Korean Heritage Language Maintenance and Language Ideology

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Abstract
This paper explores ways in which language ideology is linked to maintenance of Korean as a heritage language by Koreans in America. The data for this ethnographic study come from three separate sources: 1) a Korean language program at an American university; 2) a community-based ESL program for Korean seniors; and 3) a recently immigrated Korean family. Data collection methods include participant observation; informal conversations with the participants; in-depth interviews; and on-site document analysis. Through regular and sustained interaction with participants in the three research sites over a period of three years, the findings provide insights into ways in which the participants’ attitudes toward language learning and maintenance are continuously shaped and revised based on their life circumstances. This paper describes each participant’s language attitudes as fluid entities operating on a continuum of assimilationist ideologies on the one end and pluralist ideologies on the other.

Introduction
This paper focuses on language ideologies of Korean immigrants and how they are related to language learning and maintenance practices. In recent decades, scholarly interest on patterns of language loss and maintenance among immigrant groups has steadily grown (e.g., Extra & Verhoeven, 1993; Ferguson & Brice-Heath, 1981; Fishman, 1989, 1991; McKay & Wong, 1998). The most commonly observed pattern in the United States is a three-generational language shift from the immigrant minority language to the dominant language of the host society (Fishman, 1991). For instance, the first generation speaks the native language, while the bilingual second generation comes between the native-language-speaking first generation and the majority-language-speaking third generation. However, language minority groups increasingly experience a complete language shift within two generations (Wiley, 2001). This shift creates problems for inter-generational communication as parents, grandparents, and children do not understand each other. Wong Fillmore argues that “in recent years, languages other than English have been placed in greater jeopardy than ever before in the United States” (2003, p. 9).

The Korean language is no exception to this pattern of rapid language shift. A number of studies have documented an accelerated shift to English in Korean immigrant families (Cho & Krashen, 1998; Shin, 2005). Previous research on language use patterns of Korean immigrants shows that first-generation Korean immigrants speak almost exclusively Korean at home and at work, while most second-generation Korean Americans use mostly English (Hurh & Kim, 1984; Min, 2000). Korean Americans are among the more recent immigrant groups to enter the U.S., the majority having arrived after the passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. In 2000, over one million Koreans were living in the U.S. according to the U.S. Census. Despite the number
of Korean immigrants, there are still many untold stories about their lives and the process of heritage language maintenance (but see Jo, 2002; Lee, 2002; Shin, 2005). One area of interest that has received insufficient attention in considering heritage language maintenance is the concept of language ideologies (Fine & Sandstrom, 1993; Gonzáles, 2003; Lo Bianco, 2003; Silverstein, 1979). This study seeks to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between language ideologies and heritage language maintenance of Korean immigrants in the U.S. I first turn to a definition of language ideology.

**Language Ideology Defined**

Silverstein defined language ideologies as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived structure and use” (1979, p. 173). This definition is particularly useful for the current study in that it offers a framework for understanding the beliefs of Korean immigrant parents and children about English and Korean and how they function in their justification of the use of English and Korean in their homes. I also adopt an interactionist orientation on ideologies from a sociological framework which conceptualizes ideologies as relational and behavioral (Fine & Sandstrom 1993). Ideologies are relational in that they are not simply held by individuals, but are presented to and shared with others. Ideological beliefs guide “people’s conceptions of and actions in the social and political realm” (Fine & Sandstrom 1993, p. 24, emphasis added). In other words, people not only embrace ideologies but also act them out. Fine and Sandstrom (1993) argue that the enactment of ideologies depends on the resources available to people. Thus, to understand the relationship between heritage language maintenance and language ideology in the language education practices of Korean immigrant families, I put forth a conceptualization of language ideology as a set of justifications for using one language over others in varying circumstances.

