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EXPERIENCING EVERYDAY OTHERNESS: A STUDY OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN MARRIAGE-MIGRANTS IN SOUTH KOREA

Summary. This study explores the everyday Otherness experienced by Southeast Asian marriage-migrant women in South Korea. South Korea is increasingly ethnically diverse due to the dramatic rise in international marriages between foreign women and Korean men, most of which are facilitated by marriage brokers. Yet little research has been conducted on marriage-migrants' experiences of communicating with local Koreans. Drawing on data collected through in-depth interviews with five participants from Cambodia and Vietnam, this study focuses on specific factors that cause conflicts between these women and local Koreans in various social contexts, including the household, workplaces, and wider communities, and how the women respond to such conflicts and manage challenging interactions. The participants' narratives demonstrate the tensions and conflicts they encounter, which can be divided into three categories: the imposition of Korean ways of living, negative stereotyping, and language use. The women describe being perceived as deviating from Korean society's cultural and linguistic norms and facing pressure to conform to these norms, which sometimes conflict with their own sense of identity. In addition, they experience marginalization through Othering and negative stereotyping in their interactions with Koreans and struggle to develop a sense of belonging to the host society. The results of this study provide implications for second language programs designed for marriage-migrants, which have the potential to enable marriage-migrants to achieve sustainable development in their second language learning and to support their development of multilingual and multicultural identities.

Keywords: intercultural conflict; language use; marriage migration; South Korea; Southeast Asian immigrant; stereotype.

Introduction

Transnational migration flows have led to a rapid rise in cross-border marriage migration, particularly between Southeast Asia and East Asia. South Korea (hereafter, Korea) has become increasingly diverse in its ethnic composition due to the dramatic rise in international marriages between foreign women and Korean men, most of which are facilitated by marriage brokers. The total number of female immigrants who had moved to Korea in order to marry was 111,834 in 2007, and 211,277 by 2015, an increase of 89 percent (Korean

Statistical Information Service, 2018)[1]. Marriages between Korean men and foreign women are widespread in rural areas, which suffer a gender imbalance among single adults. Many young Korean women relocate to urban areas to pursue higher education or work, leaving the Korean men remaining in rural areas to seek brides from overseas, especially from less economically developed countries.

The majority of foreign brides come from China, Vietnam, and the Philippines, with much smaller numbers coming from Cambodia, Japan, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2018). International marriage started becoming common in Korea at the beginning of the 1990s when the Unification Church brought many Japanese women to Korea as brides (Kim, 2008). Around the same time, Korea opened diplomatic relations with China, and the number of marriages between Korean men and Chinese citizens of Korean ethnicity, known as *joseonjok*, increased. The perception that *joseonjok* immigrants were already Korean led to the assumption that they would assimilate quickly into Korean society (Hong et al., 2013). However, "fake marriages" involving *joseonjok* women led the government to regulate visas for this group more strictly starting in 1996 (Lee, 2014). Since then, the number of Southeast Asian women entering Korea to marry has gradually grown. The phenomenon of increasing ethnic diversity in Korea is described by the term *damunhwa*, literally meaning "multicultural." This term is now widely used in the media, government, and academia.

Given the growing number of marriage-migrants, their successful acculturation has become a significant social issue in Korea. In 2008, the Korean government enacted "The Support for Multicultural Families Act," which led to the establishment of over 170 multicultural family support centers throughout the country (Ahn, 2013). The centers provide various programs and services tailored to the needs of female marriage-migrants, including Korean language and culture programs, Korean cooking classes, interpretation and translation services, and child-rearing counseling services. The majority of the programs are geared towards assimilating foreign brides into Korean

[1]Although the number of international marriages continues to increase steadily, the rate (based on the number of spousal visa applications) is slowing, due to the implementation of stricter government regulations, including requirements for Korean language proficiency and spousal income levels.

society. They have little to no scope for providing education to Korean spouses and in-laws about the language or culture of their new members.

Since April 2014, the Korean government has implemented stricter language requirements for marriage-migrants, with the intention of addressing interlingual couples' communication problems. To apply for a spousal visa, marriage-migrants now have to pass Level 1 of the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK), an examination administered by Korea's National Institute for International Education. Level 1 requires a vocabulary of around 800 words necessary to perform basic language functions, such as introducing oneself, ordering, purchasing, and understanding and speaking on personal and familiar topics (TOPIK, 2018). Upon arrival in Korea, foreign brides are required to take Korean language classes specifically designed for them. These classes focus on teaching the women phrases and expressions used in family settings to manage everyday domestic tasks (Kim, 2010; Lee, 2014).

