

The Struggle and Success of Heritage Language Education: A Comparative Case Study of Two Korean American Families

Dr. Guang-Lea Lee (Corresponding Author)

Old Dominion University
Department of Teaching & Learning
Darden College of Education & Professional Studies
4301 Hampton Boulevard
3111 Education Building, Norfolk, VA 23529, USA
Email: lxlee@odu.edu

Dr. SoYoung Kang

Gwynedd Mercy University
Center for Teaching and Learning
School of Education
1325 Sumneytown Pike
Gwynedd Valley, PA 19437, USA
Email: Kang.s@gmercyu.edu

Abstract

This comparative case study investigates the beliefs of first-generation immigrant Korean parents regarding bilingualism and raising their children to speak their Heritage Language (HL). We examine how two similarly situated Korean immigrant families can support or hinder their children in learning their HL and maintaining their cultural heritage. This study specifically identifies parental beliefs, as well as what language policies and practices, if any, were employed to support the HL during the children's early childhood and adolescence. The findings reveal that although both sets of parents want their children to learn the HL, the children's proficiency level can be vastly different depending on the parents' beliefs about the importance of learning HL, their involvement in meaningful HL experiences in rich language environment, and the extent that they exposed children to HL and culture. This study sheds light on the important role Korean immigrant parents play in helping their children learn HL at home while still learning English as a second language in school.

Keywords: bilingualism, Korean-American families, heritage language, immigrant families, parents' roles

1. Introduction

Generally, immigrants in the United States from the 1960s through the 1990s pressured their children to assimilate into mainstream society. Immigrant children not fluent in English by the time they entered school were considered deficient in language learning. Ruiz (1984) identified the historical development of society's different orientations toward language and historically, speakers of HL (Heritage Language) were labeled "Language-as-a-Handicap." During this era, children were discouraged from speaking their HL at school which often resulted in a loss of their HL. Such language attrition can have negative consequences such as communication difficulties with family members, identity crises, and cultural loss.

In contrast, recent Korean immigrants tend to place a strong emphasis on preserving and passing down their language and culture to their children and future generations (Park & Sarkar, 2007). They believe that proficiency in the Korean language will help their children keep their cultural identity as Koreans, ensure better future economic opportunities, and give them more chances to communicate with their grandparents efficiently.

While Korean immigrant parents emphasize the importance of speaking HL and strive for their children's HL attainment, their proficiency levels differ, and some have trouble communicating with their parents due to loss of their HL. In many cases, from the moment their children begin compulsory education in the United States, where English is the only language used, their use of English increases until they gradually forget their HL.

As there are limited authentic accounts of first-generation immigrant parents' beliefs about learning HL and their efforts to provide language learning opportunities, this study compares the life experiences and memories of two

Korean-American families with similar beliefs about the importance of teaching a heritage language (HL) to their children, but with different levels of success in helping their children acquire the HL.

The study aims to explore specific factors that may explain the different outcomes, with a focus on the parents' beliefs, language policies, and approaches they have taken to provide language learning opportunities.

This study is intended to explore Korean parents' beliefs, language policy, and their practical approaches adopted to help their children become fluent in their HL as well as in English. We examined first-generation Korean immigrant family's sociocultural life phenomena to investigate their beliefs, home language policy, and teaching practices to compare and contrast their children's HL usage and ability, as well as the parents' beliefs regarding the intergenerational language transmission and its support of their children's HL education.

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

(1) What are the differences and similarities in beliefs and language policies that two sets of Korean immigrant parents hold regarding teaching and maintaining their heritage language?

(2) How are the two sets of immigrant Korean parents different and similar in helping their children see the value of learning their heritage language?

(3) How are the two families' teaching practices for maintaining their heritage language different and similar?

2. Heritage Language Speakers

Heritage language is identified as the language other than the dominant language in each social context, and English would be the dominant language in the United States. HL is not necessarily the first language children learn. It refers to the language of one's ancestry or culture and is second to the primary language. According to Rothman (2009,156), "a language qualifies as a heritage language if it is a language spoken at home or otherwise readily available to young children, and crucially this language is not a dominant language of the society."

Speakers of HL are bilingual and can speak a minority language that is not the language spoken in their community (Lohndal, Rothman, Kupisch, & Westergaard, 2019). Bilingual or multilingual families can use code-switching to practice two language varieties in a single conversation and to convey ideas (Nicoladis & Secco, 2000). These families also establish a family language policy (Kopeliovich, 2010). Also, comprehensive input is essential to acquire HL by hearing and understanding speech that is slightly above their current language level (Krashen, 1981). Successful HL teaching requires scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) from parents, schoolteachers, and knowledgeable peers who will provide children with comprehensible input that will move the learner to the zone of proximal development (Aimin, 2013).

The proficiency level of HL speakers ranges from those who barely understand the language to those who can command it as native speakers due to family, school, societal factors, as well as the amount of language used. Perspectives, intentionality, and willingness to support their children's fluency in their HL vary among immigrant families in the United States. The home environment and factors such as rich literacy, frequency of traveling to their parents' country, sequential versus simultaneous language acquisition, the presence of siblings, and parents' language ideology and use of HL play an important role in HL acquisition processes and outcomes.

We attend to the real-life experiences of diverse language speakers of immigrant families, such as the autoethnographies of Kennedy & Romo (2013), Souto-Manning (2006), and Vasquez (2013). Immigrant families have roots to a particular HL and culture, thus, need to find ways to retain HL to build stronger relationships with family members, and deepen their understanding and appreciation of their unique cultural heritage. As the dominant language (English) is usually more actively and frequently used than immigrant people's languages (Kachru, 1980), most HL speakers are not perfect "bilinguals" who possess the native-like control of two languages (Bloomfield, 1927). Thus, it is difficult for children of immigrant families to exhibit native-like mastery level of their HL as they grow and learn in an English-speaking school. Decades of research in bilingualism continues to produce a rich literature, including influential works such as Cummins (2000) and Romaine (1995). Children who comprehend the language mechanics in their primary language are more apt to excel in comprehending text written in a secondary language at school, as abilities related to literacy are mutually reliant across different languages (Cummins, 1996; Verhoeven, 1991).