Lo Bianco (2003) argues that heritage language maintenance through inter-generational transmission of heritage languages is “clearly affected by language ideologies as they interact with the specific circumstances and prospects of HL acquisition, maintenance, and re-acquisition” (p. 4). He further urges that:

> We need to understand the ways in which some ideologies become hegemonic, or sustain that status, and how ideologies of language operate in specific contexts, differently or similarly for different languages. A key question concerns how language-specific ideologies, or specific linguistic cultures (Schiffman, 1996) relating to particular languages, affect practice in our schools and universities and how these in turn impact on the learning, loss, re-acquisition, literacy elaboration, or community-appropriate proficiency of HLs in mainstream institutions. (2003, p. 4)

The current study addresses the following research questions: what are the language ideologies adopted by Korean immigrants? How does the enactment of these language ideologies operate in various familial and institutional settings?
Research Sites and Participants

The data for this study is drawn from a three-year ethnographic investigation of the relationship between language use and attitudes by Koreans in America in several institutional and familial settings. I have chosen three research sites to obtain a multi-generational view of the language ideologies circulating in the Korean American community. The first site, an undergraduate Korean language program, was selected to explore second- and 1.5- generation immigrant children’s experiences in and motivations for learning their heritage language in college. The second site, an adult ESL program, provides information on first-generation Korean immigrants’ experiences in learning English. The third site, the home of a Korean American family, offers a trans-generational look at language use and attitude in a non-institutional setting. In the following, I describe each of the three research sites in detail.

First site: A Korean language program at a University

I taught Korean at this site for four hours a week over three academic years (September 2000 - May 2003). The entire program served about 110 students, over 90% of whom were second- or 1.5-generation Korean Americans. Second-generation Korean Americans are defined as those who are born in the United States to first-generation Korean immigrant parents. “1.5-generation” Korean Americans were born in Korea and immigrated to the U.S. during childhood. Except for two 1.5-generation immigrants who came to the U.S. at the ages of five and six, all other participants were second-generation Korean Americans. Over the course of three years, thirty-three Korean American students participated in my interview study. In this paper, I discuss the findings from the interviews of nine of the thirty-three Korean American students who participated from this research site. Table 1 summarizes the demographic information of the ten participants, including their age at the beginning of the study, age at arrival in the U.S., and proficiency in Korean as measured by their placement in the program. In addition to formal interviews, I carried out participant observation as the instructor of the Korean language classes during the three years I taught in the program. I looked for patterns of language use and attitude and was able to obtain a fairly accurate picture of their abilities in Korean. In the third year of data collection, I conducted participant observation in an intermediate-level Korean course taught by another instructor. Five of the ten students in this class had taken my Korean classes the previous year.

Table 1: Participants at the University Korean Language Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Age at Arrival</th>
<th>Korean Proficiency</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
An interview ranging from forty-five minutes to one hour long was conducted with each participant. The interviews sought to elicit information on the participants’ language use patterns in different domains, language learning histories, and attitudes towards English and Korean. The participants were asked to write essays on what motivated them to learn Korean in college and on their progress in Korean. These essays further supplemented the interview and participant observation data.

Second site: A Community-Based Adult ESL program for Korean American seniors

The adult ESL program was offered at a Korean American community center in Philadelphia. With a few exceptions, the ESL students were first-generation Korean immigrants over sixty years old and female. Table 2 summarizes the demographic information of ten senior participants who are discussed in this paper, including their age at the beginning of the study, length of residence in the U.S., education, and proficiency in English. The class was offered during the daytime, which prevented working immigrants from attending the class. Some of the seniors had been taking this class for as long as ten years; the ESL program not only fulfilled their language learning needs but also their social needs. The seniors often met with their friends at the community center and socialized during and after class. In May, 2001, I started working as a teaching assistant in the ESL program, helping the course instructor, Mrs. Lee, and interacting with the adult students. Then from February to June 2003, I taught a citizenship class in this program to help some of the seniors prepare for their U.S. citizenship interviews. Over two years, I met with some seniors in their homes and outside of the classroom and conducted interviews with twenty-five of them. The interviews were thirty minutes to one
hour long and were about their language use patterns, language learning histories, English language learning practice, and attitudes toward English and Korean.

