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IDENTITY AND VOLUNTARY LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE EFFORTS: A CASE OF BILINGUAL KOREAN-AMERICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN HAWAI'I

Summary. Reporting on the experiences of four bilingual Korean-American university students enrolled in Korean language classes in Hawai'i, this case study focuses on their identity development and voluntary efforts to achieve heritage language (HL) competence. According to the participants' narratives, they all experienced regression in their HL abilities and language shift from Korean to English after entering school. However, they began to regain HL skills as adolescents, which was possible due both to their voluntary engagement with HL literacy and speaking practices and to the abundance of opportunities to learn and speak the HL in the home and community. Transnational connections with their heritage nation, including Korean media and visits to Korea, were key in motivating and facilitating their voluntary HL learning. Their narratives further show that the HL played an important role in the participants' ability to construct a strong sense of ethnic identity, and that they tended to view themselves as part of two distinct cultures. They were connected to the norms and values of both the receiving country's culture and the culture of their heritage nation. As second-generation immigrant children, they learned to utilize their bilingual and bicultural knowledge to navigate between the two cultures in a flexible manner, to construct situated identities, and to avoid conflicts and achieve collective identity, solidarity, and group membership. The study's insights into the role of voluntary effort in HL learning and identity development have implications for HL education.

Keywords: heritage language learning; identity; Korean-American; Korean language; transnational connection; voluntary effort.

Introduction

According to the US Census Bureau (2018), nearly 67.3 million US residents were born overseas, and almost 21.9% of the population aged five and over speaks a language other than English at home. Heritage language (HL) maintenance is an important issue for immigrant families because language is linked to ethnic identity and family communication (Lee, 2002; Lee & Kim, 2007). In immigrant families, the HL can be a powerful vehicle for preserving and transmitting cultural values and traditions. General definitions describe HL as any immigrant language spoken by immigrants and their children

(Montrul, 2020), and HL speakers as “children of first- and second-generation immigrants who have some contact with their heritage language despite using the dominant language in everyday lives” (Romanowski, 2021, p. 1215).

Given the unequal power relations between majority and minority languages and cultures, it is usually not easy for immigrant children to attain and/or maintain high levels of HL proficiency, especially literacy skills, or to develop positive bilingual and bicultural identities. According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), particular identities tend to be “legitimized or devalued in the context of global and local political economies” (p. 13). Young immigrant children are “often subject to the language assimilation pressures in their immediate school environment and fail to recognize the potential payoffs of learning the HL in the long run” (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009, p. 92). They may distance themselves from their ethnic identity and HL and experience stagnation or even regression in their HL proficiency and use after starting school (Kang, 2010), although some later become interested in (re)connecting with their heritage and choose to study their HL at university (Lee & Kim, 2007).

In the case of Korean-American college-age HL learners, a number of studies have reported that their main reasons for taking Korean language classes in university are to get back to their roots and to develop their identity as Koreans (e.g., Jo, 2001; Kang & Kim, 2012; Kim, 2006; Lee, 2002; Lee & Kim, 2007; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Song, 2010). For example, Lee and Kim (2007) observed that heritage-related reasons played a more important role than school-related reasons in Korean-American university students’ desire to learn the HL; the students viewed the language as “the main connector to their roots and their family and an expressor of who they are as a cultural being” (p. 168).

Although identity issues have been examined in the field of Korean HL education, most research has focused on the correlation between the degree of ethnic belonging and HL proficiency, motivational orientations for studying the HL, and identity and HL practices (e.g., Choi, 2015; Jeon, 2010; Jo, 2001; Kang, 2004; Kang, 2013; Kang & Kim, 2012; Kim, 2006; Lee, 2002; Lee & Kim, 2007). Less attention has been paid to the identity development

of Korean-American youth who maintain and develop their HL in diasporic contexts. Because the multiethnic population is rapidly growing in the US, and the linguistic situation of bilingual students is more complex than that of monolingual English-speaking students (Brown, 2009; Kwon, 2017), it is crucial to better understand how minority bilingual youth develop their HL and identity. Reporting on the experiences of four bilingual Korean-American university students in Hawai'i, a relatively underresearched population and region, this study focuses on their identity development and voluntary efforts to achieve HL competence. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How has growing up with two languages and cultures influenced these four Korean-American university students' development of a sense of ethnic identity?
2. What voluntary factors have influenced the participants' HL maintenance, use, and development?