Despite such government efforts, many foreign brides experience difficulty fully integrating themselves into Korean society (Freeman, 2011; Kim, 2008, 2010). Much research has been conducted on the post-migration experiences of marriage-migrants in Korea, and many studies discuss how the process of integration requires these women to negotiate differences between their home culture and the host culture and to reconstruct their identities (Freeman, 2011; Hong et al., 2013; Kim, 2008, 2010; Schubert et al., 2015). However, few have focused on the difficulties and struggles encountered by immigrants in communicating with local Koreans, despite everyday interactions serving as potentially important sites of social relationship and conflict. Drawing on in-depth interviews with Southeast Asian women, this study investigates specific factors that cause conflicts between these immigrants and Koreans and discusses how the women respond to such conflicts and manage challenging interactions. The results of this study provide implications for the further development of second language programs for marriage-migrants in light of the barriers to integration discussed here.

Tensions and Conflicts Between Marriage-Migrant Women and Koreans

Previous studies indicate that immigrant women in Korea can experience

marital conflicts arising from different family values and suffer exclusion from larger communities because of their subordinate status in hierarchies of gender, race, and class (Freeman, 2011; Kim, 2008, 2010; Park, 2019b). Gender inequality within the patriarchal family system, in particular, may be a cause of conflict between marriage-migrant women and their Korean families. In addition, some studies have suggested that Korean families' traditional gender-role expectations clash with the women's identities (Freeman, 2011; Kim, 2008). Language and culture differences also complicate immigrant women's interactions with local Koreans (Hong et al., 2013; Park, 2017; Schubert et al., 2015). For instance, differences between the varieties of Korean spoken by South Koreans and by *joseonjok* brides can lead to communication difficulties and tensions (Schubert et al., 2015). Studies by Hong et al. (2013) and Schubert et al. (2015) challenge the common assumption that *joseonjok* and South Koreans have a shared ethnicity, language, and culture that enable the former to adapt easily to South Korean society. In addition, marital conflict may also be sparked by immigrant women's frustrations concerning downward social mobility and their Korean families' objections to the transmission of the women's heritage language to their children (Kim, 2008; Park, 2019a).

In light of these difficulties, several scholars have examined how immigrant women in Korea handle everyday conflicts and negotiate hierarchical relationships through the accommodation of dominant cultural norms and acts of resistance. On the one hand, some women try to fully assimilate into the host society, raising their children according to Korean customs (Lee et al., 2015). Conversely, some women resist assimilation and strive to preserve their ethnic identity (Hong et al., 2013; Kim, 2008). For instance, in Kim's (2008) study of Filipina marriage-migrants to Korea, the women reinforced their Filipino identities in their parenting practices and refused to become Korean citizens. The *joseonjok* women in Hong et al.'s (2013) study, who experienced exclusion in Korea, emphasized their Chinese identities, drawing on their solid and existing networks in China and the nation's growing economic power. Some *joseonjok* women in Freeman's (2011) study used the threat of divorce as a strategy to fight against traditional patriarchal ideologies and resolve conflicts.

Discourses on Marriage-migrants

In 2006, the Korean government announced that the nation was in a state of "transition to a multicultural, multi-ethnic society" (*damunhwa sahoe*) following a rapid increase in the number of immigrants (Kim, 2011). The influx of marriage-migrants led the government to create a new family model called the "multicultural family" (*damunhwa gajeong*), defined as a family with one Korean national and one foreign spouse. Thus, government services and welfare supporting "multicultural families" are offered exclusively to these families and exclude migrant workers who are not married to Korean nationals (Kim, 2016). Whereas migrant workers are considered temporary sojourners who will eventually need to return home, marriage-migrants are viewed as potential Korean citizens, given their role in the nation's biological and cultural reproduction. Accordingly, the government's policies and social integration programs for marriage-migrants fall within a "patriarchal family-oriented welfare model," which aims to enable the women to successfully manage their families and households (Kim, 2011). For instance, Korean language programs designed for foreign brides have stressed "traditional women's roles as housekeepers, good daughters-in-law, wives, and mothers—highlighting only submissive roles" (Lee, 2014, p. 306).