Table 2: Participants at the Community-based Adult ESL Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Length of Residence</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>English Proficiency</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Shin</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>10/03/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Huh</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>11-02-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Yu</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>8/18/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Kim</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>10-3-02 10-10-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Oh</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>10/25/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Lee</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>11/4/2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>10/11/2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Yun</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>10/25/2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Jee</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>9/27/2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Park</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>10/25/2002 11/1/2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Third site: A Korean American Home

The third research site was the home of a Korean immigrant family. I spent time with the Park family from December 2001 to June 2002 when I taught the two Park children, Unmi and Youngsu, at their home three hours per week. I first got to know Mrs. Park in the adult ESL class mentioned above in December of 2001. The Parks emigrated from Korea to the United States in May 2001 and were adjusting to life in a new country. Both Mr. Park and Mrs. Park were in their mid-forties, with minimal English proficiency. Before coming to the U.S., Mr. Park had had a white-collar job at a company and Mrs. Park was a music instructor. When I first met the family, both Mr. and Mrs. Park were unemployed. But Mrs. Park started working as a part-time tailor at a Korean-owned dry cleaner soon after I started tutoring her children, and a few months later Mr. Park began working as a clerk at a convenience store owned by non-Koreans. His decision to work at this store was motivated by a desire to interact solely with non-Koreans to practice his English. As college-educated former professionals, Mr. and Mrs. Park have both experienced a downward shift in their employment in the U.S. due mainly to their weak command of English (Hurh, 1998; Shin, 2005).

The two Park children, Unmi and Youngsu, were in grades eight and six, respectively. Unmi, an outgoing teenage girl, liked her new school, while Youngsu, her younger
brother, often said that he disliked the new school and missed his school in Korea. I recorded field notes of my interaction with the family every time I was at their house. I paid particular attention to home literacy practices, language use patterns, and language attitudes. The Park family is by no means representative of all Korean American families. However, my interaction with them provided me with first-hand information on ways in which language ideologies within a family were resonant with what was reported by the college students and the ESL seniors.

**Research Methodology**

The data collection methods included participant observation, informal conversations with the participants, interviews, and site document review. Whenever possible, I recorded detailed field notes of my observations. Class meetings and tutoring sessions were audio-recorded. At the Korean language program, 86 two-hour long class meetings were recorded from September 26, 2000 to April 15, 2003. At the adult ESL program, 48 class meetings were recorded from December 7, 2001 to May 9, 2003. With Unmi and Youngsu, 23 one and a half-hour long tutoring sessions were recorded from January 18, 2002 to June 10, 2002. The interviews were conducted in the language the interviewees felt most comfortable using. I spoke Korean with the ESL seniors and the Parks and a mixture of Korean and English to interview my students in the Korean language program. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. During my initial review of the data, I developed tentative categories and themes related to language ideology found in the data. I then highlighted the tentative categories in my field notes, in the transcripts of the interviews and in-class recordings, and site documents. I then sorted the themes across the three sites to understand the relationships among the categories.

**Language Ideologies in Circulation**

Language ideologies operating in the Korean American community can be gauged on a continuum of assimilationist ideologies on one end and pluralist ideologies on the other. Most immigrants’ language ideologies seem to shift on this continuum as their life circumstances change. In this section, I will describe assimilationist language ideologies first, and then move onto pluralist ideologies next. I shall argue that most people espouse an ideology that falls somewhere in between the opposite poles of the continuum.

*Assimilationist language ideologies*

At the macro-societal level, assimilationist ideologies may include various strains of xenophobia and “a crusade to ‘Americanize’ the new immigrants” (Schmid, 2000). Wiley and Wright (2004) note that lack of tolerance of languages other than English and antagonism toward bilingual education are as apparent as they have ever been. Recently, the English-Only movement has spawned various anti-bilingual measures including ballot initiatives to ban bilingual education in a number of states including California, Arizona, and Massachusetts and Official English statutes in some twenty states (Lo Bianco, 2004). At the individual level, assimilationist ideologies may stem from a personal desire to succeed socially and academically.
The Park family provides an example of the assimilationist end of the language ideology continuum. The following passage is excerpted from my field notes on March 15, 2002. Earlier that day, Mr. Park had scolded Youngsu for bringing his uneaten snack back home. It turned out that Youngsu had brought the snack to school on the wrong day because he did not understand his teacher’s direction. Mr. Park blamed Youngsu for failing to understand a simple direction in English. The following vignette shows Mrs. Park’s reaction to her husband’s angry response:

