

Challenges of maintaining the mother's language: Southeast Asian marriage-migrants and their mixed-heritage children in South Korea

Mi Yung Park

University of Auckland

Introduction

As the popularity of interregional migration across East Asia has grown, the number of international marriages in South Korea (hereafter Korea) has also increased rapidly, especially in rural areas. The massive influx of marriage-migrants into Korea has led to a rapid rise in the number of Korean children of mixed heritage. According to the Korean Educational Statistics Service (2016), the number of mixed-heritage children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools rose from 46,954 in 2012 to 82,536 in 2015, an increase of approximately 76%. Although these children are born and raised in Korea as Koreans and speak Korean as their first language, they are often labeled as *damunhwa* (“multicultural”) children on account of their ethnicity. Marriage-migrant women and their children face a number of challenges. The women’s lack of Korean language skills is seen as limiting their children’s academic development and causing conflict in the household (Lee, Kim, and Lee 2015). In addition to linguistic and cultural barriers, they experience prejudice based on perceptions and beliefs related to darker skin, lower socioeconomic status, and the nature of their migration (Shin 2012).

As marriage-migrants continue to settle and start families in Korea, questions arise as to whether and to what extent their native languages and cultural heritages will be preserved and promoted in the host country. While bilingualism and heritage language (HL) development have been extensively studied in the North American context, little attention has been paid to the language experiences of mixed families in Asian countries. Yet it is important to study the specific challenges faced by mixed families in preserving and developing HLs in Korea, and in a purely Asian context where both the minority and majority languages are Asian languages. The minority-language-speaking mothers in this study are the only outsiders in their Korean families. Hence, they typically face both societal and familial pressure to assimilate, which includes adopting Korean as their primary means of communication. Furthermore, the HLs (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, Spanish) in most of the previous studies (Guardado 2010; Lao 2004; Mejía 2016; Mu and Dooley 2015; Noro 2009; Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe 2009) have recognized value in the mainstream societies, and are taught in the schools and universities. In contrast, in Korea, the Southeast Asian languages of the migrant women in this study (i.e., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Tagalog) are not only minority but low-status languages (Kim and Kim 2015). Other limitations such as lack of HL schools and communities add further challenges to the transmission of the HLs.

Given this context, this study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) What are the patterns of language use among Southeast Asian marriage-migrant mothers living in rural Korea with their children? Do these mothers make efforts to pass the HL on to their children?
- (2) What obstacles, if any, do these mothers encounter when teaching their children their HL?

The aim of this study is to improve our understanding of the factors that facilitate or hinder HL transmission and development in the context of mixed families in Korea.

Family language policy, heritage language learning, and identity

This study investigates HL use and shift among marriage-migrant families in Korea through the perspective of Family Language Policy (FLP), a line of inquiry that aims to understand “how languages are managed, learned and negotiated within the families” (King, Fogle and Logan-Terry 2008, 907). FLP is defined as “explicit and overt planning in relation to language use and language choice within the home among family members” (King, Fogle and Logan-Terry 2008, 907). Much FLP research has examined the maintenance of family languages in HL and minority language contexts where parents and grandparents act as linguistic and cultural resources. It has demonstrated the significant impact parents’ attitudes have on intergenerational minority language transmission. For example, studies have observed immigrant parents in English-dominant countries who view bilingual development in Chinese and English as beneficial career-wise (Lao 2004), who value Korean language education because it encourages intergenerational interaction (Park and Sarkar 2007), and who designate Chinese as the home language (Mu and Dooley 2015) or strive to immerse their children in Chinese-speaking communities (Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe 2009). In each of these studies, the parents’ positive attitudes had positive impacts on the children’s HL fluency.

A desire to facilitate positive identity formation (Lao 2004) or reinforce a specific cultural identity (Park and Sarkar 2007) can also be a motivating factor. The close relationship between HL proficiency and identity is apparent in several studies (Guardado 2010; Kang and Kim 2012; Lee 2002; You 2005). Lee (2002) and You (2005) found that HL proficiency helped the Korean-American children in their studies develop a positive ethnic identity and sense of belonging. Shin (2010) reported similar findings with mixed-heritage children. In the case of mixed-heritage children, supporting their knowledge of two languages and cultures can facilitate their construction of a bicultural identity (Kim and Kim 2015). Depriving them of either language does “injustice to their sense of identity because it is through language that one constructs an identity defined in collective terms of a shared culture” (Lee and Suarez 2009, 142). This echoes Pao, Wong, and Teuben-Rowe’s (1997) finding that bilingual mixed-heritage Asian-American adults received more support for the development of their cultural identity than did their English-monolingual counterparts, who more often felt isolated from both the minority ethnic and mainstream English-speaking communities.