Ethnic Identity and Heritage Language

Ethnic identity, which can be defined as "an individual's sense of self in terms of membership in a particular ethnic group" (Phinney et al., 2001, p. 496), is affected by a variety of factors, such as language, behavior, tradition, values, and attitudes towards the ethnic group (Phinney, 1990). A number of studies on HL maintenance among Korean-Americans have focused on the relationship between HL proficiency and ethnic identity (e.g., Cho, 2000; Choi, 2015; Kang & Kim, 2012; Lee, 2002). These studies have generally shown that HL proficiency and ethnic identity are strongly and positively correlated; the higher an HL speaker's Korean proficiency, the stronger their ethnic identity as Korean, and vice versa. In addition, Korean-Americans' HL competence has an impact on their social interactions and relationships with co-ethnic Korean speakers. For example, in Cho's (2000) study, those who had high Korean proficiency were well-connected to their co-ethnic community and had a greater understanding of Korean cultural values, whereas those with weaker Korean competence tended to avoid contact with

Koreans and participate less in Korean cultural activities.

Ethnic identity is a dynamic construct that can change over the course of one's life (Phinney et al., 2001; Tse, 1999, 2000). Analyzing the narratives of Asian-Americans in the US, Tse (1999) proposed that they tend to undergo four major stages of identity development, moving from assimilative to additive modes over time. In Stage 1, ethnic unawareness, ethnic minorities are not aware of their minority status due to limited contact with other ethnic groups. As they enter school and interact more with various ethnic groups, they transition into Stage 2, ethnic ambivalence/evasion, where they notice their minority status and develop ambivalent or negative attitudes towards their own ethnic group. They may reject being identified with their ethnic group and prefer to adopt the norms of the dominant group. Stage 3, ethnic emergence, begins in adolescence or early adulthood, when ethnic minorities realize that it is difficult for them to fully become part of the dominant group. Finally, in Stage 4, ethnic identity incorporation, they join the appropriate ethnic American group (e.g., Asian-Americans) and embrace their belonging in that ethnic group. While the model illustrates possible, general steps of ethnic identity development among children from dual cultural backgrounds, it is not intended to suggest that all ethnic minorities undergo all stages in a linear manner or reach the highest stage of identity development. Some may favor the dominant culture and may not identify with the minority ethnic group even as adults, whereas others may integrate both into their overall identity (Brown, 2009).

Ethnic identity can also change depending on social context (Phinney et al., 2001). The fluidity of HL speakers' ethnic identities is reflected in their language practices. Studies have shown, for example, that some Korean-American HL speakers use pronouns ("we" vs. "they" referring to Americans and Koreans) as well as code-mixing/switching between English and Korean to construct and exhibit their identities depending on the situation (e.g., Jeon, 2010; Jo, 2001; Kang, 2004; Kang, 2013).

Research has also examined factors influencing HL maintenance, use, and development. Immigrant parents' attitudes towards the HL have been found to have significant impacts on children's identity and HL learning. For example, studies have demonstrated that many Korean immigrant parents in

English-speaking countries consider bilingualism in English and Korean to be beneficial for family communication (Kwon, 2017; Park & Sarkar, 2007), cultural and ethnic identity formation (Park & Sarkar, 2007; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009), and job opportunities (Kwon, 2017). Most of these studies indicate that these parents invest in teaching their children the HL, which positively affects the children's HL development. Nevertheless, a high level of parental involvement does not always lead to HL fluency; children's interest in learning the HL is crucial. The children of immigrants may be compelled or choose to attend co-ethnic HL churches, community-based HL schools, and university classes, as well as to visit the motherland, activities that can help HL learners use and practice the HL and define their identities (e.g., Jo, 2001; Kwon, 2017). However, some of these children may regard the HL as unnecessary or irrelevant to their lives and resist speaking it and may view the HL as having little value or use in professional contexts (e.g., Palm et al., 2019; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009).

The Korean Community in Hawai'i

While Korean immigration to Hawai'i has a long and rich history, dating back to the first arrival of Korean plantation workers in 1903, the number of Korean immigrants to the US, including Hawai'i, has surged since the federal 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act. According to the US Census Bureau (2018), in 2018, 3.4% (47,394) of the 1.42 million people in Hawai'i identified themselves as Korean or Korean-American, making them the state's fourth-largest Asian ethnic group after Filipino, Japanese, and Chinese. Korean was the seventh most frequently used non-English language among non-English speakers in Hawai'i, where almost 26.6% of the population (age 5 and older) spoke a language other than English at home, in 2015–2019 (US Census Bureau, 2019). As of 2018, seven public schools and 11 community-based weekend schools provided Korean language instruction for children. The weekend schools are operated by some of the approximately 90 Korean Christian churches in Hawai'i, which have both religious and nonreligious functions for immigrants, acting as cultural brokers between them and the larger society (Kwon, 2003).

The Study

Participants

The participants of this study were four Korean-American HL learners (two female and two male) who had a relatively high level of HL ability and were enrolled in an advanced-level Korean language course at a university in Hawai'i. I refer to the participants as Sora, Semi, Jimin, and Taewoo (pseudonyms). I got to know them through their Korean language instructor. These four students were selected because they possessed diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and expressed an interest in participating in the study. Given their prior knowledge of the HL, all four participants had been placed directly into the advanced-level Korean class. They all described their motivation for enrolling in the course as further improving their Korean speaking and literacy skills.

