, was busy with work and not available to teach Christian when he was born. Unlike Mindy, Christian attended Korean language school for a short while when he was older, but he never learned much Korean there and eventually stopped attending. Mrs. Park, who had been lax

about both her daughters' Korean language education assuming that the use of Korean at home would be sufficient, was surprised to see her youngest child's startlingly drastic attrition in Korean speaking proficiency and his lack of acquisition in other language areas. Like Mrs. Hong, she attempted to send him to Korean school when he was older. He gained literacy skills in Korean, but not much more. Finally in the Cho household, the submersion in the English environment and American schooling came at different stages of life for the three Cho children.

All parents mention that the older children had natural affinities and positive viewpoints toward the Korean culture in general, which led to high Korean language competence. At the same time, the children with higher language competence were more inclined to learn about the culture and engage in it. They attributed the younger children's low language competence to their indifference or negative attitudes toward the Korean culture. They also mentioned that because of their low language proficiency, they were unable to understand, inclined to become frustrated, and found it tedious to learn when they could easily resort to English. It is evident that language and cultural competence are highly interlinked.

Finally, parents mentioned several social factors that shaped their children's HL. They mentioned personality differences, gender differences, and their children's close social circles. The first children were generally more submissive to parents' methods to teach the HL. In these five households the first children also all happened to be females. Mothers claimed that in other Korean households, they observed female children to have better HL abilities than their male siblings regardless of birth order. Finally, mothers observed that while their first children used Korean in their social circles among their friends and peers, their younger children seldom or almost never used Korean among their peers. Although the younger children had Korean

American friends, these friends, who happened to be males, were equally not proficient in the Korean language.

Lastly, as observed by the daughters, the birth order effect seems to be most attributable to the presence of a sibling who spoke English. This is because the presence of an English speaking person dramatically changed the environment of the household and the initial HL experience of the younger children. This factor seemed to be an obvious and huge difference to the daughters, who almost daily assumed the role of bridging the gap between the parents and their siblings. To the parents, this factor was not more consequential than the other possible factors mentioned above.

6.2.6. The most important factors and recommendations for future parents

All mothers stressed the importance of early and consistent parental efforts to teach the HL to their children. “There must be a lot of effort... it’s not easy,” Mrs. Suh said. “If there is no effort on the part of the parents, the children will never maintain their HL,” said Mrs. Kim, “If the parents themselves don’t have time, then they should at least stick a Korean teacher to their children.” Daughters also agreed that parental efforts were crucial. The most important factor in promoting a Korean American child’s HL was “who you're surrounded by,” Mindy said. “It is your parents,” she continued, “They are the most influential. Start from a young age [with parents] speaking to you and they retain it.” The importance of starting young was repeatedly emphasized by both mothers and daughters. “I think [Korean] should be around them since the beginning of time,” said Evelyn, reasoning that English would be acquired eventually and inevitably because they were living in America.

Moreover, mothers thought children should not only be taught Korean, but they should be explicitly told why it was important to learn Korean. Mothers believed that having a Korean identity entailed the responsibility to know the Korean language. “Telling them they are Korean when they are young, and that they must know Korean as a Korean person is important” said Mrs. Kim.

They also mentioned the importance of speaking Korean at the home with children and encouraging family activities. Parental strategies involved making Korean the primary, if not only, language spoken in the home. Parents favored reading Korean stories to their children from a young age and exposing them to the Korean culture through educational materials as well as entertaining television shows. They thought watching entertaining Korean television was an effective method of bonding with children while exposing them to the Korean language and culture. Daughters also asserted the importance of speaking Korean at home “because you can't control language outside of the home. If you hold conversations with your child, the child will learn. Compared to second gens who speak English at home... they will not learn. When you speak Korean and actually sit down and have good talks in Korean...”

Outside the home context, parents recommended sending children to Korean language schools because it was difficult to formally teach Korean in the home. Mrs. Park, who had not sent her children to formal Korean language schools from early on, mentioned that her daughters often asked her why she had not sent them. She said she realized that sending them to get free lessons after church was not sufficient. Mrs. Cho also mentioned that she regretted not being more proactive about her younger children's Korean language education when they were younger. “Even if they said they did not want to go, I should have been more assertive,” she said.

They also recommended providing opportunities for children to socialize with other Korean-speaking people. The Korean ethnic church was mentioned as a valuable resource where children could not only grow spiritually, but also gain exposure to the Korean culture.

Parents and daughters both expressed the need for personal interest in and motivation to learn the Korean culture and language. Parental efforts alone were not enough to achieve high bilingualism. Parents observed that there was not much they could do for their children who felt no need to use Korean in their daily lives, had no interest in or desire to learn about the Korean culture, and were not motivated to learn Korean. They realized that the importance of the Korean identity could not be easily transferred to their children, especially when they were competing with the American culture and identity that their children seemed to embrace. “He must realize for himself that as a Korean person if he doesn’t speak Korean it’s a shameful thing,” Mrs. Park said as she referred to her youngest son. Grace said, “It’s your own thing. No matter how much your parents push you if you don’t see the need then you can’t learn it.”