The majority of studies focus on “full heritage individuals whose parents come from the same ethnic/racial background” (Shin 2010, 205). Little research exists concerning HL use and identity among mixed-heritage individuals, particularly outside Western countries. The mixed-heritage aspect adds an additional wrinkle, in that any power dynamics at play between the HL and the language of the mainstream society likely have echoes within the family as well. Through interviews with mixed-

heritage adults in the United States, Shin (2010) concluded that the native languages of mixed couples usually occupy different positions in a language hierarchy and that both parents' efforts to promote the use of the HL were key to successful HL maintenance. Noro (2009) made a similar claim based on the finding that, for the children of Canadian fathers and Japanese mothers, the fathers' use of Japanese was key to the children's successful HL maintenance. Even if the language is not used by both parents, acceptance and support can still yield positive effects. In her study of educated Hispanic mothers in Australia, Mejía (2016) found that most of the mothers were determined to speak only Spanish with their children at home and in public. She interpreted the acceptance of Spanish by the women's Australian husbands and its relatively high status in the larger host society as major factors that positively affected the children's use of Spanish.

Mixed-heritage children in Korea

Although most studies focus on North America, the experiences of mixed-heritage children in Korea have begun to be documented as linguistic and cultural diversity has increased. In these studies, parents' failure to transmit their HL to their children has been attributed to ambivalent feelings about HL education or fear of racial discrimination (Lee et al. 2015), isolation from the community and lack of interest from the children (Kim and Kim 2015), or concerns over the children's Korean language development (Han and Price 2015). Further, Han and Price (2015) found that mothers who did teach their children their HL did so not to maintain the culture but to improve the children's academic or employment prospects.

Several scholars (Cho 2006; Jo, Seo, and Kwon 2008; Lee, Kang, and Kim 2008) have investigated the gap in academic achievement between native Korean students and mixed-heritage students, who experience significantly higher dropout rates. In an effort to address these issues, some elementary schools provide after-school programs to integrate mixed-heritage children into Korean education. These have been criticized as "assimilationist projects" (Shin 2012) that make other Korean students see these children as deficient and different (Kang 2010).

In addition, mixed-heritage children are "frequently subjected to marginalization in their respective heritage communities because of their dual ancestry and cultural experiences" (Shin 2010, 206). Physical appearance can compound their marginalized status. In Kim and Kim's (2015) study, for example, students with a Western appearance were welcomed by Korean classmates, whereas students with darker skin were "othered" and sometimes felt excluded.

The study

This study draws on fieldwork conducted in a rural city of North Gyeongsang Province, Korea in 2015–2017. North Gyeongsang Province was chosen as the fieldwork site because of the researcher's familiarity with the local situation and resources. The data presented here come from nine participants from Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Philippines who had preschool- or school-age children. They were recruited through acquaintances and printed advertisements. None of their husbands or in-laws understood or spoke the participants' HL. Six of the participants (Hyesoo, Kyung, Sooah, Yumi, Ella, Mary) lived with their in-laws at the time of the fieldwork. The others reported that their in-laws visited their homes regularly and exercised decision-making power in their families.

The participants had lived in Korea for between four and sixteen years. Most of the participants were from low socioeconomic backgrounds and had only a high school education, except for three women who had finished two- or three-year college programs. The nine participants had between them a total of sixteen children (ten girls and six boys) ranging in age from one to sixteen years. All of the children were born and raised in Korea, although Kyung's daughter had lived in Vietnam between the ages of one and four. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the participants' basic profiles and their children's backgrounds. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1. Participant background

Name	Age	Home country	Time in Korea	Highest degree held	Job	Korean language ability ¹
Hyesoo	32	Cambodia	9 years	High school	Interpreter	Level 4
Jeong	36	Vietnam	13 years	High school	Salesperson	Level 3
Kyung	36	Vietnam	14 years	3-year college (in Vietnam)	Farmer	Level 4
Sooah	36	Vietnam	14 years	2-year college (in Korea)	Housewife	N/A
Yumi	29	Vietnam	9 years	High school	Interpreter	Level 4
Dahee	33	Philippines	8 years	High school	Housewife	Level 3
Ella	41	Philippines	4 years	High school	Housewife	N/A
Mary	32	Philippines	4 years	High school	Housewife Part-time job	N/A
Megan	40	Philippines	16 years	3-year college (in the Philippines)	English teacher	Level 3

Table 2. Participants' children's backgrounds

	Mother's languages	Age	Birthplace	Proficiency in HL ²	Parents' income ³
Hyesoo's children	Cambodian, Korean	6 & 8	Korea	Beginner	Significantly below average
Jeong's child	Vietnamese, Korean	11	Korea	Beginner	Above average

¹ The Korean language ability of the participants is based on their results on the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK), an examination administered by Korea's National Institute for International Education. TOPIK levels 3 and 4 are intermediate. Sooah, Ella, and Mary had not taken the test. However, Sooah's proficiency was probably fairly advanced, as she had graduated from a two-year college in Korea. Ella's and Mary's self-rated proficiency was beginning-level.