"I am terribly busy. I wish he would help me, but he only blames the children. I feel less affectionate toward him whenever he yells at them. It takes some time to speak English well. But he just blames the children because they don’t speak English well yet. I am worried that my kids might become insane because of their father." (Translated from Korean)

Knowing that language learning takes time, Mrs. Park was frustrated that her husband had unrealistic expectations for the children to learn English quickly. She told me that she was trying to arrange for Youngsu to live with native-English speaking Americans to improve his English. She described her friend’s son who learned to speak English well from living with his English teacher. Then Unmi interrupted her mother and said in an urgent tone of voice, “Send me, too. Send me, too. People say that if you come to the United States after 15 years of age, you can’t fix your Korean accent. I am now 15. Send me, too.” Driven by parental pressure and a desire to learn English and speak it without an accent, Unmi was willing to leave her family. It should be mentioned that tens of thousands of parents in Korea send their children abroad to English-speaking countries to have them educated in English (Shin, 2006). This is largely due to the status of English as “a global language” (Kachru, 1988; McArthur, 1987; Crystal, 1997) and the importance of English in education and employment. However, it is much less common for Korean immigrants who are already living in America to break up their family so that their children can stay at an English-speaking home. This rather drastic measure is an indication of the sense of pressure the family feels to learn English.

To Mr. Park, the use of Korean detracts from the overall goal of learning English. He adopted a policy to eliminate written materials in Korean from his home. One time when I went to a Korean grocery store with Mrs. Park, we passed by a pile of Korean weekly newspapers. I picked up a copy and thought Mrs. Park would, too. But she explained that her husband had ordered her not to bring home any newspapers in Korean. In fact, Mr. Park did not allow her to bring home anything in Korean, insisting that everyone in the family needed to learn English and become American. Youngsu also said that his father did not allow him to watch television programs in Korean or listen to music with Korean lyrics. When I asked him why, he answered that his father wanted him to learn English as quickly as possible. Given that Mr. and Mrs. Park do not speak or read English very well, Korean newspapers and TV programs are the only ways in which they can keep themselves informed of current events anywhere in the world. They were making an enormous personal sacrifice by eliminating Korean written materials and media from their home.
It should be noted that Mr. Park’s behavior is probably influenced by the family’s status as recent immigrants. Since their children came to the U.S. relatively late as teenagers, Mr. and Mrs. Park know that there is not enough time for them to develop advanced English skills to enter reputable universities. Therefore, they may be willing to take drastic measures to “close the gap” in their children’s English abilities. Rather than using Korean to learn English, Mr. and Mrs. Park have made a conscious decision to make a sharp break with it so that the children could be immersed in English. The children, however, are aware of the consequences of focusing only on English. For example, Unmi told me that her dream was to become a news broadcaster in Korea, but she did not expect to since her Korean would not develop further. As radical as they may seem, cases like the Park family are relatively rare in the Korean-American community.

The language learning histories of the participants in the university Korean language program illustrate that the families of these students held similar, although much less extreme, language ideologies to those of the Parks. Mike, a second-generation Korean American, said that he had never learned Korean from his parents because they were afraid that he would fall behind in school in America if he were learning two languages at once. Mike added, “So all my life I’ve only spoken English with my parents.” His parents had moved to the United States as graduate students in their mid-twenties. According to Mike, their English, even with a Korean accent, was good enough to carry on conversations solely in English. However, they did not feel more comfortable speaking English than Korean. Mike's parents always asked him or his brother to speak in English for them in public because they were ashamed of their Korean accent.

Lily, a second-generation Korean American, had a similar story. She recalls, “When I was growing up, my parents were afraid that I would not learn English well enough. So from the start, my parents began talking to me in English to ensure that I would master the language and do well in school.” Joseph and Edward, both second-generation Korean Americans, shared similar stories. Dan, a 1.5-generation Korean American, who came to America at the age of six, recalled that his mother, a Korean language teacher at a Korean heritage language school, ironically did not allow him to learn Korean because she wanted him to learn English as quickly as possible. Dan was not given an opportunity to learn Korean until he started college. All these students experienced strong parental pressure to acquire English skills so they could be academically competitive.