3. Socio-Cultural Theory

We believe that learning heritage language is intricately linked with various cultural and social experiences and surroundings that play a significant role in shaping human cognitive abilities.

From the perspective of Socio-Cultural Theory (Lantolf, 2000), children's early language learning arises from processes of meaning-making in collaborative activity with other members of their family and community. The principles of the Socio-Cultural Theory can also apply to HL acquisition as children of Korean immigrant families first interact and communicate with people, objects, and events occurring in their environment.

The key conceptual framework of acquiring HL and English is to support children in learning and using two languages, both simultaneously and naturally as families interact with each other at home.

According to Akamatsu (2003) and Glenn (2002), it is ideal to expose children to the use of both their HL and English in support of their dual language learning. Szecsi and Szilagy (2012) who explored Hungarian-American families' efforts to teach their HL stated that parents are responsible for selecting appropriate resources and being available to support children in their optimal use to nurture children's heritage language and culture at home.

To acquire a first language, Krashen (1988) emphasized that children need to have frequent communicative language interaction with their caregivers without formal instruction on the rules of language. Parents typically teach Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) to their children, maintain healthy family interactions, and make the day-to-day decisions using heritage language in which they are fluent (Cummins, 2000). Thus, language instruction at home needs to focus on sharing a message and using it for children to function with people they interact with in the community rather than teaching Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Similarly, Vygotsky (1986) suggested that children need to acquire spontaneous concepts in the process of living and interacting with families at home while learning *scientific concepts* through formal schooling.

The quality and quantity of HL language input available at home is also related to HL acquisition rate. If parents are bilingual, simultaneous bilingual children have better language skills than sequential bilingual children, and the variance in proficiency levels is linked to the quantity of language exposure during the language acquisition sensitive phase. Children who attend English speaking daycare centers develop and retain less of their HL than children who speak their HL at home during the day. Many educators and parents believe that English Language Learners will acquire concepts in English faster if their parents speak English at home. This is a misconception. Some teachers and parents, however, are pressured to shift to English when children enter school, which can hinder their maintenance of HL. Thomas and Collier (1997) explained that students learn English faster when their literacy skills in their native language have been developed. When parents use their native language, their speech tends to be richer and more complex. For example, if parents read a story to their child in their native language, the parents will spend more time discussing the story and answering questions. When children develop basic language concepts in their native language, they can eventually translate those skills into English. Thus, teachers should not instruct a parent to speak only English at home but rather encourage them to speak and read to their children in both languages if they can.

4. Teaching Heritage Language with Multimedia and Technology

There are specific strategies and resources that are better suited for teaching the HL in a bilingual home where the HL is not a dominant language. A guiding principle is to ensure various communicative inputs in both HL and English. Researchers such as Edwards, Pemberton, Knight, & Monaghan's (2002) have investigated the importance of multimedia and technology for bilingual education. Hanson & Padden's (2009) study on bilingual American Sign Language/English technology, and Simonsson's (2004) study of Hispanic bilingual teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions on technology are relevant as well. This area of bilingualism literature is sure to grow even more as children, parents, and schoolteachers continue to gain access to rapid innovations in technology.

Parents have access to multimedia and technology to support their children's HL education. One could access pre-existing digital content such as audio-visual media in various formats (e.g., streaming, cable, satellite, DVD, etc.) that either already have curated bilingual presentation, or the content is available in both target languages. For example, the children's favorite streaming television program or movie might have audio and caption options in multiple languages, including the target HL. Bilingual parents could watch the program/movie one day in one language, and the next day in the other language. As children grow older, their access to more and more sophisticated literature and media should grow, too, especially in the form of authentic input (e.g., newspaper articles, recorded interviews, traditional and contemporary poetry, modern fiction, etc.).

As children gain both print literacy skills and digital literacy skills, parents can continue to support the HL by creating and interacting in relevant digital environments. Families can text and email each other in the HL. For example, many programs such as smartphone keyboard apps, email programs, and productivity suites might even have the HL as an available language to download and install. Families might create a policy by which they only text each other in the HL, and that they should text using proper spelling and grammar as opposed to typing shortcuts.

Another strategy is to modify existing multimedia that does not already have an interface in the HL. A picture book with simple words in the majority language can be "localized" by placing removable customized stickers with the HL text over the existing text. Tech-savvy parents might be able to create HL captions for existing media. YouTube, for example, supports content creators in writing captions and subtitles; creators could even draw upon crowdsourced captions from community contributions.

In that same vein, parents could venture into the realm of creating brand-new, custom HL materials. Customized book publications have become more cost-effective over the years. Custom e-books are perhaps more cost-effective, especially if many are uploaded to a single child-centric tablet. HL folk songs that might not be readily available by streaming music video media can be sung by the family and recorded using simple equipment (e.g., via smartphone voice recorder app) so that the song can be repeatedly played for the children.

Technology such as translation applications and Chatbots can support instruction with realia by allowing greater virtual access to items that might not be otherwise accessible to the HL learner.

Children can use a ChatBot as a valuable tool to assist in listening to Korean words, expanding vocabulary, grammar practice, conversing in HL and learning Korean culture. For example, cultural items that are readily used in the family's homeland country might not be available in the HL learner's country. Other items might be ancestral or historical, and thus rare overall. Technology can serve as a medium for learning about the item with relevant linguistic input (i.e., parent's explanations, stories, and memories of the item). 2-D and 3-D images, audio recordings, video recordings, 3-D scanned and printed materials, and even virtual reality can provide important opportunities for children to continually engage in environments rich in linguistic and cultural input.