² These are the participants' ratings of their children's HL proficiency.

³ Estimated household income relative to the average monthly household income of a Korean family (about 4.445 million won or approximately 4124 USD; Statistics Korea 2017).

Kyung's children	Vietnamese, Korean	11 & 13	Korea	Beginner	Below average
Sooah's children	Vietnamese, Korean	7, 11, & 13	Korea	Beginner	Significantly below average
Yumi's children	Vietnamese, Korean	6 & 8	Korea	Beginner	Significantly below average
Dahee's child	Cebuano (H), ⁴ Tagalog, English, Korean	7	Korea	Beginner	Above average
Ella's children	Tagalog (H), English, Korean	1, 4	Korea	Beginner	Significantly below average
Mary's child	Bisaya (H), Tagalog, English, Korean	4	Korea	Beginner	Below average
Megan's children	Ilokano (H), Tagalog, English, Korean	14, 16	Korea	Beginner	Above average

The primary research method used in this study was semi-structured interviewing, which solicited detailed narratives regarding the migrant mothers' language use and efforts to facilitate HL maintenance and development among their children. The audio-recorded interviews were conducted in Korean, in which all of the participants, except Ella and Mary, were able to fully express their ideas and opinions. Ella and Mary often switched from Korean to English to elaborate their responses. The interview questions covered the following topics: the participants' native and Korean language use, perceptions of each language, relations with their family members in Korea and their ethnic homelands, views on their children's identity and HL development, and challenges surrounding language use and childrearing. Each interview was subsequently transcribed in Korean.

I used an inductive thematic approach (Braun and Clarke 2006) to analyze the oral narratives. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "[A] theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (82). The first step of the data analysis process involved transcribing the data and noting recurring patterns and ideas to guide data analysis. The second step involved creating initial codes as they emerged from the data and grouping the different codes into themes. The themes were constantly reviewed as the analysis found links between them and brought forward comparisons and contrasts across participants. Finally, the findings were checked with the participants to confirm an accurate representation of the participants' experiences and viewpoints.

⁴ (H) marks the language used at home with family members. Most of the Filipina participants were fluent speakers of Tagalog and another Filipino language. They also learned English at school, but reported that they lacked confidence in speaking English and did not consider it one of their HLs.

Overview of mothers' and children's HL use

The participants generally spoke Korean, the societal language, to their children most of the time. Although the majority of the mothers saw the HL as something valuable that they could pass on to their children, they did not necessarily promote its use even in their own family space. There was thus a discrepancy between their stated beliefs and reported language practices. For instance, Dahee said, "It's important to learn many languages. I want my daughter to be multilingual like me. I want her to learn my own language, Cebuano, Tagalog, and English." However, she reported speaking Korean with her child 90–95% of the time, using English a mere 5–10% of the time and not using Cebuano and Tagalog at all. When the mother is the only source of the HL, providing an HL-only environment is generally impossible because the mothers have to accommodate the fathers and in-laws who do not speak or understand the HL. Additionally, the mothers' Korean family members did not support them in speaking the HL to the children, making HL transmission even more challenging.

All of the mothers, however, reported that they used a mixture of the HL and Korean with their children before they entered kindergarten, rather than either the HL or Korean exclusively. However, they gradually moved toward using more Korean after the children entered kindergarten at three years of age. The women from the Philippines sometimes used English at home along with the HL and Korean in order to help their children become proficient in English. The mothers were encouraged by their Korean family members and their children's teachers to use Korean at home in order to foster the children's Korean language development. For example, Ella, who used to speak to her children in Tagalog and English, was advised by a kindergarten teacher to mainly use Korean because she was having difficulty in conversing with other children in Korean. Since then, Ella had adopted Korean as the main medium of communication at home and used Tagalog and English only occasionally.

According to the participants, their children were generally uninterested in or negative about the use of the HL. Mixed-heritage children in Korea are faced with immense pressure to assimilate and conform to the dominant language and culture. The majority of the mothers also thought that learning Korean was the most important task for their children's academic and professional success. They believed that learning the HL could cause confusion and hinder the children's overall development in Korean. The mothers' self-imposition of Korean over their HL may thus reinforce the implicit societal message for their children. Jeong stated that his son was not interested in learning Vietnamese because he grew up hearing negative comments about Vietnam. Sooah indicated that the negative attitudes of her older children toward the HL influenced her youngest child's perception of the language. According to Sooah, her daughters did not want to learn Vietnamese due to the negative images of Vietnam as a "poor" and "underdeveloped" country.

