

Actors and their roles in maintaining Korean heritage language: Parental perceptions

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1. Introduction

The popularity of Korean language has never been higher worldwide. It is reported (IAKLE 2017 Proceedings) that the number of college and universities offering Korean around the world has drastically increased by over 900% from about 150 in the early 1990s to 1,340 in 104 countries in early 2017. This increase of enrolment in Korean is also the case in primary and secondary schools. Figures recently released by the Korean Ministry of Education show that the number of students learning Korean as a foreign or second language in primary and secondary schools around the world has increased by 75% for the three years from 86,415 in 1,053 schools in 2013 to 115,335 in 1,309 schools in 2016. In addition, the King Sejong Institute Foundation reports that it has continuously opened regional centres offering non-award Korean courses since its establishment in 2010 and as of early 2017, 171 centres are up and running in 54 countries, with about 50,000 students enrolled (based on the 2015 stats when 43,261 students were enrolled).

In Australia alone, primary and secondary students learning Korean has increased by 122.4% in the past six years from 4,219 in 38 schools in 2010 to 9,380 in 67 schools in 2016 while university students of Korean also have significantly increased by more than 280% from 888+ in 2010 to 2,518+ in 2016 (Shin S-C, 2016). This drastic increase in the enrolments of Korean around the world is also evidenced by the number of international proficiency test (TOPIK – Test of Proficiency in Korean) applicants have increased by almost 500% in the past ten years from 50,133 in 2007 to 250,141 in 2016. It is evident, therefore, that Korean has become a very popular language recently with considerable success on the global state thanks to the happy bonanza of *Hallyu* (Korean Wave) more than anything else.¹ One could say that the future of Korean language education indeed looks bright and promising. While we enjoy the current popularity of Korean language and the strength of the programs at all levels, however, there is an important area that has largely been neglected or failing in the mainstream educational systems, and that is the heritage language education for 2nd or 3rd generation speakers of Korean. Heritage language is a home or ancestral language other than English, and in the context of immigration, it is a language other than English (i.e. Korean here) that those whose family or ancestors came from another country speak.²

Heritage language education has been much less supported or promoted by any host government's language policy and curriculum planning, and there has been a lack of support and provisions for heritage Korean in multilingual countries like Australia. Shin S-C (2010) reports that despite a large pool of Korean heritage students in the communities in Australia there were a minimal number participating in Korean courses. He estimated that there were approximately 3,000 Korean heritage students nationally not studying their heritage language in their secondary years, mainly due to an absence of courses that are suitable for their unique needs. It was only in 2011 when a proper Heritage Korean course was introduced to Australian (NSW) schools. In 2016, only 76 Korean heritage students completed Korean as their matriculation (HSC) course.

If the heritage students participate in any form of Korean language study, that may be mainly through local Korean community schools. According to the Korean Ministry of Education statistics (2016), there were 101,029 students in 1,875 Hangul Schools in 117 countries, including 2,979 students in 39 Hangul schools in Australia, and additional 13,761 students in 32 Korean Schools in 15

¹ Byon (2008) outlines factors for the rise of Korean enrolments in the USA as follows: (a) South Korea's increasing visibility in the international community; (b) the increase of Korean-Americans; (c) the continuing support from the Korean Government; and (d) the US Government's bilingual and foreign language policy.

² For the definition of the terms "heritage language", "heritage learners", "heritage speakers," and "language maintenance" please refer to King (1998), Fishman (1999), Van Deusen-Scholl (2003), and Polinsky and Kagan (2007).

countries.³ In Australia alone, there were 3,905 Korean heritage students enrolled in 46 Hangul Schools (Shin S-C., 2016). While all these efforts to learn and maintain Korean through the community schools should be praised and encouraged, community schools have faced substantial obstacles, including a lack of recognition or credit from the formal educational system.