In public discourses, immigrant women are positioned as racialized, gendered Others with inadequate cultural capital, who need to be acculturated to Korean society. First, the government tends to construct the women as "unskilled mothers" who may find it difficult to raise and educate their children (Bélanger et al., 2010). Much is made of the women's lack of Korean language and cultural knowledge and its potential impact on the next generation. Second, the nature of their migration casts foreign brides as two seemingly opposite stereotypes: "vulnerable victims of a male-operated international trade" or, more commonly, "manipulative opportunists who marry solely for economic security" (Kim, 2010, p. 718). The latter image of foreign brides has become widespread partly due to media coverage of cases of migration-related marriage fraud (Freeman, 2011). This view also results in a conception of the women as potential "runaways" who will leave their Korean families to earn money to support their families back home (Freeman, 2011). These discourses

and stereotypes that have been generated in the host society contribute to the struggles faced by the immigrants as they strive to engage in meaningful conversations with Koreans and construct positive identities.

The Study

Participants, Data Collection, and Analysis

This study draws on data collected between 2015 and 2017 by means of personal interviews and ethnographic observation as part of a larger ethnographic project that explores language learning and identity among 20 Southeast Asian marriage-migrant women in a small city in North Gyeongsang Province, Korea. It focuses on five participants from Cambodia and Vietnam — Hyesoo, Jeong, Kyung, Sooah, and Yumi (all pseudonyms) — who discussed their experiences of intercultural conflicts and challenging interactions in particular depth. Table 1 summarizes their demographic backgrounds. I got to know the participants through a personal acquaintance at the Multicultural Education Center in the city where they reside.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Name	Age	Home country	Time spent in Korea	Educational background	Occupation / household income[2]	Korean language ability[3]
Hyesoo	31	Cambodia	9 years	High school	Interpreter / lower than the average	Level 3
Jeong	35	Vietnam	13 years	High school	Salesperson / more than the average	Level 3
Kyung	35	Vietnam	14 years	3-year college (in Vietnam)	Farmer / lower than the average	Level 4

[2] Estimated household income in relation to the average monthly household income of a Korean family (about 4.445 million won or approximately 4,124 USD; Statistics Korea, 2017).

[3] The Korean language ability of the participants is based on their TOPIK results. Levels 3 and 4 are intermediate (Level 1 is the lowest and Level 6 is the highest).

Name	Age	Home country	Time spent in Korea	Educational background	Occupation / household income[2]	Korean language ability[3]
Sooah	35	Vietnam	14 years	2-year college (in Korea)	Housewife/much lower than the average	N/A[4]
Yumi	28	Vietnam	9 years	High school	Interpreter/much lower than the average	Level 4

Separate interviews were conducted with each participant. They were conducted in Korean and audio-recorded. The recordings were then transcribed in Korean and translated into English. All interviews lasted from one to two hours and took place at participants' homes or in cafes or libraries. The participants' Korean language proficiency was advanced enough for them to express themselves comfortably. The interviews concentrated on their language- and communication-related experiences, such as Korean language use and learning; communication with Koreans in various social contexts; social relationships and networks; and educational and work experiences.

A thematic approach was used to analyze the interview data, adopting the procedures recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). After transcribing the data, I searched for recurring topics and patterns across the data set, created codes for these topics and patterns as they emerged from the data, and then sorted the codes into themes. The larger themes of communication breakdown and intercultural conflicts emerged through this process. Three subthemes were identified as important in my data reading: imposition of Korean ways of living, negative stereotyping, and language use.

Background Information on the Participants

All participants moved to Korea when they were in their early 20s, having met their husbands through marriage brokers. The participants had no or very little knowledge of the Korean language and culture before migrating; upon arrival, they were only able to understand or deliver minimal courtesy expressions,

[4] Sooah had not taken the TOPIK, but her proficiency was probably fairly advanced, as she had graduated from a two-year college in Korea.

such as *annyeonghaseyo* "hello" and *kamsahapnita* "thank you." In the interviews, each participant at some point made remarks to the effect that she had initially thought migration was the key to a happier and more stable life. They had developed positive images of Korea, influenced in part by Korean TV dramas and films. They had imagined Korea as an affluent land of opportunity with "polite" and "well-groomed" citizens. Although financial stability was part of their motivation for migration, it was not the only driving factor. Three of the participants (Hyesoo, Yumi, Sooah) indicated that they had wanted to pursue higher education in Korea, which they could not dream of doing in their home countries. They had believed that migrating to Korea would enhance their educational and professional opportunities. However, all participants reported that the reality was far from what they had expected. At the time of interviewing, Hyesoo, Sooah, and Yumi lived in extended families, including their in-laws, whereas Jeong and Kyung lived in nuclear families, with only their respective husbands and children.