The participants noted that as a result of their children's limited exposure to the HL and unwillingness to learn it, the children never grew fluent in the HL. All the children were clearly dominant in Korean and had only basic oral and written communication skills in the HL. The children's receptive skills were generally better than their productive skills. They seemed to be able to engage in conversations only about basic survival needs. Hyesoo observed, "My children's Cambodian proficiency is roughly one third of their Korean proficiency" and "[they] can talk about food, body parts, family members, and clothes." Megan reported, "Conversations in Ilokano tend to be brief because of the children's low proficiency in the language." HL retention was generally higher among Kyung's and Jeong's children, who had

regularly taken extended trips to the mother's home country. These children could hold conversations on some topics beyond immediate survival needs, including biographical information and daily experiences. Those mothers who did not use much of the HL with their children noted that their children had very limited proficiency in their HL, making it very difficult for them to communicate with their grandparents overseas.

Active efforts by the mothers to transmit the HLs

Four mothers (Hyesoo, Jeong, Kyung, and Mary) expressed a commitment to teaching the HL to their children. These mothers hoped that their children would embrace and learn the HL. The other five mothers hardly used the HL with their children; for the most part, they neither expected their children to learn the HL for reasons of identity development nor saw it as useful in their children's future. Mary and Hyesoo particularly stressed the crucial role of the HL for communication with the extended family. For example, the HL was, for Mary, "very important because [if my daughter can speak Bisaya] she will communicate easily with people around her, her family and relatives." These two mothers reported that their in-laws and husbands held relatively positive views of bilingualism and allowed them to teach the HL. In contrast, Jeong and Kyung adopted positive attitudes toward the HL and started teaching it to their children only after the children entered elementary school. All four mothers hoped their children would gain strong speaking skills to ensure effective communication with other HL speakers. Because they planned to continue living in Korea with their children, they did not anticipate the children becoming fully literate in the HL. Nevertheless, they emphasized reading skills and tried to instill a love of books at an early age.

In the absence of organized HL communities and formal HL instruction, the mothers tried to make bilingual arrangements at home. However, all four mothers used the HL only when their husbands or in-laws were not present; thus, the children's exposure to their HL was quite restricted. One of the common strategies that the mothers used was to designate bedtime a time for the HL, when they encouraged their children to talk about their day and they told or read stories in the HL. They helped their children improve their literacy skills through reading to them in the HL. While reading, they elicited the children's verbal participation by asking them open-ended questions about the story. All four mothers also used Skype and phone calls to let their children speak to their grandparents in the HL regularly. Mary, who called her parents every day, observed, "When I call [my mother], my daughter speaks Bisaya. Little by little, she improves."

Some mothers utilized transnational trips and immersion programs to accelerate HL development and motivation to learn the HL. The frequency and duration of these trips varied between families, ranging from two weeks to three months, typically biennially, depending on financial resources. In Excerpt 1, Kyung describes such a trip:

Excerpt 1

I visited Vietnam with my children for their Vietnamese studies last winter... Previously I used to speak only in Korean with my daughter, and she would also talk to me only in Korean. But after she came back from her trip to Vietnam, she can speak Vietnamese. Since then, I've tried to speak more Vietnamese at home.

Kyung changed her own language use in response to her daughter's improved Vietnamese language skills, increasingly engaging her daughter in HL conversations. She also encouraged regular contact with the children's grandparents, thus providing a constant motivator for HL use. Moreover, she sought out immersion opportunities in Korea, placing her daughter in a short-term Vietnamese language camp designed for children with a Vietnamese parent.

The mothers noted these trips had the additional benefit of healthy identity formation. Jeong reported that her son had been bullied and made fun of at school due to his ethnicity. She worried that, at a very young age, he was picking up on the wider society's attitude that her home country and language were inferior. Jeong took him to Vietnam every two years hoping he would develop a more positive cultural identity. In Excerpt 2, Jeong describes her observations regarding these trips:

Excerpt 2

I taught him Vietnamese but he didn't want to learn. Because Korean people look down on Vietnamese language and people. In Vietnam, my son stayed with his grandmother and studied Vietnamese hard. I didn't prepare for this trip. He proactively prepared for it. Because he enjoyed his three-month stay two years ago, he wanted to visit again. He said he really missed his grandmother, uncles, and friends.