5. Methodology

5.1. Participants

The subjects of this study are two sets of Korean-American parents whose first language is Korean, who have a command of both Korean and English, and who are raising two school-age children. The first and second authors, first-generation Korean immigrants to the U.S. decided to study two Korean parents whose first language is Korean. Both sets of parents arrived in the US in their 20s. The parents' ages range from 46 to 52, and the children's ages range from 9 to 18. The two parents have a strong desire for their children to become bilingual so the family can communicate in Korean at home. However, the children of family A are fluent in their HL while the children of family B have lost their HL. This study investigates factors that may have contributed to the children in family A becoming fluent in their HL and the children of family B experiencing HL attrition.

The purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell 2013) was used to select two specific families who could respond to the research questions with relevant experiences (Marshall 1996). Both families were interested in participating in the study and there was no interference with the normal home and family interactions of the participants. Table 1 and Table 2 show the demographic background of the parents and children of the two families. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participating parents and children to ensure the confidentiality of participants.

Table 1. Demographic Information on Parents

	Family A	Family B
Socio-Economic Level	Upper Middle Class	Middle Class
Education Level	Father: Master's Degree Mother: Doctorate Degree	Father: Associate Degree Mother: Associate Degree
Occupation	Father: Engineer Mother: Professor	Father: Own Business Mother: Housewife
Age of Immigration	Father: 27 Mother: 27	Father: 19 Mother: 23
Family Size	4	4
Number of Children	2 (1 son, 1 daughter)	2 (2 sons)
Place of Residency	Metropolitan City, Pennsylvania	Metropolitan City, Texas
First Language	Korean	Korean
Home Language	Korean	Korean

Table 2 Demographic Information on Children

	Family A Child #1	Family A Child #2	Family B Child #1	Family B Child #2
Name	Chunjae	Minhee	Sam	David
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male
Age (grade)	13 years old (8 th grade, Middle School)	9 years old (4 th grade, Elementary School)	18 years old (12 th grade, High School)	13 years old (8 th grade, Middle School)
Place of Birth	The United States	The United States	The United States	The United States
First Language	Korean	Korean	Korean	Korean
Home Language	Korean	Korean	Mixed Korean and English	Mixed Korean and English

The two families share similar demographic characteristics. The parents of both families moved from Korea to the United States when they were in their 20s and have 2 children born in the United States. The participating parents have lived in the USA for 18 to 30 years. The parents of both families are first-generation Korean immigrants and Korean is the dominant language used between them; both families have Korean spouses and two children; they have strived to teach HL to their children born in the United States; and the families have incorporated media technologies in the maintenance of HL (first language). It is also important to note that the two families have very different characteristics: the sibling's gender and age, the parent's education and SES background, the mother's career, and the degree of authoritarian parenting style of the father. The mother in family B is a full-time housewife, while the mother in family A has a professional career as a college professor. It is evident that Family B's father believes in the chauvinistic role of the father and uses authoritative parenting.

5.2. Data Collection

This comparative case study is a qualitative investigation into two Korean immigrant parents' beliefs of the importance of their children learning the heritage language, how they instill the importance of learning HL, and the instructional methods they implement. The two families with similar backgrounds and the same belief in preserving Korean language and culture in the family were selected while the competency levels of Korean language are different among children of collecting their life stories, memories, and struggles to maintain their heritage language, we sought to go in depth and reveal life experiences from their children's birth to current time based on data collected from semi-structured interviews, observations, and field notes.

As the first two authors are relatives of the participants; the first author is the sister of the mother in Family B and the second the mother in Family A, we were able to observe and take field notes separately about each family's approaches, the nature of home language teaching practices of two families, and language interactions among parents and children.

Observations of the participating families were carried out to gather information on the extent that HL was used for communication and how the participants interact among themselves as a family. For the convenience of collecting data, the first author focused on taking notes about Family B, while the second author took notes about her own family's dialogues and conversations occurred naturally while the family members were engaged in normal and daily life such as walking around the neighborhood, cooking, cleaning, mealtime, and watching TV shows. Specifically, we took notes to compare each family's cultural phenomenon including ways to celebrate Korean holidays and perspectives on preserving heritage language and culture, and the instructional methods they implement to teach the Korean language. We also conducted three semi-structured interviews with parents per family using the parent interview questions listed in Appendix. Each interview took about 45 minutes. The parent interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed to compare how the two families' efforts in teaching HL differ since their children's birth.

5.3. Data Analysis

The comparative case study approach served as the appropriate methodological framework as it aimed to understand the home culture of two Korean immigrant families through investigating detailed descriptions of their beliefs for in-depth understanding of cultural phenomena within a context-specific setting (Stake, 2013). Using a comparative case study approach, we engaged in an in-depth analysis of the families’ life stories and experiences in raising their children. To ensure the validity of the data, we used multiple data sources and member checks. The audio-recorded interview data, observations, and field notes were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis methods to derive meaningful insights. Our observation notes and the interview data were compared and cross-referenced to identify the differences and similarities as well as patterns of the two families’ beliefs, exposure to Korean culture and HL, and HL learning activities. We used the research questions as coding categories to organize and outline the responses. We assigned codes to each response based on its relevance to the research questions and grouped similar codes together into broader categories which represent themes. The identified themes were then further compared and contrasted with the others. Triangulation was done by cross-checking our interpretations of the data with the members of the two participating families. This process led to the emergence of three distinct themes: (1) parents' consistent belief about teaching HL and home language policy of HL (2) exposure to Korean language and culture to children for development and maintenance of HL skills, (3) parents’ involvement in purposeful and meaningful language experiences in rich language Learning environment.

6. Results

Three main themes emerged through grounded theory thematic analysis. For each we discussed the similarities and differences of the two families using examples of parents’ belief about HL instruction, home language policies about the medium of language for family communication, and practices of the two families.