Despite some gradual improvements in provision and participation in the past few years, there are a significant number of Korean heritage students not attending the community schools or not learning Korean at their mainstream schools or in any form because of various reasons, including family language practices and a limited recognition of the issue in government language policy. It is important for all relevant parties to continuously make efforts to maintain heritage languages and promote the heritage language education. It is known that learning a heritage language offers cognitive advantages and is beneficial to children's identity formation. In fact, a lot of scholars have pointed out the importance of promoting and learning heritage language, and that is also the case for Korean (e.g. Lee D-J, 2003; Sohn H-M, 2005; Shin S-C, 2006, 2010 and Byon, 2008). Sohn H-M (2005), for example, explains six potential benefits that Korean heritage students would gain when they learn Korean: (a) contribution to the Korean and wider communities; (b) confidence in identity issues; (c) individual competitiveness; (d) better academic performance; (e) high proficiency attainment; and (f) better career opportunities. In addition to such beneficial aspects, there should also be a sense of urgency or priority for language maintenance in migrant communities and educational systems, as well as at a government policy level. It is because most migrant languages run the risk of language shift or loss in one form or another in the second or third generations. As in other migrant communities, the language shift and loss is also happening in many Korean migrant communities in the US (e.g. Cho et al., 1997; Kim et al., 1981; Sohn S-O, 2015; You et al, 2017) and other host countries with second or third generations of Korean migration history, such as Australia (Shin S-C & Jung, 2015, 2016). The question is, is it excusable or worthwhile to lose the family language to be assimilated with and "successful" citizens of the host country at the expense of a dis-communication between generations, disconnection from relatives and even the dysfunction of family? Is there any way to deter or prevent the language shift or loss in multilingual countries like Australia? Who should play what roles in this process? Heritage language maintenance and education is more complicated than the education of a foreign or second language, requiring more effort and involving more entities and actions.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the actors and their roles in the efforts to promote Korean heritage language maintenance in the Australian context, by looking at different parties, processes and issues such as parents and family language planning (FLP), community schools and organisations, both Australian and Korean governments' language policies and supportive measures, and the heritage children themselves. Another purpose of this paper is to find out parental perceptions about actors and their roles in maintaining Korean heritage language in multicultural Australia. For this purpose a survey of forty-three Korean parents residing in Sydney has been conducted, and findings are presented in later sections together with discussions of key implications.

2. Actors and their Roles

2.1. Parents as an influencer

There is no doubt that children's orientation towards their heritage language is greatly influenced by parents' attitudes towards language maintenance. Studies (e.g. Jeon, 2001) show that parents' teachings have a close relation with their children's attitudes towards their heritage language. Unfortunately, some parents, with or without full knowledge of this, tend to compromise and stop using their heritage language, often saying 'for the benefit' of their children (Schwartz, 2010). Parents' attitudes may vary, depending on a number of factors such as the length of residence, immigrant

³ The Korean Government makes distinctions between 'Hangul School' and 'Korean School'. Hangul School is a weekend community school run by the local community organisations such as religious organisations for permanent residents, citizens, adoptees and bicultural families, whereas Korean School is an ethnic but regular local school approved by the local government for children of short-term stayers such as expatriates (e.g. diplomats, government and company employees). Both schools are financially supported by the Korean Government with a much larger amount allocated to Korean School.

generation, geographical location, education and family composition. Generally speaking, where there is a higher practical or circumstantial reason to use the language, there is a higher chance for parents to have a positive attitude and encourage their children to keep using and learning their heritage language. It is challenging, of course, for parents, mostly the mother, to get their children to speak and learn their heritage language, especially at school age when the children start refusing to speak the language. For some parents, it is often a daily battle to engage in persuading or coaxing their children, which is emotionally stressful to both the parent and the children. To many parents, regardless of their status and family situation, it is often a frustrating and struggling experience to raise children bilingual speaking both the dominant language of the host country and their heritage language competently. But it is worth the trouble because it often results in life-long benefits such as those emphasised by Sohn H-M (2005).

Many Korean migrant families, however, do not seem to have a home language policy or workable strategies to raise children bilingually. They tend to perceive the necessity of bilingualism but do not seem to have a clear family language goal or planning to raise bilingual children or a strategy that will guide them on heritage language use. Many of the parents seem to have a vague hope that one day their children will become bilingual. They tend to let their children decide which language they will use and even let the family language use shaped by their children, which usually ends up with the use of English only not just among siblings but also with parents, regardless of their proficiency in English. In their thinking process of the heritage language, parents seem to have two elements in mind: practical use and emotional attachment. Some parents seem to identify the sentimental function of their heritage language more than its practical use while other parents have a more practical view of language than emotional attachment. Parents who left Korea as a pre-teen or teenager usually tend to have a stronger emotional attachment to their heritage language than those who came to Australia later in life (i.e., 20s or 30s). The parents who arrived early tend to see the value of bilingualism to connect themselves to their motherland while the latecomer parents' greater interest and enthusiasm is in mastering the dominant language (i.e. English) of the host society (i.e. Australia) and tend to surrender or compromise in teaching the heritage language to their children.