In Korea, the child's linguistic and ethnic background were viewed unfavourably by his peers, and Vietnamese was problematized within his home. According to his mother, trips provided opportunities to enjoy and appreciate the HL within a heritage community, producing an appreciable positive change in his Vietnamese skills and his attitude toward his heritage culture and language.

Obstacles related to HL transmission, maintenance, and development

Most of the mothers encountered multiple impediments to teaching and using the HL with their children. The analysis revealed three major obstacles: lack of Korean family support, mothers' concerns about children's educational success, and prejudice and discrimination faced by mixed-race children. I will discuss each of these in turn.

Lack of Korean family support

The participants encountered a lack of family support for passing their languages on to their children due to the low status of their HLs in Korean society. In particular, the participants experienced conflict with their in-laws because of differing opinions about HL teaching. The Korean family members tended to view the women's linguistic and cultural background as a problem rather than an asset and discouraged them from teaching their native language to the children. For instance, Sooah discussed her regret at not having taught the HL to her children. When asked why she had not done so, Sooah described the objections of her family as one of the reasons.

Ella's Korean family members also discouraged her use of the HL. Ella reflected on her family's reaction when she spoke Tagalog:

Excerpt 3

When I am speaking in Tagalog to my children, my husband says *sikkulewe!* (“It’s noisy!”). I said I would like to use different languages, but he told me I have to teach them Korean first, then English... When I was speaking in Tagalog, my mother-in-law would tell me *poyki silhe!* (“I can’t bear seeing you!”). She said, “If you cannot understand Korean, don’t speak. It’s better not to talk.”

These examples of Ella’s Korean family members’ reactions indicate that they did not respect her linguistic background, and that they positioned her as a linguistic and cultural other. Her mother-in-law appears to equate speaking Tagalog with being unable to understand Korean, and Ella reported that she felt uncomfortable using her native language with her children at home as a result of such comments. In contrast, her family seemed to have positive attitudes toward English, despite their very limited knowledge of the language. This attitude reflects asymmetrical linguistic hierarchy favouring English, owing to its instrumental value and high status in Korean society (Park and Wee 2012). The heated pursuit of English as a linguistic capital in Korea is attributed to the country’s long traditions of education fever. When asked whether her mother-in-law responded to her English use in the same way, Ella commented, “No, she would instead try to say something in English, like ‘Thank you’.” Thus, for Ella’s mother-in-law, English may be able to exist in a bilingual relationship with Korean, but Tagalog cannot.

In Jeong’s and Kyung’s cases, their husbands supported their speaking Vietnamese to their children in their own family space, but their in-laws objected. Jeong stated, “My husband said it was okay to teach [my son] Vietnamese, but my mother-in-law told me not to. It was up to my mother-in-law.” When asked the reason for her mother-in-law’s attitude, Jeong mentioned that her mother-in-law believed that Jeong’s attempts to use Vietnamese at home would delay and interrupt the child’s development of Korean. Despite the fact that Jeong’s and Kyung’s mothers-in-law only engaged minimally in supporting their households, they still exercised power and authority. The participants’ subordinate position in age, gender, class, and racial hierarchies, along with a lack of Korean language proficiency, prevented them from gaining access to decision-making power. Jeong and Kyung endured their mothers-in-law’s control and yielded to their wishes by limiting the use of the HL at home so as to avoid conflict. They instead relied on transnational trips and communication with the maternal grandparents for the children’s HL learning.

Mothers’ concerns about their children’s educational success

Another challenge for HL maintenance is the mothers’ concerns that learning the HL could hinder their children’s educational achievement. All of the mothers considered excellent Korean proficiency a priority for their children, viewing it as the key to the children’s success.

There is a discourse prevalent in Korean society that mixed-heritage children experience academic difficulties because they lack Korean language competence, which is attributed to having a foreign mother. Some of the women had internalized such messages and felt that they were incapable mothers who could neither support their children academically nor engage with the wider school life, such as attending parent-teacher meetings. Observing middle-class Korean parents’ high levels of involvement and investment in their children’s education, the participants came to believe that providing a good education is a crucial part of Korean childrearing. They

expressed a strong desire to become “good Korean mothers” and considered mastery of the Korean language essential to achieve this goal.

In general, the mothers’ emphasis on their children’s development of Korean language skills led them to promote Korean within the household, hindering the children’s bilingual development. As Megan explained, “I only spoke Korean and English with my children because I was worried that they would fall behind with school work.” Yumi shared similar views: “[Korean] is more important for their future. I want them to do well in school.” For the most part, the mothers did not consider having no or minimally functional HL proficiency a disadvantage because they expected their children to continue to live in Korea.