The participants had grown up speaking Korean with their parents, who had immigrated to the US from Korea, and two of them (Semi and Taewoo) had also studied Korean at a community-based HL school for at least 10 years before entering university. The participants noted that they had to use Korean at home because their parents generally spoke little English at home and strongly emphasized the importance of their children maintaining their HL and developing an ethnic identity. For this reason, when the participants began elementary school, they all had to take English as a Second Language (ESL) courses for one to two years. Except for Sora's mother, who had immigrated to the US during her middle school years, the participants' parents had limited English proficiency.

To give some brief background information on each participant, Sora was born in Korea and immigrated to the US with her parents when she was one year old. While growing up in Hawai'i, Sora did not attend a community-based Korean HL school. Sora visited Korea two times during her kindergarten and elementary school years. Semi was born and raised in Hawai'i by her single mother, who had immigrated to the US in her 20s. Unlike Sora, Semi attended Korean HL school for 10 years. Moreover, she was an active member of her Korean Christian church where she regularly

participated in cultural activities and taught Korean to Korean-American children. Growing up, Semi visited Korea once every two years. Jimin was born in South Carolina and moved to Hawai'i when he was in the fourth grade. He was an active member of his Korean Christian church and worked as a Sunday school teacher. Jimin had visited Korea a couple of times as a child. Taewoo was born and raised in American Samoa and moved to Hawai'i to attend high school and university. His parents had immigrated to American Samoa in their 30s. Taewoo had attended a Korean HL school in American Samoa for more than 10 years and visited Korea several times as a child.

Data Collection and Analysis

The main data collection method used in this study was semistructured interviews, which were designed to elicit in-depth narratives regarding the participants' HL use and learning, as well as their identity construction. The interviews were conducted in English, as the participants felt more confident expressing their ideas and opinions in English. However, they were allowed to use both languages freely, and they occasionally switched to Korean. The interview questions covered the following topics: the participants' HL and English use; their perceptions of each language; their views on their identity, bilingualism, and HL development; their childhood experiences; their social networks and relationships with their co-ethnic community members; and the opportunities and challenges they had experienced surrounding HL maintenance and identity formation. Each interview lasted approximately one and a half hours and was audiorecorded and subsequently transcribed, at which time any exchanges in Korean were translated into English.

A case study approach was employed in this study to allow the researcher to understand how the participants' HL- and identity-related experiences were influenced by their backgrounds and larger sociopolitical contexts. As Duff (2008, 2014) stressed, case studies are effective tools for understanding individuals' language-learning processes, motivation, and identity. They provide a way to engage in an in-depth exploration of different individuals' experiences, insights, and developmental pathways within

a particular linguistic, social, or educational context (Duff, 2014).

I used an inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyze the participants' interview data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "[A] theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 82). The analysis involved several phases. First, I read the transcribed data several times, noting recurring patterns and ideas to guide the data analysis. Second, I created initial codes line-by-line by identifying specific data related to the research questions. I then collated the different codes that were related to each other in order to form larger categories. These categories were then grouped into themes that were reviewed as the analysis found interconnections between them and brought forward comparisons and contrasts across the four participants. The final themes examined in this study are: (1) heritage language acquisition and loss during childhood, (2) emerging identities and voluntary efforts to learn the HL, (3) motherland trips and ascribed identities, and (4) situated bicultural identities.

Findings

Heritage Language Acquisition and Loss During Childhood

Many studies have investigated Korean-American children's and adults' reasons for studying their HL, which are often related to identity and communication with family and community members (e.g., Cho, 2000; Kim, 2006; Kwon, 2017; Lee, 2002; Lee & Kim, 2007). Similarly, for the participants of the present study, the HL was associated with family and preservation of the cultural identities and values transmitted to them by their parents. For all the participants, Korean was the first language they acquired through speaking with their parents at home, and it had continued to be part of their daily life. All four participants mentioned that it was important to them to improve their HL proficiency because of their strong desire to communicate effectively and maintain close relationships with their parents,

extended family, and members of the Korean immigrant community.

When asked about their HL use at the time of the study, their responses indicated that they used only or mostly Korean with their parents. Jimin said he used "100% Korean at home both with my mom and dad because my parents can hardly speak English." According to Jimin, his parents had never had to learn English because they worked with Korean immigrants in Hawai'i. He added that his parents stressed the importance of him learning Korean to stay connected to his heritage culture and maintain a strong ethnic identity. Sora also said that she used mostly Korean with her parents, especially her father, who not only spoke little English but considered it important to speak Korean with his children to help them maintain their Korean identities, and who regularly reminded her to use Korean at home. However, she mixed Korean and English when she spoke with her mother, who also spoke fluent English.