2.2. Children as main actors

Many of the Korean students want to 'learn' Korean at university to facilitate their communication with their parents and relatives but they need to ask themselves why they are waiting until university to 'learn' their heritage language. Kim et al (1981), which evaluates Korean-American cases on this issue, maintains that Korean American students come back to search for the language of their parents as well as their lost identity after they have realised that unlike their European peers they cannot be completely assimilated into the society because of racial differences.

Heritage children need to be aware that their lack of proficiency in their heritage language leads to little meaningful communication taking place between them and their parents, if English or the society's main language is not the parents' dominant language. This also creates a distance between them and their parents (Cho et al., 1997). At the same time, heritage students need to be taught that their heritage language is a valuable resource for the host country as well as the community and should be encouraged to develop their heritage language.

2.3. Home as a language nest

Heritage language maintenance must start from home. A number of scholars (e.g. King, 2001; Warner, 2001; and Anderson, 2015) underscore the significance of family in language use and how its involvement is crucial to maintain and revitalise the heritage language. What can or should we then do at home not to miss out or reclaim a great opportunity to develop in children their heritage language, a great part of their cultural heritage? It is suggested that the first step is to establish the home as a language 'nest' (Anderson, 2015), which is a physical space for a natural immersion where the household uses the heritage language only. It was reported to be a successful method in Hawaii (Warner, 2001) and New Zealand (King, 2001). It starts with claiming or reclaiming parts of the house as 'domains' where the heritage language (i.e. Korean) only is used – 'Korean only zone'. It should take an incremental approach, claiming or reclaiming from small domains such as kitchen, dining room, bathroom, bedroom, etc.) and should be expanded slowly, gradually and steadily,

depending on each child and each family. In order to enforce the revitalisation plan, Anderson (op. cit.) suggests that such efforts initially focus on adults or older children before involving young children and parents take “actionable steps” by choosing an activity, time of day and the domain in the house. Parents can use any and all associated activities and strategies and hopefully and ideally the whole home might become a language nest. Also, they can work with other families in the community with a similar goal.

2.4. Community schools as a support system

Community schools play and should play an auxiliary but significant role in maintaining the heritage language and in helping the children of the migrant family with developing their heritage language proficiency. They have enormous potential to be a valuable support system and it is observed that many of the Korean community schools in Australia play such a role successfully. Despite their effort, however, there are a few areas to improve on the operation of the schools, teachers and parents.

Community schools should ensure that they implement well-organised fun and effective curriculum in which children with similar age are grouped to work on their language projects. This is particularly important when considering the fact that many children dislike attending the community schools because they are often ‘forced’ to go and want to spend their weekend time with friends or doing outdoor activities. Secondly, community school administrators should ensure that their school is not perceived as ‘child-care centre’ or as a religious operation. Community schools are often tarnished with such reputations since many of them are operated by religious organisations during or before/after the worship service. It is particularly important that community schools operate without carrying obvious religious connections, which could be problematic for students and divisive in the community. Thirdly, community schools ensure that they employ certified teachers who are qualified and trained to teach at a public community school in a bilingual environment, rather than relying on volunteering parent teachers. It is advantageous and beneficial to have certified teachers for, for example, students’ respects towards the teachers, teachers’ professionalism, parents’ confidence in the teachers, and the status of the schools. Last but not least, parents would need to be aware that community schools are only an ancillary support centre, rather than a panacea for their children’s issue with the heritage language.

2.5. Korean community organisations as support agents

The Korean community in Australia should be warned that it is detrimental to the family relationship and the community as a whole if the heritage language is lost at home. In a way, promoting bilingualism among the Korean language education community at all levels will be more important or urgent than offering Korean language courses, pedagogy seminars or teacher training. Community organisations need to help families make a specific family language plan and share information and stories on successful bilingualism and family language planning strategies more than anything else. It would be necessary for the community organisations to network and collaborate with each other to help families with raising their children bilingually. Both Korean community leaders and immigrant families need to understand that their heritage language and English need not be in opposition (Schwartz, 2010).