In addition, the mothers’ emphasis on the importance of English competence further contributed to the HL losing ground at home. Dahee shared her views:

Excerpt 4

Korean is really important. My child has to be good at English too because she has to excel in school... If you’re a good student, it’s okay even if you don’t have many friends. Because you would be confident. I must equip my child with a lot of knowledge. When she starts third grade, I’ll focus more on her English.

In Korean society, English is coveted as linguistic capital that will bring educational success, which will in turn generate class mobility and better employment prospects. Knowledge of minority languages such as Tagalog is not considered a determining factor for success. For this reason, the mothers started their children’s English education at an early age, most often through private tutoring. For instance, Dahee provided her child with private lessons⁵ in English because, she said, it is required to pass competitive examinations and gain admission to prestigious universities. Dahee’s strong passion for her child’s educational success was strengthened by her belief that mixed-race children are vulnerable to discrimination by mainstream society. Consequently, Dahee’s daughter did not speak the HL, other than knowing a few commonly used expressions.

Prejudice and discrimination faced by mixed-race children

In addition to lack of family support and the mothers’ desire for their children’s educational success, the mothers’ concerns about the prejudice and discrimination faced by mixed-heritage children in Korea negatively impacted the children’s HL development. Some of the Southeast Asian women in this study reported that when they were in public, they sometimes chose not to use their mother tongue with their children because of the risks of revealing that they were foreigners. For example, Hyesoo, who highly valued HL learning, stated that she tried not to use Cambodian outside the house with her children. Her own experiences of discrimination and stories from her friends led her to worry that her children would remain marginalized after entering elementary school. Despite the fact that the children were born, raised, and educated as native speakers of Korean, the *damunhwa* label, with its links to low socioeconomic status and differences in physical appearance, made them vulnerable

⁵ Dahee reported that she did not feel confident in teaching English to her child because of her lack of grammatical knowledge and teaching skills.

to discrimination. Six mothers reported that their children had been bullied or teased in school for such things.

Dahee emphasized her interest in raising her child to be multilingual like herself. However, she did not actually put this belief into action. She faced a conflict between her wish to pass her heritage on to her child and her desire to focus on teaching her child English, which she believed would lead to inclusion. The following excerpt illustrates her position:

Excerpt 5

Mixed-heritage children get discriminated against a lot by Koreans because their mothers are foreigners. Especially if the mothers are from poor countries. But if the mothers are from a rich country, like the USA, and speak English, it's okay. If the children speak English well, the Korean mothers want to make friends with us. So my child must speak good English.

Dahee elaborated that the children of marriage-migrants in Korea receive unfair treatment not simply because they are foreigners but because they are from countries that are economically less developed than Korea. She believed that English proficiency could be an important resource for the children, helping protect them from discrimination and make them part of the mainstream group.

Like Dahee, Megan was concerned about her children being isolated and excluded in school. Megan's children were reluctant to use languages other than Korean in front of their peers because doing so would reveal that their mother was from another country. The children's unwillingness to use Ilokano, and even English, in public influenced Megan's decision not to promote HL development. In Excerpt 6, she describes the situation:

Excerpt 6

My children get embarrassed when using Ilokano or English in front of their friends. When they do, their friends would ask, "Is your mom a foreigner? Where is she from?" Especially when I go out with them and use languages other than Korean, their friends find it strange. So my children don't want to use other languages.

Megan clearly feared that having a foreign mother would be an obstacle to her children's ability to build positive relationships with peers and would undermine their socialization. For Megan and her children, full inclusion in the social world of the school seemed to take priority over maintaining connections to their HL and culture. As a result, Megan's children appeared to have a weak affiliation with their HL, as well as with English, at least when in Korea. However, Megan commented that when her children visited the Philippines, they communicated with their grandparents in English, rather than trying to polish their HL. She added that although family conversations would typically take place in Ilokano, her parents tried to communicate in English in order to accommodate the low HL proficiency of their grandchildren.

Discussion and conclusion

This study has investigated minority HL transmission and maintenance in intermarried families which have been under-researched in the field (Mejía 2016; Noro 2009; Shin 2010). The results of the study suggest that the younger generations

of ethnic minority groups in Korea are unlikely to maintain their HLs and their ability to relate to their families overseas and their heritage cultures. This finding echoes those of Kim and Kim (2015), who described that migrant women's children's minority HLs (e.g. Russian, Tagalog) were not appreciated and preserved in Korea. Negative familial and societal attitudes toward minority languages had a strong influence on the participating mothers' views and practices. The mothers reported gradually shifting to the dominant language, Korean, and their children's struggle with even basic language functions in their HL. While some mothers made efforts to develop their children's HLs, the challenge of providing sufficient exposure made it unlikely that their children would achieve bilingualism.