The participants all described being strongly encouraged, especially in the first three to five years, to devote their lives to the family, take full responsibility for housekeeping chores such as cooking meals for the extended family, and participate in family farming. In particular, taking care of children and elderly in-laws is typically considered to be the responsibility, and the primary role of mothers in Korean society (Kim, 2008), and the women consequently prioritized staying home to fulfill these duties over socializing or professional activities in order to meet their family members' expectations. The participants eventually sought outside employment to become more independent financially and to practice their Korean. Hyesoo got her first job as a Cambodian interpreter at a regional Multicultural Education Center five years before the time of interviewing. Yumi had started working four years prior to the interviews as a Vietnamese interpreter for the regional Multicultural Education Center. Jeong worked at a factory and at a government organization before taking up her current job as a cosmetics salesperson. Kyung and Sooah mainly had worked on their family farms but sporadically taken part-time paid jobs.

Results

In this section, I will explore the tensions and conflicts the women experienced in interacting with Koreans and the women's reactions to these situations, which took place in various social contexts, including the household, workplaces, and wider communities. The tensions and conflicts discussed by the participants are divided here into three categories: the imposition of Korean ways of living, negative stereotyping, and language use.

Imposition of Korean Ways of Living

One of the major communication difficulties that emerged from the women's narratives was how interactions, especially with their in-laws, were not two-way communications but sites of one-way imposition. Their in-laws had strong expectations that they assimilate to Korean culture, which dominated their communication. The data show how such expectations conflict with the women's own projected identities and how those expectations are imposed through their communicative interactions. For example, in Excerpt 1, Yumi expresses her frustration at her mother-in-law's attempts to change her eating habits.

> **Excerpt 1**
> I can't eat spicy food, but I try to eat *kimchi* as a token of respect. It's too spicy for me so I have to wash the *kimchi* with water. My mother-in-law saw this and asked me with a disgusted look on her face, "If you eat it that way, is it delicious?"…She forces me to adopt the Korean way of living. It gives me a lot of stress. We should eat what we can. She should not force me saying, "Eat this, eat that."

Yumi tried to eat *kimchi* (traditional Korean fermented vegetables) as an attempt to fit into the Korean culture. Yet her mother-in-law seemed to view Yumi's washing of the *kimchi* as a disrespectful act and imposed her view on Yumi through one-way communication in the form of rhetorical questions and imperatives. As a result, Yumi felt pressured to "adopt the Korean way of living"

rather than being her authentic self. She did not voice her opinions directly to her in-laws for fear that her behavior would be criticized as "talking back," which is culturally discouraged. In her narrative, however, Yumi critically evaluates the authoritative behavior of her mother-in-law and resists the assimilation pressures she faced at home.

Hyesoo reported that she felt compelled to comply with various Korean cultural customs in her marital household. For instance, she was expected to offer a daily morning greeting, using proper language and body gestures, as a sign of respect. Hyesoo was also required to prepare breakfast and dinner each day for her elderly in-laws and husband. She reluctantly accepted this role as she was told that cooking and serving food are a daughter-in-law's responsibilities. For Hyesoo, her family's expectations conflicted with her existing ways of being, which were largely influenced by her Cambodian cultural background.

Hyesoo also felt that Korean eating customs were being imposed on her, as shown in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2

I don't understand Korean people. Why they live like that. My in-laws keep asking me, "Why aren't you eating breakfast with us?" They force me to eat with them. I've lived like this for over 20 years. I don't want to change the way I am. Because of such reasons, there are conflicts between immigrant women and their in-laws. Because they force people to change, saying, "In Korea, you have to behave like this."

Although more Koreans are adopting Western breakfast foods such as cereal, the typical Korean breakfast pattern is rice, soup, and side dishes. Hyesoo contrasted this practice with the Cambodian practice, saying, "In Cambodia, we often skip breakfast. Even if we eat, we eat simple things because the weather is so hot and people don't bother to cook." Like Yumi, Hyesoo experienced the imposition of Korean norms through rhetorical questions and imperatives in her communications with her in-laws.

Beyond the household, the participants experienced conflicts with Korean neighbors and described feeling pressured to conform to the social

norms of the host society. Sooah used to volunteer at her village community center when neighborhood events and gatherings were held. She was usually involved in cooking and cleaning tasks with other women. Although most of the neighbors were older than her, she chose to volunteer and attend the events regularly as she had hoped doing so would give her regular exposure to Korean. However, interacting with her neighbors was not easy. In Excerpt 3, Sooah recalls an incident in which older neighbors reprimanded her for acting differently than they expected:

> **Excerpt 3**
> Whenever I show up, people focus on fixing my behavior and speech. (They said), "you don't know how to cook Korean food," "you shouldn't wear short shorts," "you don't know how to speak Korean politely."