6.1. Theme 1: Parents’ Consistent Belief about Teaching Heritage Language

For Family A	For Family B
<p>The parents consistently believed in the importance of maintaining HL and engaged in continuous language interaction in Korean. Although two children who were born in the United States found English to be an easier language to use between themselves, they became used to communicating with each other in Korean at home. Since they were born, the family’s home language has always been Korean but English vocabulary was simultaneously introduced, mainly by the mother.</p> <p>Supporting Example: An example of the consistent parents’ belief in speaking only HL was an instance in the car when the mother was driving. Chunjae and Minhee were having a conversation in English, the mother asked them, “Can you say that again in Korean?”</p> <p>In order to advance children’s vocabulary, Family A often played a popular Korean ‘word ending game (끝말잇기),’ where children take turns saying a word that begins with the final syllable (끝말) of the previous player’s word. For example, if the first player says the word "고양이" (cat), the next player might say "이어폰" (earphones), using the final syllable "이" from the previous word.</p> <p>We found an interesting phenomenon from the children in Family A who often initiate</p>	<p>There has been a lack of consistent belief about HL language use and ongoing language support for learning and practicing Korean for the children in family B.</p> <p>Family B is a very patriarchal family, with the father having full authority who has decided to teach English only initially. The mother is expected to be quiet and defer to the decisions of the father about education.</p> <p>The father prioritized teaching English language only, and as a result, this family did not place any importance on teaching their HL. The father stated, “<i>assimilation into mainstream American culture is a priority. I prioritized teaching the English language to better prepare for my children for a future living in USA</i>”</p> <p>This family’s language policy was reversed when the father changed his views about HL education when Sam, the first son, became 7 years old, and David, the second son, was 2 years of age. The father then started to use Korean to communicate with their children. Family B provided confusing mixed messages to their children, alternating between the opinions of “<i>forget about Korean</i>” and, “<i>study Korean again.</i>”</p>

<p>conversations with Koreans they encounter in Korean. For example, when they order food at a Korean restaurant in the USA or anytime encountering Koreans, the language they use is Korean. We observed that their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) of HL was more developed than their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The children practice speaking and listening daily with parents and by listening to Korean music and watching TV shows. On the other hand, reading and writing skills are not frequently practiced as they only occasionally read Korean books, and get a chance to write Koreans when they text or email with grandparents.</p>	<p>Supporting Examples: The father in Family B strongly insisted on teaching English only at the beginning when Sam was born. He often claimed to his wife that, <i>“I am struggling a lot as a Korean immigrant without fluent English speaking ability, I have experienced discrimination or faced challenges in securing a stable professional position. So, I want you to speak only English to our son. I of course want to speak only English to my child to ensure that he can assimilate into mainstream American life.”</i> Sam and David questioned, <i>“why should I learn Korean?”</i> They believed they are American, saying, <i>“I will not go to Korea, so I do not need to speak Korean.”</i></p>
---	--

6.2. Theme 2: Simultaneous Exposure to Korean Language and Culture to Children for the Development of HL

This theme alerts other immigrant parents to the importance of creating a consistent educational environment to maintain HL, as Family B has experienced difficulty in continuously teaching HL, while Family A has not.

For Family A	For Family B
<p>We observed that the heritage language was used simultaneously with English. The two children, Chunjae and Minhee of family A, were exposed to and learned both English and Korean simultaneously from the time they were born. They grew to understand and use both languages well enough to be fluent bilinguals.</p> <p>When children of family A began to communicate only in English, the parents would quickly encourage them to put the sentences into Korean again and repeat. This helped to assure that they practiced and used the heritage language on a daily basis.</p>	<p>In this family, the father has spoken to children in English since the children’s birth, and the mother has not pressured them to speak Korean although she wanted to teach them the HL. Mother’s opinion about teaching two languages simultaneously has been ignored and her husband insists on teaching English as they are Americans and HL is not needed to live in the United States.</p> <p>We observed a lack of interest in learning HL in the two children, the risk of HL attrition, and eventual loss as Sam and David learned HL sequentially, meaning that Korean was added after initially learning English.</p>
<p>Supporting Example: Family A regularly visited family members in Korea during summer months. Parents realized the importance of children spending time with their grandparents and other extended family to build strong relationships. Through traveling each summer, children were exposed to both Korean culture and language. Since Family A are not members of a Korean church and children don’t attend Korean School at home, they have very</p>	<p>Supporting Example: Family B has attended a Korean church where the children are exposed to Korean language and people at the church and the Sunday School.</p> <p>To expose the two children to Korean culture and language, the father decided to send them to a Korean language school affiliated with a local Korean church and asked the mother to start teaching Korean to better communicate with his sons.</p>

limited access to the Korean community in the U.S.

Chunjae and Minhee were exposed to both “surface level” and “deep level” of Korean culture every day. They practiced surface level culture by celebrating Korean holidays such as New Year and *Chuseok* (Korean Thanksgiving) in a traditional Korean way. They would wear hanbok on holidays, have rice cake soup on New Year’s Day, and seaweed soup on their birthdays. Other Korean holidays like Parents Day, and Children’s Day were celebrated and included gifts.

On a deeper level, the day of *jesa*, the day of their ancestor’s death, the family got together for the traditional ancestral rites/ceremony, prepared special *jesa* foods, and bowed to pictures of the ancestors.

In addition, Chunjae and Minhee practiced deep culture every day. As they know it is important to show respect to someone who is older, they try to act appropriately. For example, when someone who is older gives them something, they receive it with two hands to show respect. They always greet elders by bowing and wait for the elders to begin eating at the dining table. Even at the dining table, there are certain ways to have the table setting. The rice bowl should be on the left and the soup bowl should always be on the right.

The mother would instruct them by saying, “*Your soup bowl is on the wrong side. You need to have your soup bowl on your right and your rice bowl on your left.*” When Chunjae asked, “*Why do I need to switch them?*”, she would reply, “*If you put your soup bowl on your left, it is for the dead people.*”

The children's Korean practice includes completing worksheets at home and at Korean School for one year. Most Korean language practices are copying words and sentences, and dictating rather than writing expressively.

Sam believed English is more important. Even though the mother tried to teach Korean as often as she could and spoke Korean naturally to him, he strongly refused to participate in Korean language practice at home.

Often Sam played the role of English translator for the family. For example, he wrote an excuse note for an absence to send to the teacher. He frequently fixed mother’s English pronunciation and sentences.

Unlike Sam, David, reluctantly, followed mom’s instruction to study Korean and was able to speak Korean.