This study expands FLP lines of research by examining conflict and negotiation between migrant mothers and their Korean family members regarding their children's HL development, as well as how this influenced language usage at home. This study's findings support Noro's (2009) argument that the home is not a harmonious domain of HL and culture transmission. In this study, HL use in the home involved conflict and struggle. Only two of the participants' families did not entirely oppose HL use, but nevertheless did not expect the HL to be used in their presence. In the rural three-generation Korean families in this study, the presence of parents-in-law, even when they occupy separate households, is a strong factor in family dynamics and power relations. The women's subordinate position, culturally determined by their age, gender, and family role, is subordinated further by their ethnicity, nonnative status, and the nature of their marriages (Lee et al. 2015; Park 2017). Their autonomy, influence, and capacity to challenge are consequently severely constrained. Thus, the results of this study brought to light the important role that HL maintenance and bilingualism play in family members' negotiation of power, agency, and identity construction.

The FLP and denigration of the migrant women's heritage observed in the participants' homes is influenced by mainstream Korean society's language ideologies. Bilingualism is promoted with a high-status language like English which is compulsory at school and viewed as a linguistic capital (Park and Wee 2012). In contrast, Southeast Asian languages are stigmatized, and their use is regarded as indicative of lack of education or low socioeconomic status (Kim and Kim 2015). The mothers' narratives left no doubt that they believed the mainstream society would discriminate against their children based on their appearance, ethnicity, and language, and they hoped complete assimilation would help their children avoid some of this discrimination (Kim 2010; Lee et al. 2015). Although the growing number of migrants does challenge the long-held ideal of Korean ethnic homogeneity, the ideology of one language, one race, and one nation still prevails (Shin 2012). Mixed-heritage children in this study sometimes became the target for bullying and teasing because of their background. In an effort to protect the children from discrimination, the mothers exerted themselves to strengthen their children's Korean identity and language over any other identity and language. Abandonment of the HL for Korean was also motivated by the desire for the children to succeed academically and professionally, in a way the mothers had not. Thus, mastery of the prestige languages, Korean and English, was emphasized.

In order to prevent the loss of heritage languages and cultures, systematic and long-term efforts need to be made at the familial, educational, and governmental levels. Supportive and comfortable language environments are necessary for the continued use and development of children's HLs. In addition, it is vital to make information available to parents and teachers that will raise awareness of the values of

multilingualism and multiculturalism (Shin 2006). The migrant mothers in this study often expressed the belief that bilingualism causes confusion and delays the acquisition of the societally dominant language. This belief was commonly reinforced by family members and even teachers. As a result of such deficit views of bilingualism, migrant mothers are often uncertain about whether they should pass on the HL to the next generation. Persuading both minority- and majority-language parents of the benefits of multilingualism and multiculturalism is key to developing positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity. If school teachers and students perceived multilingualism as a resource for the individual and the country, mixed-heritage children could be empowered and motivated to utilize their linguistic resources and also deepen their sense of belonging. Korea does seem to value bilingualism and biculturalism in the case of some “global” languages, which are taught in schools, but this attitude has not yet extended to other languages and cultures.

The findings suggest directions for future research. First, the study focused on HL use and learning among mixed-heritage children with Vietnamese, Cambodian, or Filipino heritage. More research is needed on mixed-heritage children from different ethnic groups, including those connected to prestige languages like English, Chinese, and Japanese. Each heritage group may occupy different sociopolitical positions in Korea and face different issues regarding HL transmission. Second, the study relied on the mothers’ narratives, relating their views and their perceptions of their in-laws’ and children’s views. The participants rarely mentioned the opinions of the fathers. Future studies could also include the narratives and perceptions of other involved parties. The furthering of our understanding of HL transmission in this environment can be used to better facilitate greater language development within these communities and societies.

References

- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2006. “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology.” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101.
- Cho, Y. 2006. *Survey on Education of the Children of Multicultural Families*. Seoul: Policy Report of Ministry of Education and Human Resources.
- King, K. A., Fogle, L., and Logan-Terry, A. 2008. “Family Language Policy.” *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2: 907–922.
- Guardado, M. 2010. “Heritage Language Development: Preserving a Mythic Past or Envisioning the Future of Canadian Identity?” *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 9 (5): 329–346.