2.6. Australian Government policy position

It appears that the Australian Federal Government has a limited language policy to support heritage languages or heritage language learning. There are some funding opportunities for community languages schools at state levels to provide some assistance with operating the programs and there is a course or two for heritage students as a targeted strategy in large states such as NSW but there is no language policy planned or enacted by the Federal Government to improve the public perception of heritage languages and to support heritage language education. For a nation, migrant languages could be ‘assets’ or ‘resources’, but for immigrant families, their heritage language is an essential tool for survival. In its mission statement, Heritage Languages in America⁴ also recognises

⁴ Its website: <http://www.cal.org/heritage/about/principles.html>

benefits at both individual (individual use and identity) and national levels. In developing any policy on migrant languages, therefore, it is necessary to have a humanistic concept and approach in mind, as well as socio-economic benefits.

There is a growing scholarly literature showing that languages used in local communities are useful for the interests of a nation, and here ‘language as instrument’ to achieve various needs becomes a relevant heritage language education ideology. The Australian government would need to recognise that competent bilinguals are valuable resources for various purposes at socio-cultural and national levels and that skilled heritage bilinguals can serve the needs of the nation expediently. Australia needs individuals who are highly proficient in both English AND other languages such as Korean in the field of, for example, trade and business; diplomacy and foreign relations; national security; media and public relations; law; education; medical and health; community development; and service professions.

2.7. The role of the Korean Government

The Korean Government should adopt interventionist measures to support the heritage language proficiency of overseas Korean migrants’ children. It should work with the host country (i.e. Australia) to introduce and expand a heritage Korean course as part of a school curriculum and teach humanistic values as well as benefits and advantages of heritage language maintenance. It should help increase public awareness about bilingualism in the Korean communities in Australia, making educational pamphlets available at the Korean consulate and various Korean community organisations. Also, the government should develop family language planning strategies (more than national identity-driven textbooks and materials) and guidelines, and disseminate these to overseas Korean migrants together with information on successful cases of bilingualism. The Korean Government should also encourage entrepreneurs and professionals to support and implement projects and programs which promote heritage language education overseas.

3. The Survey – Parental Perceptions

As discussed above, parents are key actors in maintaining heritage languages. This study is interested in learning about perceptions they may have towards maintenance of Korean heritage language, and to find them out a survey has been conducted in the Sydney Korean community recently. The results of the survey are presented below.

3.1. Participants

A total of forty-three Korean parents residing in Sydney participated in the survey. Among them nearly all of them (40 or 93%) were female (mothers) and only three were male (fathers). Their ages ranged from 30s to 50s with a median age of 45. All of the respondents were Australian citizens or permanent residents, except one unspecified participant.

Table 1: Age, Gender and Status

Age group	Gender		Total	% (N=43)	Residential status	Total	% (N=43)
	F	M					
30-39	6	0	6	13.95	Australian citizen	21	48.84
40-49	24	3	27	62.79	Permanent resident	21	48.84
50-59	9	0	9	20.93	Unspecified	1	2.33
Unspecified	1	0	1	2.33	TOTAL	43	100.00
TOTAL	40	3	43	100.00			
Median	45						

Their length of residence in Sydney and Australia widely ranged from 4 years to nearly 40 years with an average length of 14 years. Nearly half of them (n=21, or 49%) were in home duties (‘housewives’), followed by unspecified or various other jobs such as network marketer, teacher,

accountant, care worker, daycare operator, chef, programmer, immigration agent, self-employed and student.

Nearly 70% of the participants had two children, and their age groups ranged widely from 0-5 to 25-30 with an average age of 15 years old. 49% of the participants indicated that their children were born in Australia while 33% of them answered that they were born in Korea.

Participants' expectations were high as 92% of them would like their children to attain a very high or native-like proficiency in Korean. Also, 88% of them were using Korean with their children at home all the time or most of the time.

3.2. Perceived significant actors

The previous section has identified and discussed a number of actors playing a significant role in maintaining heritage languages. To find out what perceptions parents would have towards those actors in *maintaining* Korean heritage language, participants were asked to choose three groups of actors who should play a significant role for their heritage children to *maintain* Korean in Australia. The three most significant actors chosen by participants were clearly Korean parents (90.7%), followed by heritage children (67.4%) and Korean community schools (39.5%). It was clear that the single most significant factor or actor in influencing children to maintain their heritage language was parents themselves, and this is not surprising. Other actors such as Korean Government, Australian schools and Korea community organisations were also perceived as important but with much lower level of significance. The role of Australian Government and Australian universities was perceived as minimally significant, and such view has some implications for further discussion.