Communication from the older neighbors was dominated by targeted statements imposing expectations of Koreanness and emphasizing Sooah as inadequate. As a result, Sooah reported that she became uninterested in visiting the community center and stopped volunteering in order to avoid the negative evaluations of the Koreans she met there.

Negative Stereotyping

The participants perceived pre-existing, negative stereotypes attached to marriage-migrants as an exacerbating factor in their communication problems with Koreans, including their own families. Kyung's narrative in Excerpt 4 is illustrative:

> **Excerpt 4**
> I can't communicate with Koreans. They think Vietnam is a poor country. My mother-in-law says, "You earn money in Korea and send all of it to Vietnam, right?" I don't do that. Actually, I receive help from my family (in Vietnam). There are times when our farm isn't doing well. If I told my mom I wanted to come visit, then my mom would purchase an airplane ticket for me. I can't explain this to every single Korean I

> meet, right? I really get stressed out. Since I'm tired of proving them wrong, I ignore them.

In Korean society, foreign brides are stereotyped as "manipulative opportunists" who marry only for economic benefits (Kim, 2010). And because commercial agencies often arrange international marriages, they are viewed as "purchase marriages" (Kim & Kim, 2015). Such stereotypes apparently led Kyung's mother-in-law to believe that Kyung had been sending remittances to her natal family in Vietnam. In her narrative, Kyung provided a counter-example to show that her mother-in-law's assumption was false, but she also reported that she chose not to respond to the expression of such negative stereotypes to avoid direct confrontation. Thus, Kyung's distress at her Korean family's lack of trust in her and their belief in the stereotypes about foreign brides had a negative impact on her socialization. The stereotypes affect communication between immigrants and Koreans and, in some cases, result in communication ceasing or not being initiated.

At workplaces as well, negative stereotypes can make conversations between colleagues uncomfortable and create an atmosphere of tension. For example, before starting her job at a cosmetics company, Jeong worked as a translator and interpreter for a local government organization to assist newly arrived foreign wives with their adaptation. In Excerpt 5, Jeong describes a Korean colleague's negative comments about Vietnamese immigrants in Korea:

> **Excerpt 5**
>
> Korean people think Vietnamese immigrants create a lot of social problems in Korea. My colleague kept saying, "These Vietnamese cause me a lot of headaches. They run away and create problems." So I got stressed out. I told her if there were no Vietnamese immigrants, she wouldn't have a job. So if Koreans say one word, I'll say my piece too.

Jeong's colleague's comment invoked an image of immigrant women as potential "runaways" who abandon their families for other men or for paid jobs once they obtain citizenship (Freeman, 2011). Media portrayals of such

runaway brides have reinforced the perception of immigrants as a social problem (Kim, 2008). Instead of denying the stereotypical belief, Jeong pointed out her colleague's position to remind her that her role was to help immigrants and to highlight the benefits her colleague gained from immigrants' presence in Korea. Rather than evaluating the accuracy of the stereotype, Jeong's strategy was to stop her colleague from criticizing her ethnic group. Jeong's narrative gives an example of the pervasiveness of negative stereotypes in communication with Koreans, even in what should be a positive environment.

Hyesoo also reported encountering negative images of Cambodia and Cambodian immigrants perpetuated in Korean society:

> **Excerpt 6**
>
> Koreans think Cambodia is a bad country. They say we married just for money. That's why there is conflict between Koreans and Cambodian women. Although Cambodia is a poor country, there are many good people. For Koreans, America and Cambodia are two very different countries. America is rich, and Cambodia is poor. I didn't come to Korea for money. I came to live a happy life.

Hyesoo considered negative stereotyping to be a major source of conflict between Cambodian immigrants and Koreans. According to Hyesoo, Koreans often associate Cambodian brides with poverty and mercenary motivations. Although Hyesoo acknowledged that her country was poor, she problematized Koreans' view of Cambodia as "a bad country." She further challenged the stereotype by explaining that her own decision to migrate was driven by a quest for happiness, not for financial gain.

Language Use

Immigrant women from Southeast Asia often experience mistreatment and discrimination on the basis of race, class, gender, mother tongue, the economic status of the home country, and the nature of their migration (Kim, 2010; Kim & Kim, 2015; Park, 2017, 2019a, 2019b; Shin, 2012). In this study, participants reported facing discriminatory behavior from Koreans at home and

at the workplace, and in larger communities. Specifically, the use of Korean, as used both by the participants and by Koreans in their interactions with marriage-migrants, was a source of tension.