Shin (2005) finds that language shift to English in Korean American families is in part due to parents’ extreme concern about education, which is perceived to depend on perfect development of English. Furthermore, many Korean immigrant parents chose to move to the U.S. for children’s education, since access to higher education is much more competitive in Korea than it is in the United States. Education as a main motivation to emigrate makes Korean parents zealous about their children learning English – their children’s failure to get into a good college turns their immigration to the U.S. into a failure as well. Wong Fillmore (2003) argues that many immigrant parents choose to stop speaking the heritage language because they do not want to be perceived as being
different from the mainstream population, and because educational policies emphasizing children’s English development pressure parents to abandon their heritage language. Both of these reasons are a reflection of assimilationist ideologies; immigrants are seen as needing to be assimilated to U.S. mainstream society, and acquiring English at the cost of heritage languages is taken for granted. In addition, an English-only policy at home is justified by immigrant parents’ belief that learning two or more languages confuses their children, an assumption that Shin (2003) characterizes as one of the many “myths surrounding bilingualism.”

Assimilationist language ideologies circulating in micro-level interactions are backed up by the idea of English as the *de facto* language of the United States (Macedo, 1997). In response to my question about which language is more important, Mr. Shin, one of the seniors in the adult ESL class, answered “If you live here [the United States], the more important language is of course English. You must speak English, because you need to know the language of this place.” Mr. Shin’s use of the expressions, “of course” and “must” indexes his language ideology that using English confers a legitimacy on its speakers that other languages do not.

The first-generation immigrants in the adult ESL class seemed to equate English abilities with Americanness. With only one exception, all the seniors whom I interviewed answered that they did not consider themselves to be American, whether or not they had U.S. citizenship. Mrs. Huh, the only senior who said that she considered herself an American, justified her answer with her status as a U.S. citizen. When I asked the seniors to explain why they did not consider themselves American, many of them answered, “Because I cannot speak English.” To emphasize the importance of English in being American, Mrs. Yu said, “How can you be American when you cannot speak the language?” Here, Mrs. Yu used “the language” to refer to English. To the seniors, English seems to be the only language that marks someone as American. These beliefs are closely linked to macro-level English-Only ideologies and policies, as well as the status of English as a global language.

Another example of an ideology favoring English is shown in an interview Mr. Shin, a student in the adult ESL class. When I asked Mr. Shin which language he believed to be more beautiful, he said “English” twice, then added, “English is the best language…. Yes, yes, because English is the common language of the world. If you know English, you can use it anywhere, but you cannot use Korean in foreign countries.” It is noteworthy that my question about aesthetic qualities of Korean and English brought about a response that focuses on the practicality of these languages.

*Pluralist language ideologies*

Many participants in this study espoused language ideologies towards the other end of the continuum, which values both Korean and English. According to Schmid (2000), pluralist language ideologies:
recognize and affirm the multilingual nature of the society, declare that multiple languages (and ethnolinguistic groups) are national resources to be nurtured as a collective asset, grant equal language rights to individuals and/or groups to retain their “mother’s tongue,” and stipulate a policy goal of facilitating native language retention and maintenance, most commonly through the educational system. (p. 60)

Most participants considered bilingualism to be better than monolingualism and to offer additional benefits to the speaker. The university students of Korean and the adult ESL students expressed the value of Korean in various domains in their lives such as family and friendship as well as employment. For example, Mrs. Kim in the ESL program emphasized the value of Korean in a story of a second-generation Korean American, the son of her acquaintance, who lost his job at a Korean-owned company in the United States because of his inability to speak Korean. She started the story, saying “If you can speak not only English but also Korean, it is even better than speaking only English.” Mr. Park shared Ms. Kim's view: “If 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans can speak both Korean and English, it is really beneficial for their future. But if they can speak only English, it’s disadvantageous.”