He was tested to be qualified for a public preschool-service which was intended for children whose first language is not English and failed a phonemic awareness and a speaking test in English.

David began losing Korean as soon as he started preschool. He received daily ESL service until the end of kindergarten with an emphasis placed exclusively on English fluency. Once in school his language use remained primarily English during school hours and while playing with his American friends or watching television. English was also the language used for extensive homework assignments each night. His parents did not want to stress David out more with the demand to learn HL.

6.3. Theme 3: Parent Involvement in Purposeful and Meaningful Language Experiences in Rich Language Learning Environment

We found significant differences in the parents’ efforts to ensure the children have useful HL experiences between the two families.

For Family A	For Family B
<p>Family A selected children’s books written in Korean to read aloud to their children and encouraged them to ask questions in both languages. The parents fully supported their children learning to use two languages simultaneously and naturally.</p> <p>As Family A traveled every summer to Korea to visit, they purchased additional Korean children’s books each time they visited. Chunjae and Minhee frequently read those books aloud to practice reading.</p>	<p>Family B has limited literature and print materials. They used Korean language textbooks published in Korea and sent to Korean schools worldwide. Although they didn’t purchase trade books published in Korean, they occasionally checked out children’s books available in Korean from a public library.</p> <p>After the traditional Korean father in Family B commanded the family to stop speaking HL, the mother communicated with her children in her</p>

<p>This family watched long-running Korean variety shows on TV together every weekend. Such TV shows including, ‘Dad, Where are You Going? (아빠 어디가?)’ and ‘Running Man (러닝맨)’ are their favorite to watch and practice conversational Korean.</p>	<p>“broken English”. During the years of not using HL, the children suffered significant setbacks in developing an interest in learning HL.</p>
<p>Supporting Example: To communicate with Grandmothers in Korea, Family A used email and KakaoTalk text messages. Since they know how to use a Korean keyboard, they would type in Korean and also read their grandmothers’ messages in Korean. The function of auto spell check also helped them to practice Korean and see the correct spellings.</p> <p>For example, both grandmother and Minhee love flowers and plants. They take pictures of nature with flowers around them and share with each other through KakaoTalk. They engage in conversation in Korean. This is the way they connect, relate, and share their interests.</p> <p>Another example is when the family is watching a Korean television show together and Chunjae says, “<i>what did he say? What does ‘숙면’ mean?</i>” The mother responds, “<i>it means ‘깊게 잠을 잔다는 뜻’ 이고, 영어로는, deep sleep.</i>” “<i>Oh, I see</i>”, replies Chunjae.</p>	<p>Supporting Example: Unlike the examples in Family A, the children of family B refused to speak to any adults who wanted to engage in Korean conversation. For example, if their aunt asks them to speak with her in Korean, they refuse to talk to her, whereas if she says that she will speak in English, they welcome a conversation with her. When their grandmother called using a video chatting application, such as KakaoTalk, they ran away and demonstrated no interest in speaking in Korean as the grandmother can’t speak in English. Even when the simple questions are asked in Korean, the children choose to respond in English as they cannot recall appropriate Korean vocabulary. The younger child, David, states that he understands Korean but mostly responds in English. Consequently, the family conversations between the parents and children are limited.</p>

7. Discussion

7.1. Consistency of Valuing HL and Simultaneously Teaching Two Languages

Family members from nuclear and extended families should use Korean and involve siblings to interact between them. They emphasized the practices DeCapua and Wintgerst (2009) described as instrumental in promoting and maintaining the HL, which are consistent parental efforts and the promotion of positive attitudes towards the HL. According to Haynes (2007), encouraging students to speak HL would positively influence ELs to learn English as a second language. In Sequential Bilingual and Coordinate Bilingual instructions, the children learned one language first and then moved on acquiring the second language. Thus, those two languages work independently, and there are more translations from one language to other in the usage.

Children of immigrants grow up speaking their home language orally and informally with their family (Foulis & Barajas, 2019). The children in Family A consider themselves bilingual, fluent in both Korean and English. They are competent in using BICS, but not CALP because they don’t attend school where the primary language is their HL, therefore they have very limited instruction in that language and don’t have the chance to learn the academic language. Bilingual children usually learn and practice conversational language with the family members in informal settings. Immigrant children’s main language is English. Thus, they can’t use scientific language learning with HL. Family A’s children have mastered Korean communicative language at the same level as their peer age group living in Korea. However, there are limitations to gaining BICS 100% due to the slang used by their peers in Korea. It is difficult to learn and stay current with slang without constant exposure to Korean media. Often, slang is developed through TV shows and other media. Family A consistently believed in the importance of maintaining HL and provided continuous language instruction throughout the children’s childhood. Similarly, many Korean immigrants in the United States also perceive the HL as an important aspect of their identity and cultural heritage that needs to be maintained and valued (Song, 2016).

Our study underscores that Korean families who value teaching their heritage language and realize the benefits of bilingualism for their children should consistently strive to make time to actively interact with their children. Parents are primary teachers of HL and should use a variety of efforts for home instruction in teaching their HL (Lee & Gupta, 2020). The parents of Family A believe that emphasizing a “Korean only” language policy at home has been effective. provided comprehensible input and scaffolding to teach HL (Kang, 2015).

Family A emphasized the practices DeCapua and Wintegerst (2009) described as instrumental in promoting and maintaining the HL, such as consistent parental language practices, scaffolding, providing comprehensible input, and the promotion of positive attitudes towards the HL. Both families used their heritage language as the parents see Korean as their dominant language, yet the children's ability levels to speak HL are different depending on their parents' conviction that it is their responsibility to encourage and promote their children's HL development. As parents of Family A were confident that their children would have sufficient exposure to English at school and outside home, they adopted an explicit language policy of encouraging their children to speak only HL at home. Unlike Family A, the mother and father of Family B did not have a consistent belief or opinion, so language choice was left completely up to their children (Lanza, 2007, p. 52). Our finding is consistent with previous studies (Kopeliovich, 2010; Revis, 2017) that parents' explicit and consistent home language management is more likely to lead to speaking the HL. Thus, parents whose primary language is not English should consistently create environments where their children can speak, read, and write in their HL language.