Despite the expectation that immigrant women speak Korean, they often experience discrimination based on their use of Korean. For example, Kyung discussed her feelings of being excluded and marginalized whenever she attended a work-related workshop or event in Seoul. She claimed that her status as a foreign bride, a non-native speaker of Korean, and a speaker of a stigmatized Korean regional dialect served as a barrier to membership in the professional community. This subtle kind of marginalization was evident in the way Koreans reacted to her, as seen in Excerpt 7:

> **Excerpt 7**
>
> People from the big cities look down on marriage-migrants and don't want to speak with us. Some people don't understand what I say; there are people who react rudely, "What did you say?" and there are people who pretend as if they didn't hear me. Koreans really ruin my self-esteem. Look, if we didn't come to Korea, the population wouldn't increase. Go to an elementary school and check. A lot of children are *damunhwa* ("multicultural") children. I don't expect Koreans to thank us, but they shouldn't mistreat us.

Like Jeong in Excerpt 5, Kyung in Excerpt 7 describes being subject to Koreans' preconceived notions about marriage-migrants, as borne out in Kyung's case in Koreans' reactions to her speech. Again like Jeong, Kyung's reaction was to criticize Koreans' negative evaluations of marriage-migrants and to emphasize the benefits marriage-migrants provide to Korea.

More specifically, the use of *panmal* (non-honorific speech) can be a particular source of conflict. A competent Korean speaker uses honorific and non-honorific speech styles according to age, kinship, and social status (Sohn, 1999), with *panmal* being an intimate form of speaking reserved for addressing same-age friends or people in an inferior position in an informal context. In Excerpt 8, Jeong describes an unpleasant conversation she had with her manager, who scolded her using *panmal*:

Excerpt 8

I had a tough time working there. Almost everyday I was asked to run errands. Because I was used to doing only the things requested, I didn't initiate tasks. One day, the director scolded me saying, *Ne kuke wae an haysse?* ("Why haven't you done it?"). I said, "I didn't do it because you didn't ask me to." She got more mad. She used *panmal* and didn't treat me well.

Interacting with her manager was a struggle because Jeong felt that she was considered incompetent and was treated disrespectfully. Jeong appears to have perceived her manager's use of *panmal* as inappropriate as it fails to convey respect and formality. Moreover, the manager's use of the second-person pronoun *ne*, used among children or by an older person addressing a child, might have offended Jeong for the same reasons. Jeong perceived the manager as having violated politeness norms, and the rigid superior–inferior relationship emphasized by the use of *panmal* constrained Jeong's capacity to voice her feelings about the rudeness.

Sooah experienced a similar type of verbal mistreatment when communicating with the director of the community cultural center where she volunteered:

Excerpt 9

The director who was in charge of the event started using *panmal*. She said, "Hey Sooah, do this, do that." I asked her why she called me just by my first name. I told her, "Do you know me? When did we meet before? Do not speak to me in *panmal* because I'm not your subordinate. I'm a citizen who is using the center and you shouldn't treat volunteers poorly. Do not use *panmal* just because I'm a foreigner."

The director used *panmal* along with a non-honorific vocative, although an honorific speech would be expected in such a situation. The use of *panmal* in this context is inappropriate because it does not convey social distance and politeness. Sooah interpreted the director's behavior as a sign of a Korean's

condescending attitude towards foreigners. Sooah directly confronted the director, foregrounding her identity as a Korean citizen and a volunteer who deserved respect. Sooah's confrontation can be regarded as successful because it changed the addressee's behavior. Sooah reported, "Since then, she stopped speaking to me in *panmal*."

Sooah's sensitivity to *panmal* may be informed by previous negative experiences with members of her community. For example, in Excerpt 10, Sooah relates the tension around using *panmal* with an older neighbor at her community center:

> **Excerpt 10**
>
> I had to be very careful with how I spoke. I couldn't speak freely. I used the honorifics, but here and there I spoke in *panmal*, as in *imo*, *ilehkey hay?* ("Auntie, should I do it this way?"). Then, she judged me and scolded me, saying *ne kkapwunta* ("You're acting up!").