Table 2: Most significant actors in Korean language maintenance

Category	R 1	R2	R 3	TOTAL	% (N=43)
Parents (Korean or Korean-Australian)	36	2	1	39	90.69
Korean heritage children	3	24	2	29	67.44
Korean community schools	1	6	10	17	39.53
Korean Government	1	3	10	14	32.56
Australian schools	1	2	7	10	23.26
Korean community organisations	0	1	6	7	16.28
Australian Government	0	2	3	5	11.63
Australian universities	0	0	1	1	2.33
Other –K-TV	0	1	0	1	2.33

Participants were also asked to choose three most significant actors in *promoting* Korean heritage language education in Australia. In this role also, parents (88.4%) were perceived as the single most significant actor clearly but overall, Korean Government was perceived as the most significant actor promoting Korean heritage language education in Australia. The next most significant actors were heritage children themselves, followed by Korean community organisations. Though less significantly, Australian schools, Korean community schools and Australian Government were also perceived as important and responsible for promoting Korean heritage language learning and teaching.

Table 3: Most significant actors in promoting Korean heritage language education

Category	R1	R2	R3	TOTAL	% (N=43)
Parents (Korean or Korean-Australian)	30	6	2	38	88.37
Korean heritage children	5	20	2	27	62.79
Korean Government	2	4	36	42	97.68
Korean community organisations	1	2	24	27	62.79
Australian schools	1	6	15	22	51.16
Korean community schools	3	6	10	19	44.19
Australian Government	2	4	9	15	34.88
Australian universities	0	0	3	3	13.95

Participants were then asked to provide own opinions about the roles of key actors which should play to help their children maintain their family or heritage language. Below, answers from the open-ended questions are summarised thematically (the author's translations) under each of the key actors – family, community, Australian schools and universities, and Korean and Australian governments.

3.3. Role of family

The role of family as perceived by the participants to help their children keep their family language is summarised in four areas: (1) speaking in Korean at home; (2) teaching Korean and about Korea to children; (3) exposing children to Korean media; and (4) other practices. Overwhelmingly, participants suggest that the family use Korean at home and constantly encourage children to speak in Korean and to participate in conversations with family members.

(1) Speaking in Korean at home (34 most frequent comments):

- "Speak in Korean at home"
- "Talk in Korean at home and read Korean books, watch Korean films"
- "Use Korean when talking with family members"
- "Constantly encourage or help them to speak in Korean"
- "Always communicate in Korean only at home"
- "Encourage them to participate in family conversations"
- "Frequently talk with children in Korean"

(2) Teaching Korean and about Korea to children (4 comments):

- "Help them to learn Korean and read Korean books"
- "Teach about Korea's culture and history"
- "Help them not to forget what they know"
- "To teach, to correct the mistakes they would make at first-hand"

(3) Exposing children to Korean media:

- "Help them to watch Korean drama, K-pop idol concerts"
- "Watching K-pop concerts"

(4) Other:

- "Constant encouragement"
- "Help children to expose to heritage Korean for a long period"
- "Explaining why they should learn and maintain Korean"

3.4. Role of the community

The role of the Korean community can also be summarised in four areas as perceived by the participants: (1) promoting Korean cultural events and hands-on experience workshops; (2) providing and supporting Korean language schools; (3) establishing recognisable teaching systems; and (4) other support areas. Participants' comments indicate that the priority role of the community is in providing and/or supporting culture-related practical learning opportunities.

(1) promoting Korean cultural events and hands-on experience workshops:

- "Hosting and supporting Korean cultural events"
- "Offering cultural classes, e.g. taekwondo, K-pop, Korean food, etc."
- "Constantly promoting various cultural events and hands-on opportunities"
- "Helping to have an easy access to cultural materials, e.g. books, audio, video"
- "Organising Korean language-related cultural events"
- "Supporting traditional cultural experiences and Korean language schools"
- "Promoting regular Korean language workshops"
- "Organising events and camps for Korean children"
- "Hosting cultural events for a wider Australian community"