Immigrant parents are motivated to raise their children to be bilingual in Korean and English because they want to help their children develop healthy ethnic identities as Korean Americans. Furthermore, as Korea becomes economically more influential in the world, there is a growing recognition that knowledge of Korean provides economic and practical benefits. Many ESL seniors emphasized the importance of Korean for their grandchildren and expressed the desire that they be Korean American. Similarly, Cho (2000) reported that second-generation Korean Americans who had developed Korean language proficiency had a strong ethnic identity and displayed greater understanding and knowledge of cultural values, ethics, and manners.

First-generation immigrant parents often send their 1.5- and second-generation children to Korean heritage language schools, many of which are affiliated with Korean Protestant churches (Min, 2000; You, 2005). A few of my college student participants recalled attending Korean heritage language schools, and reported that they stopped going for a number of reasons. One student reported that he was forced to attend such a school, but was not motivated to learn Korean and eventually stopped attending.2 Another student did not enjoy Korean school because of her teacher’s authoritarian and tedious teaching style. Scheduling conflicts between their Korean school's weekend schedules and extracurricular activities caused still others to withdraw. Finally, students usually do not earn academic credit for Korean community school attendance, although a small number of states allow public schools to that grant students academic credit.3

The presence of grandparents in the home greatly influences children’s exposure to Korean. For example, Mrs. Oh, an ESL senior, took on an active role in teaching Korean to her grandchildren, who she said now speak both English and Korean comfortably. Mrs. Oh said, about her granddaughter, “When I visit her, she must speak with me only in
Korean. I refuse to listen to her unless she speaks in Korean. When I am with them, she has to write [copy] one page of the Bible in Korean per day.”

Many students in my Korean language class also recalled learning the Korean alphabet from their grandmothers. Since very few grandparents can speak English well, children are in essence forced to speak Korean with them. Some parents may also choose to speak Korean with children at home because they do not want to pass on inaccurate English to their children. Mr. and Mrs. Lee told me that their children spoke with their grandchildren only in Korean at home because they were afraid that their incorrect English pronunciation might have a negative effect on their children’s English. Therefore, parents’ choice to speak Korean can be motivated either by the desire to teach Korean or to avoid speaking incorrect English.

It may be that immigrant parents want to teach Korean to their children, but their work schedule or location of their residence deprives them of time and resources. Jason, a second-generation Korean American, recalled that when he was growing up, his parents worked long hours and were not home often. Mrs. Yun, an ESL senior, also observed, “Many second-generation Korean Americans cannot speak Korean because their parents go out early in the morning and come back late at night. They don’t have time to take care of their children, and the children hang out only with American friends.” Jason’s experience and Mrs. Yun’s observation are supported by a survey of Korean junior and senior high school students in New York City. Sixty-four percent of the sample reported that neither of their parents was at home after school (Min, 1995). Mr. Jee, another ESL senior, claimed that his grandchildren could not speak Korean because few Korean immigrants lived in their neighborhood.

In a survey study of 251 Korean immigrant parents, Shin (2005) found that only a small percentage of Korean parents who wanted Korean to be spoken at home either taught, read to their children in Korean, or sent them to Korean heritage language schools. Shin (2005) also claimed that although 82.4% of the parents favored bilingual development of their children, they placed far more emphasis on children’s English acquisition, since English proficiency had a direct influence on school performance. Therefore, although parents generally have favorable attitudes towards bilingual development, they may not act on those attitudes because of a sense of urgency that their children acquire English quickly.

It is noteworthy that schooling plays an important role in language practice in Korean immigrant families. Many second-generation Korean Americans reported that while developing English proficiency they stopped speaking Korean after they started schooling. Jane, a second-generation Korean American, who used to speak Korean before elementary school said:

When I entered elementary school, I began speaking English with my friends and my teachers. Soon, I forgot how to speak Korean almost entirely. My parents continued to speak Korean to me throughout my life,
mixing in English words when they knew them, and I would reply back in English.