Conflicts occurred due to Sooah's inappropriate use of the Korean honorifics that govern the interaction between younger and older speakers as speakers who fail to use honorifics appropriately may be judged to be lacking in courtesy and education. Thus, Sooah's shift to the non-honorific register might have upset her older neighbor by implying unacceptable power relations. Although this exchange might have raised Sooah's awareness of social practices as demonstrated in Excerpt 9, the experience she describes in Excerpt 10 had negative social ramifications. Sooah reported that this incident led her to not want to revisit the community center.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigates distinct factors underlying communicative difficulties and intercultural conflicts between marriage-migrants and local Koreans. The findings suggest that interactions between immigrant women and local Koreans are shaped by structural and contextual factors, as well as the women's personal dispositions. While the women's narratives demonstrate that their agency plays a role in shaping their experiences, the majority group's

"monocultural and monolingual habitus" (Gogolin, 2021, p. 300) imposes limits on interactions between the two groups. In communication with Koreans, the participants frequently experienced the oppressiveness of Korea's "monolingual and monocultural ideology" (Chimbutane, 2011, p. 44) and struggled to find a place for themselves without changing their existing ways of being. The women faced pressure to conform to Korean cultural norms and meet the host society's expectations. Incongruities between their preferred and imposed identities were manifested in and exacerbated communicative difficulties and conflicts.

This study's findings also support Freeman's (2011) and Kim's (2010) arguments that particular aspects of Korean culture, including a rigid age- and gender-based social hierarchy, together with assimilationist expectations, constrain immigrant women's communication with their Korean family members and with other Koreans in the broader community. This in turn impacts the women's ability to negotiate preferred identities in their interactions, hampering their development of a sense of belonging to their adopted society. While the participants in this study asserted their right to stay culturally different within the interview context, they also often reported being unable to directly challenge their Korean families and other acquaintances due to their subordinate position or unwillingness to engage in conflict.

In addition, this study's findings demonstrate how the stigmatization of immigrant women involves Othering and the development of negative stereotypes. Stereotyping was part of the participants' daily experience. The participants reported that when Koreans talked to or about immigrant women, they emphasized negative stereotypical traits, implying group homogeneity and overlooking the complexity and subjectivity of the individual (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006). In this sense, the women are seen as "objects" to be categorized in terms of class and race, and their differences from the dominant group are seen as deficits. The prevalent image of foreign brides is that they marry Korean men in order to provide financial support to their families back home (Kim, 2008, 2010). Korean media routinely report that they abandon their Korean families to find jobs in the cities if their husbands cannot fulfill the women's financial expectations, reinforcing the stereotype that the women use marriage as a purely economic strategy (Freeman, 2011). Such

assumptions and Koreans' unfavorable attitudes towards these immigrants' ethnicity, which Koreans typically associate with low socioeconomic status, negatively affected the participants' integration and threatened their inhabited identity. The women in this study adopted two strategies for responding to negative perceptions. They challenged such perceptions by providing alternative explanations, or they declined to respond to avoid potentially stressful situations; that is, they either confronted the issue or withdrew from communication. In neither case could the participants operate as ordinary Koreans.

Systematic efforts need to be made to alter public discourses that lead to the stigmatization of international marriage and to create "alternative discourses" on cultural diversity to help preserve the "cultural and moral integrity of marginalized groups" (Siapera, 2010, p. 71). Schubert et al. (2015, p. 244) argue that "[t]he type of culture implied in multiculturalism" as understood in Korea is that of "less-powerful or less-developed countries." In other words, "multicultural" is a way of referring to racial Others, and hence being categorized by the Korean government as a "multicultural family" makes Southeast Asian immigrants and their children more vulnerable to social exclusion (Kim & Kim, 2015). The binary images of marriage-migrants as either manipulative opportunists or victims of a male-operated international trade have been propagated in the media and scholarly studies (Kim, 2010). More qualitative studies need to be conducted to fairly assess immigrants' participation in both private and professional domains and their contributions to society. The circulation of unbiased and accurate images of immigrants would help improve public understanding of the immigrant situation and create a more positive view of immigrants. Popular media, including TV, newspapers, and magazines, could also contribute positively to the circulation of stories of successful immigrants by presenting them as fully empowered individuals who work in various capacities. It is only through the active involvement of a host society that the full potential of immigrants can be realized.

The findings offer valuable implications for second language teachers and curriculum developers, who can play a critical role in promoting sustainable multilingualism and multiculturalism. Language programs for marriage-migrants should go beyond developing the women's linguistic skills. Language

teachers can serve as cultural mediators and transformers by providing their students with strategies for handling challenging interactions and discrimination so that they can achieve sustainable development in second language learning and create and inhabit strong multilingual and multicultural identities. Explicit instruction in responding to negative stereotypes could help them improve their communication skills and empower them to participate confidently in intercultural interactions. In particular, the women should be supported in learning how to challenge assumptions about any group of people and to help lead non-judgmental communication. The more Koreans learn about the real facts of immigration and the actual experiences of individual immigrants, the more likely it is that the negative group stereotypes they may have been applying will break down.