- (2) Supporting Korean community language schools:
 - “Supporting quality Korean community school programs”
 - “Enhancing Korean community schools and library programs”
 - “Helping for quality Korean language programs and teachers”
 - “Promoting Korean community schools, cultural events and festivities”
 - “Helping to diversify Korean community language programs”
- (3) Establishing recognisable teaching system
 - “Implementing a systematic curriculum”
 - “Making provisions for Korean language textbooks and teaching systems”
 - “Making efforts to include Korean in elective curriculum”
- (4) Other support areas
 - “Teaching the importance of speaking in Korean”
 - “Providing opportunities where Korean is used ... with a wider community beyond home”
 - “Expanding opportunities for heritage children to learn Korean”
 - “Helping them to get interested in Korean through, for example, youth magazine, newspaper”
 - “Helping them to become important persons in Australia”
 - “Supporting them to feel proud”
 - “Making third generations be proud”

3.5. Roles of Australian schools and universities

As formal settings for language education, Australian schools and universities play a critical role in terms of learning opportunities and students’ motivation. On the perceived role of schools and universities to maintain Korean heritage language, participants were asked to comment, and their responses are summarised in the following four areas: (1) providing more systematic Korean language courses/classes; (2) promoting the importance of Korean; (3) encouraging learning of Korean culture; and (4) other roles. In general, participants expected that more Australian schools and universities make provisions for heritage Korean students to learn Korean.

- (1) Providing more systematic Korean language courses/classes
 - “It would be good if there were Korean language electives at all high schools”
 - “Increase schools teaching Korean either as a core or elective subject”
 - “Establishing more Korean language department at uni”
 - “Encouraging more students to choose Korean as their second language”
 - “Introducing new Korean language classes at schools”
 - “Providing accurate information and helping to produce teachers”
- (2) Promoting the importance of Korean
 - “Making aware of and teaching the importance of Korean”
 - “Emphasising the importance of learning a heritage language”
 - “Emphasising the importance of being bilingual and its benefits”
 - “Making aware of Korean as a valuable resource and the value of students with ethnic language and cultural backgrounds”
 - “Promoting Korean as a valuable second language”
- (3) Encouraging learning of Korean culture
 - “Providing opportunities for cultural interactions”
 - “Hosting cultural events”
 - “Enhancing awareness of Korea at multicultural events”
 - “Encouraging extra-curricular activities where Korean is used”
 - “Encouraging mutual cultural exchanges that are suitable for children’s ages”
- (4) Other roles

- “Making learning of Korean more readily recognised”
- “Making general public aware of Korea adequately”

3.6. Roles of Australian or Korean governments

Both Australian and Korean governments also have an important role to play to help Korean heritage students to maintain their heritage language. Participants’ expectations towards them as commented are summarised in four areas of roles: (1) providing support at policy levels; (2) providing opportunities for culture learning; (3) supporting Korean community schools; and (4) other comments.

- (1) Providing support at policy levels
 - “Providing sustainable policy support”
 - “Providing financial and funding support”
 - “Making provisions for systematic educational programs”
 - “Providing support for Korean language courses”
 - “Establishing a certified Korean language academy”
 - “Recruiting qualified teachers and helping to offer Korean”
 - “Review on curriculum and programs”
- (2) Providing opportunities for culture learning
 - “Making provisions to interact with Korean culture”
 - “Hosting cultural events, e.g. films, sports, K-pop, K-food”
 - “Hosting events leading to Korean language”
 - “Hosting or supporting to host ‘Culture Day’ event”
 - “Distributing Korean language and cultural materials”
 - “Establishing a Korean language library”
 - “Organising exchange programs for school students”
- (3) Supporting for Korean community schools
 - “Policy and financial support for Korean language schools”
 - “Moral and societal support for Korean ethnic schools”
- (4) Other comments
 - “More Korean governmental role in one form or another”
 - “Making aware of the importance of being bilingual for Australia”
 - “Making adjustment in weightings/scaling in HSC Korean”.

Additional organisations or groups of people that have been referred to by participants as important in maintaining or promoting heritage Korean language include: Korean churches, Korean government agencies such as Korean Cultural Centre, Korean Education Centre, local councils and their cultural events, Korean coordinators for all public organisations, Korean language teachers, instructors and professors, and media.

3.7. Parents own efforts

After all these parental expectations, it is interesting to know what efforts parents themselves actually make to help their children maintain their heritage language at home and/or outside of home. A list of possible efforts was given to tick one or more, along with an opportunity to give their own answers. Table 4 below shows the results of their responses.