Jane’s use of English increased substantially once she started attending school, while her Korean weakened, a common pattern among Korean immigrant children (Shin, 2005). Jane’s parents did not send her to a Korean heritage language school, although such schools were available in Los Angeles, where she grew up. Joseph, a second-generation Korean American, had learned Korean from his grandparents when he was small, but stopped speaking Korean once he entered school. The negative influence of English-only schooling on the maintenance of heritage languages is well documented among other language minority groups (Wong Fillmore, 1991; 2003).

Although immigrant children may turn their backs on their heritage language during K-12 schooling, many try to reclaim it when they enter college, when their status as university students allows it. Jane, who wants to become a medical doctor, talked about her aspirations to use Korean in her career:

In the future, it will be good to know how to speak Korean. I plan to work back in California, and there are a lot of Koreans who live there. If I am able to speak Korean well enough, I will be able to have a lot more clients through the Korean people I meet. Being bilingual in Korean and English will help me communicate with a lot of my clients and help build stronger relations with them.

Knowledge of Korean can also be applied directly to academic work. David, a 1.5-generation Korean American, also hoped to develop his Korean proficiency to write a history honors thesis on Korea.

Learning Korean in college seems to result in a renewed appreciation for Korean as a heritage language. For example, Mike, whose parents had spoken to him only in English at home, was actively learning Korean in college. Before he started studying Korean in his sophomore year, he had spent a summer in Seoul, attending a university-affiliated Korean language school, Mike said:

Having been born in America, I never felt any tie to Korean culture and therefore the language as well. The only charge that ever made me want to learn was that it would look good on a resume and it would help me get a job. But as I grow older, my own heritage has become increasingly more important to me...I also realized that I want to be able to pass on to my kids some of the heritage and the language of my parents.

Mike seems to have shifted from a position of valuing Korean only as an instrument for employment to a realization that it is a critical part of his heritage.

Some students' parents seemed to believe that because their children were at a good university, they could now “afford” to reconnect with their heritage language.
Mike’s decision to learn Korean in college was supported by his parents, who used to speak with him only in English. Joseph, a second-generation college student, has a similar story. Although Joseph’s parents discouraged him from speaking Korean when he was growing up, they support his decision to learn Korean at the university. Now that these students have native English fluency, their parents no longer see Korean as a threat to their English development but think of it as a useful addition to their children’s linguistic and cultural repertoire.

Cho (2000) claimed that unlike European Americans, Koreans as ethnic and racial minorities cannot be completely assimilated into American society. One of my research participants, Dan, a 1.5-generation Korean American, confirmed Cho’s claim, saying that he became increasingly interested in Korean because he was not accepted as an American. The other students were motivated not by a perceived failure to become “American” but by their realization of the value of their heritage as they matured. About half of my Korean language program participants were from areas with few other Korean Americans. Being in a university environment where they meet and interact with other Korean Americans may have contributed to renewing their interest in their common heritage and cultural background.

Second-generation Korean Americans want an opportunity to learn Korean in a “socially accepted and supported way” (Lee, 2002, p. 123). I argue that an undergraduate Korean language program is such an accepted venue, since it is offered in a mainstream institution rather than in a community-based institution. Most of the Korean Americans in the Korean language program had no opportunities to study Korean as an academic subject in their primary or secondary schools. The university Korean language program gave legitimacy to what was earlier considered peripheral. Furthermore, as university students, they no longer worried about learning English, which in turn helped them to pursue Korean without the pressure to learn English. Both parents' and students' views of the value of studying Korean demonstrate that language ideologies are fluid and largely influenced by life circumstances.

Conclusion
This study explored the relationship between language ideologies and language practice among Korean Americans of different generations. In general, the language ideologies of Korean Americans fall on a continuum from assimilationist to pluralist, and they can shift in response to individual and family life circumstances. Participants' ideological shifts resulted in varied language practices at different times. For example, we saw that while many Korean parents with young children hold assimilationist ideologies and speak to their children in English only, they shift to a more pluralist position and support their children's desire to learn Korean once the children are in college. Paradoxically, 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans’ high proficiency in English facilitates their decision to pursue Korean when they reach college age, when Korean is perceived as a desirable addition to English. A shift toward pluralist language ideologies may have a positive influence on these students’ language development.
The common misconception that two languages confuse children, or the belief that studying Korean will detract resources and energy from learning English, drives many parents to abandon Korean when their children are still learning English. Many second generation Korean Americans in this study never had an adequate opportunity to learn Korean because their parents decided to use English only. In addition, even in homes where Korean and English co-existed, a lack of Korean-language resources prevented children from properly developing in Korean. In general, with a few exceptions, the college students who participated in this study experienced minimal “inter-generational transmission” (Fishman, 1990, 1991) of Korean.