Regardless of the parents' English language fluency level, the study found that Korean American families believe they must speak Korean at home and are highly motivated to teach their heritage language as they realize the advantages of being bilingual personally (family cohesion and communication), culturally (strengthened ties to roots), and professionally (greater employment prospects).

Bilingual parents should praise their children for being able to acquire both HL and English, not suppress one or the other. This way, immigrant families can engage their children in practicing their interpersonal communication language skills (Cummins, 1996) using their HL which is their primary language at home and expose English simultaneously. When these bilingual children are enrolled in school, the best setting for them to continuously maintain their HL is a school in which the two languages are used, and where becoming proficient in both is considered a significant intellectual and cultural achievement (Manning, Baruth, & Lee, 2017). Proficiency in speaking a HL varies depending on the level of exposure and practice. HL learners often feel that they are not proficient in their HL as it is difficult to use both languages equally fluently in all situations. The capacity to use a language depends on various factors such as the context, needs, and the person whom the individual is communicating with.

7.2 Motivate Learning HL Using Meaningful Language Learning Activities

The absence of familiar and societal recognition of the rationale for maintaining their HL is a major factor in Korean youths' lack of motivation to maintain their HL. Korean-American children who are motivated to learn Korean often also have the desire to improve communication with parents and relatives, to develop a closer association with the Korean- American community, and to expand their career options (Cho, Cho, & Tse, 1997). Even though they have little time for HL learning due to busy academic schedules, extracurricular activities, and family responsibilities, the children of Family A made time as a family and put conscious effort into creating a rich language learning home environment to practice HL because they were highly motivated to teach and learn HL. As children of Family A have a deeper connection through frequent interactions with relatives and friends who communicate in Korean, they have a compelling reason to speak their HL and maintain their culture and identity. The children of family A feel that learning and speaking Korean is a way to maintain family ties and respect their cultural heritage and grandparents who expect them to do so.

The biggest obstacle for children of Family B learning Korean was limited exposure to the HL. When there was no exposure to the Korean language for the first eight years of his life, Sam lost interest in adding his HL as he was already comfortable speaking in English with his parents. If Sam and David grew up in a home where Korean was used consistently, they would have had many opportunities to hear and practice speaking Korean. David had begun learning and using HL, but schooling actually had a detrimental impact on maintaining it. Partnership between American mainstream schools, immigrant parents, and heritage language (HL) schools is necessary to include children's HL in the daily school curriculum and establish a conducive atmosphere for HL learning.

As their father suddenly expected them to learn Korean after attending Korean language school for only about a year, he was anxious that the sons' Korean was not drastically improved. As Cho, Cho, and Tse (1997) indicated one of the obstacles to achieving higher levels of HL proficiency is that Korean-American youth can feel overwhelmed when their parents and other HL speakers hold unrealistic expectations. This shows that parents need to be patient and understand that it takes time to gain language confidence in using Korean. Otherwise, language learners' self-confidence is in jeopardy when they realize their level of Korean proficiency is not enough and they lose confidence to use Korean (Lee, 2002).

The two children, Sam and David of Family B, may lack the motivation and interest to learn Korean because they do not have practical benefits and realistic functions to use Korean especially since they feel disconnected from communicating their cultural heritage as they have avoided an occasion to use Korean. Another obstacle for Family B is a lack of learning resources to support their HL development. While there are some language materials such as textbooks and a Korean Bible available for learning Korean, Sam and David did not have access to a large collection of children's trade books and media in Korean as those children in Family B. Sam and David who already learned only English felt that Korean is a difficult language to learn when they started learning it due to drastic differences in its grammar, pronunciation, and writing system. This can make it challenging for many Korean-American children to master their HL, especially if they don't use it at home or have access to qualified HL language teachers in language immersion programs. Although Korean youth acknowledge the importance of knowing their HL, the existing language courses in community-based language schools are not meeting their needs to become fluent HL speakers.

This study confirms that parents should not be afraid to teach their native language. Instead, they need to encourage their children to acquire two languages, their HL as well as English, through real life, purposeful, and meaningful language experiences. HL must be spoken daily so that children will not lose proficiency. Many parents still believe children should learn only one language initially, and then add on another when they are more mature. They are not convinced that children can speak their mother tongue at home while learning English in school.

Some teachers think English Learners should not be allowed to speak their native language even at home and believe students will be confused by speaking two languages and thus delayed in improving their reading and writing of English at school. We found these fears to be common but unfounded. It is also inappropriate to tell students that they live in the United States and therefore must focus on learning English.

8. Implication and Conclusion

This study examines how two similarly situated Korean immigrant families support or hinder their children to learn their HL and maintain their cultural heritage.

We found not only clear differences between the two families but also, each Korean immigrant family's belief, language policy, and HL teaching practices vary and evolve as their perspectives change depending on the individual ideology. This study provides significant insight into understanding Korean immigrants' beliefs of about teaching heritage language, its complexity, and the various factors that influence it such as parents' personal perspectives, experiences, and values. As Jo (2001) noted HL speakers' personal language repertoire and use reflect their individual family's relationships and environment and locations (place of residence and relationship to the homeland) through which their transnational lived histories have been constituted.

Many naturally bilingual children who have grown up in the United States wish to speak their native language. Those who have lost their native language regret that they didn't keep up with it. They are fluent only in English, and unable to communicate with their parents and relatives who don't speak much English. Thus, these two generations develop a cultural gap and loose connections that come with shared language and culture within their own community. It is important for parents and teachers to encourage, raise, and nurture bilingual and bicultural children. They should provide consistent opportunities for the use of HL to increase proficiency rather than allow children to experience language attrition. Although it took a few years, Family B participated in our study and ultimately realized that children's bilingualism is beneficial for both language and cognitive development in HL which extends their metalinguistic knowledge and application in learning English.