Table 4: Parents own efforts in Korean language maintenance

Category	Total	%
Try to communicate with children in Korean at home	40	93.02
Encourage children to speak in Korean at home	27	62.79
Encourage children to watch Korean media (e.g. K-drama, K-show etc.)	27	62.79

Try to teach Korean language to children at home	25	58.14
Encourage children to read Korean books	21	48.84
Encourage children to have contacts with relatives by phone/media	20	46.51
Send children to a weekend ethnic school in the community	17	39.54
Encourage children to enrol in a Korean course at school	11	25.58
Encourage children to attend functions and events in the Korean community	6	13.96

Not surprisingly the single most important effort they make was to ‘try to communicate with their children in Korean at home’ (93%), followed by ‘encouraging them to speak in Korean at home or watch Korean media’ (62.8%). Parents make least efforts in encouraging children to attend community functions and events, to enrol in a Korean course at school and to send them to community schools on the weekend. These latter responses would need some discussions as they are somewhat contrary to their expectations towards the role of the community.

4. Summary and Conclusion

Since Korean as a heritage language in Australia is related to the process of language shifting, explicit policies and programs are required to support heritage language maintenance and revitalisation. This requires the involvement of all parties from individual families, local communities to government stakeholders to ensure planning and support strategies are implemented. There are significant values and benefits for heritage language maintenance and raising bilingual children at individual, socio-cultural and national levels (Cummins, 2005). The first step for bilingual education is to promote the benefits of bilingualism to the parents and their children and for them to make efforts for heritage language maintenance and bilingual education. At the same time Korean communities and both Australian and Korean governments need to prepare and execute appropriate support measures. The Australian Government needs to take adequate actions to support heritage languages at a policy level while the Korean Government and Korean communities in Australia have a lot to support and implement, however, language policies and support systems cannot maintain and revitalise languages without dedicated speakers of the language. It is ultimately the responsibility of Korean parents who need to speak Korean language to their children, and it is the children who need to speak in Korean at least at home, simply because it is their heritage language not to lose. There is no one who can prevent Korean from gradually disappearing in Korean immigrant families if they are reluctant to speak it in the multicultural Australia.

From the survey, it was revealed that parental expectations of their children were very high in terms of their proficiency in Korean, and it is promising that the vast majority of them speak in Korean with their children at home most of the time, if not all the time. It is also encouraging to know that parents recognise that the most significant actors playing the most influential role in maintaining and promoting Korean heritage language are parents themselves and that the most important role of family is to use the family or heritage language at home. In fact, the most significant effort they reportedly make is to try to communicate in Korean with their children or encourage them to speak in Korean at home. This implies the necessity of family language planning strategies (Schwartz, 2010). For instance, parents would need to be persistent in using Korean even when children respond in English or refuse to speak the home language and make efforts for children to expose ‘real-life’ situations by visiting Korea or arranging conversations with relatives.

At the community level, parents were expecting more opportunities for their children to learn about Korean culture and have some practical hands-on experiences through Korean community schools or other venues. This is understandable in that in a multicultural migrant country like Australia, opportunities for minority ethnic migrants to enjoy or participate in cultural practices of the country of origin are very limited. It was also perceived by parents that there is a need for more schools and universities to provide better and quality Korean language programs for heritage students, together with policy level support from both Australian and Korean governments.

Despite all the positive indications of parental attitudes, however, there are two particular aspects that are worth making a special note. The first one is the parents’ implications that the matter of

maintaining Korean language in Australia is limited only to acts at home (parents and children) and Korean community schools. As evidenced from the low or minimal support on Australian government and universities as significant actors, there seems a lack of perspectives among parents that heritage language maintenance involves and requires efforts from a wider community beyond the immediate or direct settings. In addition, Korean community organisations, low scored as well, would also need to be proactive in promoting heritage Korean in a wider Australian community. In this regard, it would be helpful to conduct a community information session or an awareness campaign for Korean parents informing of the importance of implementing heritage Korean programs in mainstream schools and tertiary institutions.

In line with this aspect, another point to make is that somehow parents are not so enthusiastic about encouraging their children to enrol in Korean at school and sending them to community schools or functions/events. The possible reasons may include a lack of Korean language courses at school, fear of or biased prejudice on Korean courses, lack of cultural activities designed for heritage children in the community or narrow perspectives on what it takes to maintain the heritage language. Parents in this category would need to be more proactive for children, looking at their family language from more long-term and wider perspectives.

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