Immigrants' Korean families could also benefit from better information to improve their understanding of the women's experiences with the dominant group, the complexity of their identities, and their communication difficulties. Their families could play a vital role in the immigrants' settlement process, helping them feel like they belong and make a meaningful contribution to Korean society. Improving these families' ability to tolerate people of different ethnic groups and creating a culture of non-judgmental communication within the household would be an important step to promote immigrants' acculturation and positive identity construction (Kim, 2009). Furthermore, while second language programs designed for immigrant women continue to emphasize their domestic roles (Lee, 2014), they fail to support the women's identities and development as full citizens. Better efforts could be made to develop immigrants' place in the wider Korean society; for example, cultural awareness training workshops should be available to Koreans, including employers, school teachers, and community members, to help them learn to recognize and appreciate the rich resources and multiple identities of immigrants.

This study seeks to understand the intercultural conflict between immigrant women and Koreans, including their family members and other members of the host society, and its negative impact on their confidence in their cultural and ethnic identities, and, consequently, their self-esteem and full integration into the host society. The findings suggest directions for further

exploration. First, the study focused on the experiences of Southeast Asian marriage-migrant women who faced negative stereotypes in Korea. More research is needed on immigrants from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, especially from groups that do not encounter the same level or type of negative stereotypes and assumptions, such as East Asians (e.g., Chinese, Japanese). Each ethnic group may occupy different sociopolitical positions in Korea and face different issues related to acculturation, identity construction, and language use. Second, the study relied on the marriage-migrant women's narratives in which they spoke of their own views, as well as their perceptions of the views of their in-laws and colleagues. Future research needs to consider both immigrants' and local Koreans' experiences and perspectives in order to achieve a better understanding of intercultural communication between immigrant women and the local society. The information gained from such research efforts could contribute to promoting mutual understanding between immigrants and host societies, as well as sustainable multiculturalism and multilingualism in Korean society.

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KASDIENIO KITONIŠKUMO PATYRIMAS: PIETRYČIŲ AZIJOS SANTUOKOS MIGRANČIŲ TYRIMAS PIETŲ KORĖJOJE

Santrauka. Šis tyrimas nagrinėja kasdienį kitoniškumą, kurį patiria Pietryčių Azijos santuokos migrantės. Pietų Korėjoje vis labiau didėja etninė įvairovė, nes pastaruoju metu žymiai padaugėjo tarptautinių santuokų tarp užsieniečių moterų ir korėjiečių vyrų. Dauguma šių santuokų įvyksta per vedybų brokerius. Iki šiol atlikta nedaug tyrimų apie santuokos migrančių bendravimo su korėjiečiais patirtį. Šiame tyrime daugiausia dėmesio skiriama konkretiems veiksniams, kurie sukelia konfliktus tarp šių moterų ir vietinių vyrų įvairiuose socialiniuose kontekstuose, įskaitant namų ūkį, darbovietes ir platesnes bendruomenes, kaip moterys reaguoja į tokius konfliktus ir kaip susidoroja su šiomis sudėtingomis sąveikomis. Duomenys tyrimui surinkti atlikus išsamius interviu su penkiomis tyrimo dalyvėmis iš Kambodžos ir Vietnamo. Dalyvių pasakojimai atskleidžia įtampą ir kylančius konfliktus, kuriuos galima suskirstyti į tris kategorijas: korėjiečių gyvenimo būdų primetimas, neigiami stereotipai ir kalbos vartojimas. Moterų teigimu, vyrauja nuomonė, kad jos nukrypsta nuo Korėjos visuomenės kultūros ir kalbos normų, todėl patiria spaudimą jų laikytis, nors kartais tos normos prieštarauja jų pačių tapatumo jausmui. Be to, emigrantės patiria visuotinę atskirtį (marginalizaciją), nes laikomos kitokiomis, vertinamos neigiamais stereotipais, todėl stengiasi išsiugdyti priklausymo priimančiai visuomenei jausmą. Šio tyrimo rezultatai daro prielaidą, kad antrosios kalbos mokymosi programos, skirtos santuokos migrantėms, gali sukurti palankias sąlygas, įgalinančias santuokos migrantes pasiekti gerų rezultatų nuolat mokantis antrosios kalbos ir palaikančias jų daugiakalbių ir daugiakultūrių tapatybių vystymąsi.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: tarpkultūrinis konfliktas; kalbos vartojimas; santuokos migrantės; Pietų Korėja; Pietryčių Azijos imigrantės; stereotipas.