Although the HL had always been an essential part of daily life for all participants, they had not found it easy to maintain their HL proficiency. After they started school, they experienced tremendous pressure to shift to English due to its status as the medium of instruction (Kang, 2010). Semi was placed in an ESL program for two years in elementary school. She quickly acquired English, but at the expense of her first language, as she described in the interview:

When I was little, [my mom] taught me a lot of Korean. My first language was Korean. So, all I knew was Korean. I didn't know English at all. I have videos of me singing the church songs in Korean. She also recorded me praying in Korean. But, in elementary [school], I had to go to ESL for two years. After ESL, I totally lost all my Korean.

Similarly, during the interview, Sora reported that she spoke only Korean at home in early childhood. However, she spent a lot of time with her aunts, who had grown up in Hawai'i as 1.5-generation Korean immigrants, because her parents worked long hours. Her aunts encouraged her to speak English at home because they wanted to prepare her for school. Sora gradually experienced reduced HL input and use, as shown in her remarks below:

Growing up with my aunts, they would all speak English to me. They said that when I was little, I only spoke Korean. So, they wanted to teach me English before I went to school. They started speaking English to me only. And then, when I went to school, I just kept speaking in English.

Jimin shared a similar experience, and also attributed the deterioration of his Korean language skills to his childhood education. He claimed that although he only spoke Korean as a young child, his ability to speak English quickly surpassed his ability to communicate in Korean once he entered elementary school. He added that he had stopped attending HL school at the same time because his parents thought that continuing to go to HL school while learning English would be too great a burden. According to Jimin, his parents saw the benefit of him learning the HL but were concerned that it would interfere with his English language acquisition.

Emerging Identities and Voluntary Efforts to Learn The HL

Despite the deterioration of their ability to communicate in Korean early in their childhood, these young Korean-Americans became interested in improving their HL during adolescence when they began to think about their ethnic identity (Tse, 1999). A sense of identity is a vital component of adolescent development, and it is especially significant for those who belong to ethnic minorities (Phinney, 1990). As the participants grew more mature, they started to incorporate their ethnicity into their sense of self and make voluntary efforts to develop their HL skills. Several factors contributed to this process, particularly exposure to Korean pop culture and interaction with Korean peers and community members.

For example, during Sora's elementary and middle school years, she was not particularly concerned about developing a sense of belonging to an ethnic community and did not feel a need to define her ethnic identity. When she started high school, however, she became more proactive in developing her ethnic identity. She began socializing with ethnic Korean peers, which provided opportunities to speak Korean beyond the home setting. She explained:

As I got older and after I entered high school, interestingly, I hung out with more Korean friends. I did not care which group I belonged to when I was little. But in high school I felt more comfortable with Koreans, and I found more similarities with Korean friends. You just feel more comfortable because you do not need to adjust too much. You have similar interests. Everything in life becomes more convenient.

When asked what interests she and her friends had in common, Sora described their shared passion for Korean popular culture, such as dramas, films, and music. Beginning in high school and continuing to the time of the interview, Sora had a strong desire to improve her Korean in order to communicate well with her Korean friends, including international students from Korea, and be fully accepted as a member of the ethnic peer group. She added that she wanted to be able to keep up with current issues in the Korean entertainment industry, as she and her Korean friends often exchanged their thoughts on Korean popular culture and participated in online forums on Korean media channels and celebrities, writing comments and asking questions in Korean. Sora also mentioned that she began learning to write in Korean when she started watching music programs (e.g., "Music Bank"). Listening to the newest Korean hit songs, she regularly engaged in literacy activities by writing down their lyrics and memorizing the meaning of unfamiliar words. In fact, she said, one of her main reasons for studying Korean in university was to be able to understand the lyrics of her favorite songs, as well as dramas, without using a dictionary or asking her parents.

Jimin also became interested in Korean popular culture during his high school years, when he became an enthusiastic consumer of Korean variety shows. Such shows are a major part of television entertainment in Korea, and are usually composed of various performances, skits, quizzes, and comedy acts, with popular celebrities and K-pop idols as guests. Jimin's comments below illustrate how watching Korean television shows positively affected his HL learning:

I read a lot because I watch Korean variety shows. I read a little faster because of that. It's like a variety show where people talk to each other. I have to read Korean while they do it because their conversations are subtitled on the TV screen. It helps me improve my Korean.

Because these variety shows are subtitled in Korean, watching them not only helped Jimin to connect to his heritage culture but also facilitated his Korean reading ability, as well as his listening skills.