Some stakeholders and teachers are against promoting bilingualism in their schools or offer HL instruction because they believe children will "pick up" their HL automatically in their home. Also, some believe that public resources must be allocated to generating fluent speakers and writers of dominant languages such as English and Spanish, thus, HL instruction is not available in the school system. The authors hope to emphasize that immigrant families need to find a way to support their children in learning English at no cost to their HL.

Parents of language minorities should recognize their role as first-language teachers and utilize unique and effective ways to prevent HL loss and support their children's biliteracy. As the ability to speak HL is strongly tied to accessing cultural capital (Park, 2022), teachers need to encourage immigrant parents to support children to be fluent in their HL while learning the language of mainstream society. Teachers can foster bilingual children's positive attitudes towards both cultures, living in culturally appropriate ways with awareness and empathy, and expressing their bicultural identity with confidence (Baker, 2011, p.4; Choi, 2021). Teachers need to see what these children bring to the classroom adds value to the classes, although they are different and unknown, and find ways to support them learning and using two languages. Teachers need to support other language speakers who grow up

speaking and listening to their HL so that they will continue improving HL to become bilingual and bicultural global leaders.

We recommend the following specific practical ideas to immigrant families and HL speaking families. By adhering to these guidelines, families can support children to acquire their HL naturally, simultaneously, and proficiently.

- **Speak both heritage and English languages simultaneously daily.** Children can acquire an HL naturally through a source of natural communication using a subconscious process during which they are unaware of grammatical rules. Parents need to communicate their HL naturally at home during their interactions with children without concern about teaching grammar rules. While parents should be eager to raise bilingual children, they need to understand that their children can become bilingual but usually through keeping up with social and conversational language, not formally studying academic language. Children of immigrants to the United States generally do not receive a formal education in their HL. Korean parents should avoid expecting their children to be competent and fluent in academic Korean language without providing learning opportunities in disciplinary language education. Increased availability of language immersion programs from preschool to high school would also provide support to children maintaining their HL as well as learning English.
- **Parents should have the same belief about teaching heritage language.** After discussing home language policy, parents need to decide on a course to follow. Bilingual parents often think their children will be confused using two different languages, and as a result, be delayed in learning English in school. This is a myth. Wong-Fillmore (2000) claimed that the loss of HL negatively impacts children's identities, their relationships with parents and grandparents, and even their academic accomplishments.
- **Build motivation to learn heritage language in children.** Student's motivation plays a critical role in success in learning language. Since the integratively motivated students tend to be more active in learning, there is a higher chance for them to become more successful in learning the language as well. This leads to the reason why parents and teachers need to pay attention to supporting children to build motivation to learn heritage language.
Instead of relying only on textbooks to teach the language, exposing children to various ways of learning such as informal peer tutoring and peer interaction can motivate children to learn and develop a positive attitude in learning. Interacting with friends who have similar interests or who are fluent in the heritage language can make the learning process more enjoyable. For example, as K-culture such as K-Pop, K-Drama or K-Food is becoming popular today in the U.S.A., teachers can introduce K-culture to motivate students to learn its culture and language with friends. As technology is an integral part of children's lives, new communication and information technology tools such as the Chatbot can also motivate and facilitate learning and developing HL.
- **Foster children's HL acquisition by providing a positive home environment rich in language resources.** A language-rich environment which stimulates listening, speaking, and reading is fundamental to bolstering children's HL acquisition. Provide children's literature, videos, and songs that enable them to perceive and comprehend HL content that slightly exceeds their current language proficiency so that they do not perceive learning Korean as a difficult task and overwhelmed. Parents need to read trade books and bilingual books in the HL that correspond to their children's age and language level, as this can facilitate the acquisition of novel vocabulary and HL structures.
- **Engage children in age-appropriate HL discourse daily.** During conversation in HL, listen to questions and responses attentively, and offer constructive feedback to help them refine their linguistic skills. While it is essential to respond to children's utterances, parents need to refrain from correcting every mistake made, as this may impede their confidence in speaking HL which may discourage them in learning their HL.

References

- Aimin, L. (2013). The study of second language acquisition under socio-cultural theory. *American journal of educational research*, 1(5), 162-167.
- Adams, M. (2014). Social justice and education. In M. Reisch (Ed.), *Routledge international handbook of social justice* (pp. 249–268). London: Routledge.
- Akamatsu, N. (2003). The Effects of First Language Orthographic Features on Second Language Reading in Text. *Language Learning*. 53(2), 207-231.
- Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (Vol. 79). Multilingual matters.
- Bloomfield, L. (1927). Literate and illiterate speech. *American Speech*, 2(10), 432-439.
- Cho, G., Cho, K. S., & Tse, L. (1997). Why ethnic minorities want to develop their heritage language: The case of Korean-Americans. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 10(2), 106-112.