- Han, E-J., and P. G. Price. 2015. "Uncovering the Hidden Power of Language: Critical Race Theory, Critical Language Socialization and Multicultural Families in Korea." *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 44 (2): 108–131.
- Jo, H. Y., D. H. Seo, and S. H. Kwon. 2008. "An Ethnographic Study on the Academic Performance of Children of Migrants." *Korean Journal of Sociology of Education* 18 (2): 105–134.
- Kang, H-S., and I-s. Kim. 2012. "Perceived and Actual Competence and Ethnic Identity in Heritage Language Learning: A Case Study of Korean-American College Students." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 15 (3): 279–294.
- Kang, S.-W. 2010. "Multicultural Education and the Rights to Education of Migrant Children in South Korea." *Educational Review* 62 (3): 287–300.
- Kim, M., and T.-Y. Kim. 2015. "A Critical Study of Language Minority Students' Participation in Language Communities in the Korean Context." *Language and Intercultural Communication* 15 (2): 224–239.
- Korean Educational Statistics Service. 2016. *Statistics on Multicultural Children in Korea*. Accessed 15 January 2017.
http://kess.kedi.re.kr/post/6656386?itemCode=03andmenuId=m_02_03_03
- Lao, C. 2004. "Parents' Attitudes toward Chinese-English Bilingual Education and Chinese-Language Use." *Bilingual Research Journal* 28 (1): 99–121.
- Lee, E., S-k. Kim, and J. K. Lee. 2015. "Precarious Motherhood: Lives of Southeast Asian Marriage Migrant Women in Korea." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 21 (4): 409–430.
- Lee, J.-B., S.-W. Kang, and H. Kim. 2008. *Research on the Educational Status of the Children from Multicultural Families*. Seoul: Korea Educational Development Institute.
- Lee, J. S. 2002. "The Korean Language in America: The Role of Cultural Identity in Heritage Language Learning." *Language, Culture, and Curriculum* 15 (2): 117–133.
- Lee, J.S. and Suarez, D. 2009. "A synthesis of the roles of heritage languages in the lives of immigrant children." In T.G. Wiley, J.S. Lee, and R. Rumberger (Eds.), *The Education of Language Minority Immigrants in the United States* (pp. 136–171). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Mejía, G. 2016. "Language Usage and Culture Maintenance: A Study of Spanish-Speaking Immigrant Mothers in Australia." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 37 (1): 23–39.
- Mu, G. M., and K. Dooley. 2015. "Coming into an Inheritance: Family Support and Chinese Heritage Language Learning." *International Journal of Bilingual*

Education and Bilingualism 18 (4): 501–515.

Noro, H. 2009. “The Role of Japanese as a Heritage Language in Constructing Ethnic Identity among Hapa Japanese Canadian Children.” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 30 (1): 1–18.

Pao, D. L., S. D. Wong, and S. Teuben-Rowe. 1997. “Identity Formation for Mixed-Heritage Adults and Implications for Educators.” *TESOL Quarterly* 31 (3): 622–631.

Park, J. S., and L. Wee. (2012). *Markets of English: Linguistic Capital and Language Policy in a Globalizing World*. New York: Routledge.

Park, M. Y. 2017. “Resisting Linguistic and Ethnic Marginalization: Voices of Southeast Asian Marriage-Migrant Women in Korea.” *Language and Intercultural Communication* 17 (2): 118–134.

Park, S. M., and M. Sarkar. 2007. “Parents’ Attitudes toward Heritage Language Maintenance for Their Children and Their Efforts to Help Their Children Maintain the Heritage Language: A Case Study of Korean-Canadian Immigrants.” *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 20 (3): 223–235.

Shin, G-W. 2012. “Racist South Korea? Diverse but Not Tolerant of Diversity.” In R. Kowner and W. Demel (Eds.), *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia: Western and Eastern Constructions* (pp. 369–390). Boston, MA: Brill.

Shin, S. J. 2006. “High-stakes Testing and Heritage Language Maintenance. In K. Kondo-Brown (Ed.). *Heritage Language Development: Focus on East Asian Immigrants* (127–144). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Shin, S. J. 2010. “‘What about Me? I’m Not Like Chinese but I’m Not Like American’: Heritage Language Learning and Identity of Mixed Heritage Adults.” *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 9 (3): 203–219.

Statistics Korea. 2017. *The Household Survey Data of the Fourth Quarter of 2017*. Accessed 1 May 2018.
http://kosis.kr/statisticsList/statisticsListIndex.do?menuId=M_01_01&vwcd=MT_ZTITLE&parmTabId=M_01_01#SelectStatsBoxDiv

You, B-k. 2005. “Children Negotiating Korean American Ethnic Identity through Their Heritage Language.” *Bilingual Research Journal* 29 (3): 711–721.

Zhang, D., and D. T. Slaughter-Defoe. 2009. “Language Attitudes and Heritage Language Maintenance among Chinese Immigrant Families in the USA.” *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 22 (2): 77–93.