In Taewoo's case, watching Korean variety shows inspired him to improve his speaking skills. The following quote illustrates how transnational media can motivate HL learning:

When my mom introduced me to "Infinite Challenge," I fell in love with Jae-suk Yoo because he is so funny. He was my role model for a while. He is such an eloquent speaker. He can say things at certain times even though it's all scripted. He can adlib and put in his own things. I really liked that. I wanted to learn Korean too to speak like him.

"Infinite Challenge" is a variety show and Jae-suk Yoo, a comedian, is its host. Seeing Yoo as a role model, Taewoo made efforts to further improve his Korean to become an "eloquent" Korean speaker like Yoo.

Semi's interview also suggested that the Korean media are a useful resource for developing HL skills and learning more about Korean customs and traditions. She explained that she regularly watched Korean television dramas precisely because doing so exposed her to both Korean language and Korean culture.

Consumption of Korean popular culture thus affected the participants' HL learning. Their appreciation of Korean music and television programs motivated them to improve their HL skills as it exposed them to both spoken and written Korean and required an advanced level of Korean language proficiency.

Motherland Trips and Ascribed Identities

Growing up, the participants visited their motherland, Korea, with their parents with varying frequency, from every two years to only a couple of times. The length of their stays also varied, from one month to one year.

During her interview, Sora reflected on her most recent trip to Korea, one year earlier. She said that she had a complicated relationship with her

country of birth, and that although she had visited Korea twice as a child, she did not remember much about those trips because she had been too young. As she grew older, despite her cultural knowledge and her proficiency in Korean, she felt disconnected from Korea and unwilling to go back. She had resisted returning for several years, although her parents and brother visited Korea every year. Sora explained that her unfamiliarity with her family in Korea had made her anxious: "I thought I would be uncomfortable. I don't know anybody in Korea. It's just family. But, I don't even know my own family either. So, if I go, it's like meeting new people. It would be very awkward."

After a gap of a decade, it had been a difficult decision to go back to Korea, but Sora had finally decided to do it, joining her family on their summer trip. She described the experience of meeting relatives, participating in cultural activities, making new friends, and learning about current social issues in Korea. According to Sora, one of the most enjoyable parts of the trip was staying in her grandmother's house and taking walks with her grandmother, who taught her a lot about her ancestors and family history. Below, Sora illustrates how her grandmother helped her discover her cultural roots:

There are so many *myoji* 'graves' spread randomly across the two hills behind my grandmother's house. [My grandmother] took me there and [explained], "This is a family grave yard, this is the grave yard of whoever and so on." That was my first time to hear [about them]. I saw my great grandmother's grave too and learned about her. It was an interesting experience.

During the interview, Sora added that she met many of her relatives on her father's side for the first time. One day, she attended a dinner gathering, which took up the whole restaurant because her paternal family had over 20 members. It was only at this gathering that Sora learned that she had such a large family in Korea. She got to know her family members fairly quickly by talking with them in Korean. Sora's high proficiency in Korean contributed to communicating with them, and her initial anxiety about not knowing her extended family members in Korea soon faded away.

While visiting Korea enabled Sora to get to know her family and

develop her understanding of her heritage, she experienced inner conflicts because her Korean identity was constantly challenged. Her experience echoes He's (2006) claim that HL speakers' "identities are dynamically and fluidly negotiated, validated, challenged, or changed as social interaction develops in real time" (p. 18). Sora felt she was regarded as "a family member from overseas," "a cousin from America," or "Korean-American" by her relatives and other Korean people she met during her trip. According to Sora, she was treated differently and often got teased by her relatives because of her pronunciation and bilingual language practices, such as mixing English words into Korean. In addition, some people tried to teach her about Korean traditions and customs that she had known all her life, which made Sora feel "awkward" and "frustrated." One aspect of Korean culture that Sora's relatives emphasized was related to Korean table manners:

When I'm eating they're like, "When you are eating, you have to sit straight and you have to wait before the older people eat first" and then "you can't hold the spoon and chopsticks." And "you shouldn't talk too much while eating." But I don't do that anyway but they keep telling you how to behave.

Sora felt that she was viewed as different by Koreans outside the family as well. When she went on an excursion to a shopping center with a Korean friend from Hawai'i, the Korean salespeople noticed that she was not from Korea, which led her to reflect on the identities others ascribed to her:

I went to Dongdaemun (a shopping center in Seoul). Korean men who were selling bags told me, "You are from America, right?" I asked, "How do you know?" They answered, "We can just tell." I said, "Oh, I see." So I figured they would know if you are not from here; they see you. I went with a really FOB older female Korean friend. They didn't say anything to her.