- Choi, J. (2021). Navigating tensions and leveraging identities: A young trilingual child's emerging language ideologies. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 1-14.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cummins, J. (1996). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society*. Los Angeles: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- DeCapua, A., & Wintergerst, A. (2009). Second-generation language maintenance and identity: A case study. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 32(1), 5–25.
- Edwards, V., Pemberton, L., Knight, J., & Monaghan, F. (2002). Fabula: A bilingual multimedia authoring environment for children exploring minority languages. *Language Learning & Technology*, 6(2), 59–69. Retrieved from <http://lt.msu.edu/vol6num2/edwards/>
- Foulis, E., & Barajas, J. (2019). Weaving Our Histories: Latin@ Ethnography in the Heritage Language Classroom. *Journal of Folklore and Education*, 6, 98-107.
- Gardner, R. C. & Lambert, W. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Glenne, Charle, L. (2002). One language or two? *Principal*, 82(2), 28-31.
- Glenn, C. L. (2002). One Language or Two? *Principal*. 82(2), 28-31.
- Hanson, V. L., & Padden, C. A. (2009). Computers and videodisc technology for bilingual ASL/English instruction of deaf children. In D. Nix & R. Spiro (Eds.), *Cognition, education, and multimedia: Exploring ideas in high technology* (49–63). Hillsdale, NJ: Routledge.
- Haynes, J. (2007). *Getting Started with English Language Learners: How Educators Can Meet the Challenge*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD
- Jo, H. Y. (2001). Heritage Language Learning and Ethnic Identity: Korean Americans' Struggle with Language Authorities. *Language Culture and Curriculum*, 14(1), 26-41.
- Kachru, B. B. (1980). Bilingualism. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 1, 2-18.
- Kennedy, K. D., & Romo, H. D. (2013). "All colors and hues": An autoethnography of a multiethnic family's strategies for bilingualism and multiculturalism. *Family Relations*, 62, 109–124. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2012.00742.x
- Kopeliovich, S. (2010). Family language policy: A case study of a Russian-Hebrew bilingual family: Toward a theoretical framework. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 4(3), 162–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2010.490731>
- Krashen, S. (1988). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2000). Introducing sociocultural theory. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 1-26). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lanza, E. (2007). Multilingualism and the family. In P. Auer & Li Wei (Eds.), *Handbook of multilingualism and multilingual communication* (pp. 45–68). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Lee, G.-L., & Gupta, A. (2020). Raising children to speak their heritage language in the USA: Roles of Korean parents. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 11(4), 521-531. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1104.01>
- 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.
- Lohndal, T., Rothman, J., Kupisch, T., & Westergaard, M. (2019). Heritage language acquisition: What it reveals and why it is important for formal linguistic theories. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 13(12), e12357.
- Manning, L., Baruth, L., & Lee, G. L. (2017). *Multicultural Education of Children & Adolescents*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Marshall, M. N. 1996. "Sampling for Qualitative Research." *Family Practice*. 13(6): 522–525.
- Nicoladis, E., & Secco, G. (2000). The role of a child's productive vocabulary in the language choice of a bilingual family. *First Language*, 20(58), 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014272370002005801>
- Park, M. Y. (2022). Language ideologies, heritage language use, and identity construction among 1.5-generation Korean immigrants in New Zealand. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(7), 2469-2481.
- Park, S. M., & Sarkar, M. (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.

- Revis, M. (2017). Family language policy in refugee-background communities: Towards a model of language management and practices. *Journal of Home Language Research*, 2, 40-62.
<https://doi.org/10.16993/jhrlr.30>
- Romaine, S. (1995). *Bilingualism* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Rothman J (2009) Understanding the nature and outcomes of early bilingualism: Romance languages as heritage languages. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 13, 155–163.
- Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *Journal of the National Association of Bilingual Education*, 8, 15-34.
- Simonsson, M. (2004). Technology use of Hispanic bilingual teachers: A function of their beliefs, attitudes and perceptions on peer technology use in the classroom. *Journal of Instructional Psychology; Mobile*, 31(3), 257–266.
- Song, K. (2016). “No one speaks Korean at school!”: Ideological discourses on languages in a Korean family. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 39(1), 4-19.
- Souto-Manning, M. (2006). A critical look at bilingualism discourse in public schools: Autoethnographic reflections of a vulnerable observer. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 30(2), 559–577.
 doi:10.1080/15235882.2006.10162890
- Stake, R. E. (2013). *Multiple case study analysis*. Guilford Press.
- Szecs, T. & Szilagy, J. (2012). Immigrant Hungarian Families' Perceptions of New Media Technologies in the Transmission of Heritage Language and Culture. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 25(3), 265-281.
- Thomas, W. & Collier, V. (1997). *School effectiveness for language minority students*. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. Washington, DC: George Washington University Center for the Study of Language and Education.
- Valdes, D. (2000). “Introduction,” in *Spanish for Native Speakers*, I. (New York, NY: Harcourt College), 1-32.
- Vasquez, B. (2013). Politico-economic influence and social outcome of English language among Filipinos: An autoethnography. *University of the Visayas - Journal of Research*, 7(1), 183–194. Retrieved from <http://www.uvjor.ph/index.php/uvjor/article/view/28>
- Verhoeven, L. (1991). Acquisition of biliteracy. *AILA Review*. 8, 61-74.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wong-Fillmore, L. (2000). Loss of family languages: Should educators be concerned? *Theory into Practice*, 39(4), 203–210.
- Wood, D., Bruner, J., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem-solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17, 89–100.

Appendix

Parent Interview Questions in English and Korean

- How much have you used Korean with your children at home? 가정에서 자녀들과 얼마나 한국어를 사용하셨습니까?
- What is your language policy regarding the use of Korean at home? 가정에서 한국어 사용에 관한 언어규율은 무엇입니까?
- Why or why not do you believe it is important for your children to learn and maintain Korean language? 자녀가 한국어를 배우는것이 중요하다고 믿는다면 또는 반대로 중요하지 않다고 생각한다면 각각 그 이유를 밝혀 주십시오.
- What do you and your spouse feel about your children's ability to speak Korean? 자녀들이 얼마나 한국어를 잘 한다고 생각하십니까?
- How do you help your children understand your beliefs regarding the value of learning Korean? 자녀들이 한국어를 배우는 가치에 관한 당신의 믿음을 어떻게 이해시키십니까?
- How do you support your child(ren)'s learning Korean? List any teaching activities you have used to teach the heritage language. (e.g., sending child(ren) to Korean school, reading, helping with homework from Korean school, etc) 당신의 자녀가 한국어를 배우는 것을 어떻게 지원하십니까? 가르치는 방법을 나열하십시오.(예를 들면, 한글학교에 보낸다든지, 한글학교 숙제를 돕는다든지 등)

7. How do you use Korean books and media in Korean (Korean movies, video clips, or news) to teach Korean to your children?
자녀들이 한국책, 한국영화나 동영상, 뉴스를 집에서 보며 공부합니까?
8. What is your children's attitude toward learning and using their heritage language?
자녀들이 모국어를 배우고 사용하려는 태도는 어떻습니까?
9. What is your children's plan to maintain their heritage language?
자녀들이 모국어를 배우고 사용하려는 태도는 어떻습니까?