By postponing the learning of Korean, many students have lost opportunities to develop advanced literacy in Korean. Only a small number of Korean college students pursue Korean language study on the advanced level, and the majority stop at the intermediate level. For many undergraduate students, the incentives to learn Korean may prove to be too little and too late (Shin, 2006). Had students been given opportunities to develop their heritage language while growing up, they would have had a better chance at attaining advanced levels of proficiency.

To enhance Korean language development among second- and third-generation Korean Americans, institutional support at the K-12 level is badly needed (Shin, 2006). This support is especially important given that development of high levels of literacy, including literacy in the academic register, can only happen through the integration of the heritage language into regular schooling. Part of the institutional support called for is for community-based heritage language programs to collaborate with public school systems to integrate heritage languages into regular school curriculum and instruction, and for public schools to give students academic credit for work completed in heritage schools. For this collaboration to be fully realized, strong grass-roots initiatives need to come from parents and the community. An example of a grassroots campaign supporting Korean heritage language education is the Foundation for Korean Language and Culture in USA (formerly the Foundation for SAT II Korean). The foundation was founded in 1994 to promote Korean language education in U.S. public schools and to lobby for the adoption of Korean as a SAT II foreign language (Foundation for Korean Language and Culture, 2007). In 1995, the foundation presented $500,000 raised from the Korean American community, the Korean government, and Samsung, to the College Board to cover the cost of developing a SAT II Korean test. Later that year, Korean was adopted as one of nine SAT II foreign languages and the first Korean SAT II was administered in 1997 to 2,500 students. By 2002 the number of students taking SAT II Korean had increased to 3,194. The foundation has also petitioned high schools to offer Korean as a foreign language. In 2007, Georgia established Korean as a foreign language in public schools (KORUS News, 2006).

My interviews, the success of KLACUSA in its campaign for a Korean SAT II, and the growth of Korean language programs in public schools suggest that many Korean parents want their children to develop as bilinguals. However, the language ideology I observed...
in my interviews with the Park family, as well as with Korean-American college students, suggests that many Korean parents suspect that their children will not learn English well enough to excel academically if they continue to speak and study Korean. Parents with this belief are likely to discourage their children from studying Korean until they have reached college. As a result, the children have only a short time to pursue language study, and fewer will reach their potential as highly-functioning bilinguals.

Parents would therefore benefit from information on the myths and facts of bilingualism in the family, including the rewards of uninterrupted bilingualism and the academic and professional benefits of attaining high proficiency in another language. Outreach to the Korean community could also include information on K-16 Korean language programs in the U.S.\textsuperscript{5} and on conducting advocacy for heritage language education. These efforts would contribute to broadening the base of support for Korean language maintenance in the United States.

Acknowledgement
I am grateful for the valuable comments and suggestions made on earlier drafts by two anonymous reviewers and the guest editors of this issue, Sarah J. Shin and Jin Sook Lee, whose encouragement and guidance have greatly helped me improve the paper. All remaining shortcomings are solely my responsibility.

References


**Notes**

1. All names are pseudonyms.

2. The issue of students' lack of motivation also emerged in my conversations with several Korean community school teachers in Philadelphia and was part of my own experience as a Korean community school teacher for a semester.

3. For example, in 2006 public schools in the Atlanta, Georgia area granted students academic credit for attending a local Saturday Korean language school (KORUS News, 2006).


5. In addition to KLACUSA's list of K-12 schools teaching Korean, the American Association of Teachers of Korean (AATK) has a list of post-secondary institutions in the U.S. that offer Korean (American Association of Teachers of Korean, n.d.)