When asked how the salespersons noticed her background, she speculated that it might have been because of her ways of speaking and acting, along with her tanned skin. She said she might have "[spoken] Korean with an American accent" and used hesitation fillers such as "um, uh, and like" when speaking with them. Although interacting with the Korean sellers was not pleasant because she wanted to be viewed and accepted as Korean, it

motivated Sora to further develop her Korean. She explained her feelings thus:

It's better to know the language of the place you're going. It's more comfortable to use it. If I do go to Korea, using Korean will put me more into the environment—make me part of the group. If I'm there, I don't want to feel like a foreigner. I want to feel comfortable in that environment. It's very hard for me if people say, "You're different." If I can speak Korean perfectly, they won't care, they would think, "Oh, my mistake."

While Sora struggled to define her own identity and her relationship with the heritage nation, she had been defined by others. Koreans she met in Korea attached labels to her that differed from those she would choose for herself, which led to emotional distress. Having realized how her own identities were influenced by others, she came to view speaking perfect Korean as a way to be accepted as part of the Korean community, which led her to invest more time in HL learning, such as enrolling in a Korean course at university.

Taewoo also became motivated to improve his Korean when he visited Korea during his middle school years. He mentioned that, although he grew up speaking Korean at home with his parents, he had limited vocabulary, especially Sino-Korean words, which sometimes made it challenging for him to interact with native Koreans. During the interview, Taewoo related an incident that made him feel he really needed to improve his Korean. At his aunt's request, Taewoo had gone to buy watermelons at a supermarket, when he had the following exchange:

The salesperson asked me in Korean, *Subak baedal haejulkka?* 'Do you want me to deliver the watermelons to your place?' I didn't know what *baedal* 'deliver' meant in Korean at that time. So, I just said "no" because I didn't want them to know that I didn't understand Korean. I went up to the apartment with two big watermelons, sweating a lot. Everybody just stared at me. I really felt stupid. I really wanted to learn [Korean vocabulary] after that experience.

As an HL speaker, Taewoo felt embarrassed when he didn't understand what

the salesperson said. To maintain face, he did not ask for the meaning of the word he did not know, *baedal*. However, this led to the further embarrassment of having to struggle in public with the watermelons, an experience that made Taewoo realize the importance of a solid grasp of vocabulary to carry out successful communication. This experience motivated him to study Korean harder, particularly Sino-Korean vocabulary.

Situated Bicultural Identities

The analysis of the participants' narratives showed that they had developed bicultural identities, "composed of characteristics from both Korean and American cultures" (Lee, 2002, p. 117). The kind of personae and identities they created for themselves changed from moment to moment, as well as from context to context. Similar experiences showing the socially constructed and situated nature of identity have also been reported for other Korean HL speakers (e.g., Jeon, 2010; Jo, 2001; Kang, 2004; Kang, 2013). Based on the interview data, the participants seemed to use certain contextual signals, such as language, place, and the people around them, to construct certain identities. For example, Sora's way of talking, thinking, and acting shifted depending on whether she was situated in a Korean or American environment, as demonstrated by her comments below:

If I'm in a very Korean environment, such as Palama [a Korean supermarket in Hawai'i], I would be very Korean. The way I act would be Korean. But, if I was in a very American environment, such as one of my English classes, I'll be less Asian and more American.

Growing up in two cultures, Sora developed an awareness of the different norms, expectations, and ideologies that existed in each culture and consequently created a bicultural identity. In the following excerpt, she reflects on the differences in the level or display of intimacy in friendship regarded as appropriate in Korean and American communities:

I know how to act with Americans. To what extent they can joke, if they can swear at each other or not, if they can push

each other or not. Boundaries for friendships are different. In Korea, people are closer and can be aggressive with their friends. In America, I have a feeling that there is a little bit more distance put between individuals. It's like my bubble thing. If you go to Korea, friends are holding hands and walking around down the street, but here if you see that, people would go, "Oh, that's weird."

Sora displayed her understanding of the two distinct cultures by contrasting close friendships in the US with those in Korea and explaining the different norms of Korean and American peer groups. She reported that she consciously spoke and behaved differently in front of her Korean friends and her American friends. Her efforts to change her behavior in accordance with the given context imply that her identities are socially situated and typically adjusted to whichever culture is salient in the immediate context.

During the interview, Semi also discussed noticeable cultural differences between her as a Korean-American and native Koreans and how she adjusted her linguistic behaviors even with her peers to be "more respectful":

[Native Koreans] are very polite. They call everybody *enni* (older sister) and *oppa* (older brother). Even if they are one year older. Because I'm so used to American culture, I don't see someone one year older than me as an *enni*. I feel like we are more the same. Yeah, I say *enni* and *oppa* to the ones from Korea just to show respect. Because I think they would think that I'm bad if I don't say and don't show respect. I know their culture. Their culture is very respectful.

In addition, Semi preferred to speak in English or mix Korean and English with her Korean friends who grew up in Hawai'i; however, she tried to "be more Korean" when interacting with adult church members by speaking in Korean in order to be regarded as a legitimate member of the Korean immigrant church community:

I speak Korean at church because my whole church has a lot of older Korean female friends. They speak Korean to each other. I feel weird to speak English to them, so I have to speak Korean to them...It's helpful to speak with them. The more you speak or the more you surround yourself with the culture, the more you become in it.