Highly bilingual daughters found that the Korean language had immediate and direct relevance to their lives because of their involvement in the culture and their daily interaction with Korean people in the Korean language. Janet remarked that “having friends that speak Korean, just talking every day, [and] really loving the culture” were most important for HL maintenance. Mindy also replied, “You have to be interested in the culture. Korean shows, Kpop... that keeps it relevant. Looking at the newspaper and entertainment. If you don’t have interest you don’t pursue it.”

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The review of literature on Korean as a heritage language revealed that young parents of elementary and preschool age children had positive views toward the HL, and optimistic, high expectations for their children's HL and cultural competence. This study of middle-age Korean immigrant mothers with grown-up children as well as younger children allows a speculative view of what the future years might entail for these Korean immigrant households. In this study, mothers revealed their initial expectations for their children's HL and cultural competence, which were also positive, optimistic, and high. Although this study was not longitudinal in nature, the reflections of these mothers about their experiences portrayed how life circumstances and the circumstances and reactions of their children were factors that influenced and shaped mothers' efforts, strategies, and current views. This study has filled a gap in research by providing a closer look into five HL households and how language shift may be occurring, changing, and being lived out in the lives of both the parent and children generation.

This study revealed that mother's high motivation to transmit the HL and culture to the next generation resulted in the successful rearing of highly bilingual eldest female children. Although none of the daughters claimed to have language and cultural competence that equaled that of the parent generation or of Korean monolinguals, mothers and their eldest children were generally satisfied and content with the level of the eldest children's HL attainment. The comparisons of mothers and daughters' current evaluations of their cultural competence revealed that a cultural and generational variation exists to some extent between the two groups. The variation was most salient in mothers' and daughters' conception of the ethnic Korean identity.

While parents view their daughters to be fully Korean, they overlook the fact that a part of the daughters' identities is rooted in an American identity. Moreover, parents espouse a nationalistic view related with the Korean identity, regarding it as an ethical duty for a Korean person to know and speak the national Korean language. The daughters, who clearly value their Korean identity and culture, nevertheless differentiate themselves from peers they perceive as completely South Korean. Even when discussing future potential spouses, they assert that they would most likely marry a Korean person who can speak English and share their American experiences rather than a monolingual Korean person with a cultural experience limited to the South Korean culture. Their bilingualism and their socialization in the American culture doubtlessly add an American component to their identities and world views.

The five mothers revealed that their efforts included both within-home and outside-of-home practices of Korean socialization and education. Because they had high expectations, these parents tried extremely hard to maintain the HL, utilizing the available resources in the community. Parents' efforts and strategies can be attributed further success when considering the fact that all daughters were not only bilingual but enthusiastic and determined to also teach their children the Korean language and culture in the future. This finding implies that perhaps this second generation may also be successful in HL maintenance, going against the common three-generational shift seen across HL groups. However, just as life circumstances and children's agency and self-will influenced their parents' efforts and strategies, daughters will most likely also face obstacles and challenges in maintaining the HL. The challenges of HL maintenance will most likely be heightened in the second-to-third generation because of the fact that the second generation, although highly bilingual, still has less competence than the first. Also, their

abilities to communicate in English and the fact that English is their dominant language will most likely highly influence their home practices and the socialization of the third generation.

The hypothesis that despite their enthusiasm the second generation will perhaps be less successful in HL maintenance is made stronger by the fact that HL attrition was seen to be greater with the younger children in these households. Even when parental goals and efforts were the same, the younger children of these households were not as bilingual as the first children, often to the parents' regrets. This can most likely be attributed to the presence of an English-speaking mediator, the oldest sibling, in the household.

Even so, the second generation may still show surprising success in transmitting the HL to the next generation considering that they may better understand the culture, perspective, and identity of the next American-born generation. Also having been taught the Korean language and culture themselves, the daughters may have insight into the most effective methods and motivational strategies in teaching a HL. Mothers and daughters agreed that parental efforts were the most important determiners of children's HL competence. Moreover, they stressed that early input, education, and socialization were crucial in successful HL maintenance. Compared to the adult HL learners of previous studies who mentioned that their parents never bothered to teach them Korean as youngsters, these daughters indeed show high levels of bilingualism that can be traced back to their formative years. Another important factor in HL maintenance seems to be personal investment in the culture. Although it has long been known that language and culture are inseparable, and knowledge of one of them naturally contributes to the knowledge of the other, this study reveals how important it is for a HL learner to enjoy, appreciate, and partake in the culture in order to successfully acquire the language.

Overall, we hope that this study contributes to the studies on HL households, HL transmission, and HL maintenance. Moreover, we hope that this study adds qualitative insight into the current literature about East Asian HL groups and intergenerational relationships. We postulate that in intergenerational or parent-child relationships, some things seem to be universal across languages and cultures. Past and present, parents seem to be invested in their children's futures, having high hopes and motivation to raise their children in the way that they deem best. Children are highly influenced by early parental efforts, but still come to have perspectives about many things that differ from their parents. With the increase in transmigration, the once strange phenomenon of a language and cultural barrier existing between parents and children has now become common. We hope that future studies on HL transmission and maintenance will help bring down these linguistic and cultural barriers.

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