Semi consciously chose between Korean and English when talking to other members of her ethnic group, especially first-generation older members. Semi did not feel “comfortable” using English with Koreans who grew up in Korea and spoke Korean. Elaborating on this remark, she explained that she chose to use Korean, which has a system of honorifics, to “be polite” and to accommodate others’ limited English skills. Semi’s use of her HL beyond the home environment enabled her to build and strengthen her relationships with her co-ethnic community members and affirm a shared culture and identity.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of the participants’ narratives demonstrates that, growing up, the participants faced challenges in balancing the HL and English; they experienced regression in their communication abilities in the HL or even a language shift from Korean to English after they entered the English-dominant American educational system. Such “subtractive bilingualism” is common among immigrant children, who often acquire the dominant language at the expense of their first language (Fillmore, 1991; Kang, 2010). Some of the participants’ parents felt they had to choose which language to focus on, negotiating between American schooling and HL maintenance, especially because their children had to attend ESL classes. After learning English, the participants lived their lives in it. This is due to “[English’s] hegemony in American economic and cultural life, along with its high social status, mak[ing] it irresistible to younger generations” (Crawford, 2008, p. 24). However, the results of the present study show the possibility of reconnecting with the HL and regaining HL skills over time. The participants’ voluntary engagement with HL literacy and speaking practices, together with abundant opportunities to learn and speak HL in the home and community, made it possible for them to reach a high level of proficiency in the HL.

All of the participants described their interest in Korean popular culture as one of their main motivations for reconnecting with Korean and further developing their HL proficiency. Lee (2018) and Wang and Pyun (2020) similarly found that engaging with Korean popular culture was important to learners enrolled in Korean language classes at American

universities. This study's participants found transnational mass media to be a useful resource for HL maintenance and development, and a key element in their voluntary HL learning activities. However, the individual participants differed in terms of their preferred media genres and content. Sora enjoyed watching music programs to familiarize herself with the newest Korean songs, whereas Jimin and Taewoo watched Korean variety shows made up of comedy acts and musical performances, and Semi preferred TV dramas. In addition, their consumption of Korean popular culture affected individual participants' HL learning in different ways. Specifically, Sora began to regularly engage in literacy activities (e.g., writing down the lyrics of her favorite songs) when she began watching music programs, and Jimin reported improving his reading skills because conversations on the variety shows he watched were subtitled. Taewoo's favorite show led him to want to improve his speaking skills to emulate its host, while Semi particularly enjoyed watching television dramas because they helped her learn more about social customs and cultural values and to obtain up-to-date information about Korea, which she found useful when socializing with Korean-speaking people. In other words, the transnational mass media provided an immersion experience that allowed the participants additional opportunities to work on particular skills and knowledge areas that they found important and helped them develop meaningful ties to the parental home country and its culture (e.g., Kwon, 2017; Min, 2017).

It was also found that visits to Korea facilitated the participants' HL learning and identity construction. Although the frequency varied across participants, such visits helped them build and maintain a relationship with Korea. The participants' familiarity with the HL played a crucial role in networking and developing a fundamental sense of kinship with their extended families in their heritage nation (e.g., Soehl & Waldinger, 2012). Transnational visits to their parents' home countries enabled the participants to deeply engage with the HL and culture, as also seen in Lee et al.'s (2020) study of Korean-Americans' study abroad experiences in Korea. The participants in the present study were given opportunities to use their HL, communicate with extended family members, and build strong social and emotional ties with them during their stay (e.g., Kwon, 2017). Interacting

with people in Korean was sometimes challenging because of their limited HL proficiency, different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, or their ascribed identities as "Other." However, these challenges were not necessarily negative because they motivated them to further develop their HL to construct their identities as legitimate Koreans.

The HL played an important role in the participants' ability to build a strong sense of ethnic identity (e.g., Cho, 2000; Choi, 2015; Kang & Kim, 2012; Lee, 2002). Speaking and learning the Korean language enabled them to gain a better understanding of the heritage culture and its people, build social relationships with them, and participate in HL-speaking community activities (e.g., teaching Korean and serving as a Sunday school teacher at Korean churches). In addition, the bilingual youth tended to view themselves as part of two distinct cultures (Kang, 2013). They were connected to the norms and values of both the receiving country's culture and the culture of their heritage nation. As second-generation immigrant children, they learned to adapt their cultural orientation to socialize with different groups of people and integrate into the two cultural and linguistic environments. Utilizing bilingual and bicultural knowledge, they navigated between the two cultures in a flexible manner, constructing situated identities, as a way to avoid conflicts and achieve collective identity, solidarity, and group membership.

The findings offer implications for HL education. While these participants' experiences and strategies may not be generalizable to how others use, practice, and develop HLs, this case study sheds light on the importance of the agentive roles of immigrant children and their voluntary efforts to learn the HL. In particular, it showed how transnational connections with their heritage nation can motivate and facilitate immigrant children's HL maintenance and development. In addition, the findings showed that HL maintenance is not static but fluid and dynamic and that an individual's patterns of language use can change over time. As children, the participants experienced tension between maintaining their HL and the pressure to quickly shift to the dominant language as a means to obtain academic, social, and eventual financial success. The far-reaching expectations of English-only instruction led to language shift and loss. However, these participants

counteracted the hegemonic power of English by consuming Korean popular culture, building, and strengthening co-ethnic social ties, and actively using and regaining their HL. They took a proactive stance as young adolescents and adults to embrace both languages and cultures and integrate them into their sense of identity. These findings suggest the importance of raising awareness of the power inequalities between English and other languages, as well as of the social, functional, and psychological significance of HLs and the benefits of bilingualism. Critical awareness and understanding of the significant impacts of linguistic and cultural hegemony on people's lives can help immigrant families and minority language speakers make informed decisions regarding HL education.

The findings suggest future research directions. While the findings reported in this study contribute to the existing body of research on HL learners' HL development and identity, the experiences reported here may not be representative of HL learners' lives in general. All four participants grew up in a linguistically and culturally diverse place, Hawai'i, with relatively easy access to Korean communities and peer social networks. Future research could extend the line of qualitative research taken here by examining the views and experiences of diverse HL learners in different contexts since language choices made in the immigrant family and by HL learners are closely connected to the ideologies of the surrounding communities and society. Furthermore, given the agentive roles of immigrant children, more research is needed on different strategies that elementary and secondary school students use to practice and enhance their HL, their beliefs about and attitudes towards the HL and multilingualism, and the ways they position themselves. It would also be valuable to investigate the views of other involved parties, including immigrant parents and HL and mainstream schoolteachers. A better understanding of HL maintenance and transmission efforts in diverse diasporic environments would contribute to promoting greater bilingual and multilingual development within these communities.

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**TAPATYBĖ IR SAVANORIŠKOS KALBOS PALAIKYMŲ
PASTANGOS: DVIKALBIŲ KORĖJIEČIŲ IR AMERIKIEČIŲ
UNIVERSITETO STUDENTŲ ATVEJIS HAVAJUOSE**

Santrauka. Šiame atvejo tyrime aprašoma keturių dvikalbių korėjiečių kilmės amerikiečių universiteto studentų, lankančių korėjiečių kalbos kursus Havajuose, patirtis. Daugiausia dėmesio skiriama jų tapatumo raidai ir savanoriškoms pastangoms siekti paveldėtos kalbos (PK) kompetencijos. Remiantis dalyvių pasakojimais, visi jie, pradėję lankyti mokyklą, patyrė PK gebėjimų regresą ir kalbos vartojimo pokytį, t. y., vis dažniau kalbėjo ne korėjiečių, o anglų kalba. Tačiau paauglystėje korėjiečių kalbos kompetencija sustiprėjo dėl savanoriško įsitraukimo į PK raštingumo ir kalbėjimo praktiką bei dėl pagausėjusių galimybių mokytis ir kalbėti PK namuose ir bendruomenėje. Tarpvalstybiniai ryšiai su savo tautos paveldu, įskaitant korėjiečių žiniasklaidą ir vizitus į Korėją, buvo labai svarbūs motyvuojant ir palengvinant savanorišką PK mokymąsi. Tyrimo dalyvių pasakojimai taip pat rodo, kad PK vaidino svarbų vaidmenį kuriant stiprų etninio tapatumo jausmą ir kad jie buvo linkę laikyti save dviejų skirtingų kultūrų dalimi – buvo susiję tiek su priimančiosios šalies kultūros, tiek su savo paveldėtos tautos kultūros normomis ir vertybėmis. Kaip antrosios kartos imigrantų vaikai, jie išmoko panaudoti savo dvikalbystės ir dvikultūriškumo žinias, kad lanksčiai laviruotų tarp dviejų kultūrų, susikurtų situacinę tapatybę, išvengtų konfliktų ir pasiektų kolektyvinę tapatybę, solidarumą bei narystę grupėje. Tyrime pateiktos išvagos apie savanoriškų pastangų vaidmenį mokantis paveldėtos kalbos ir plėtojant tapatybę yra reikšmingos paveldo kalbos ugdymui.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: paveldėtos kalbos mokymasis; tapatumas; korėjiečių kilmės amerikietis; korėjiečių kalba; tarptautinis ryšys; savanoriškos pastangos.