Parents’ Attitudes Toward Their Children’s Heritage Language Maintenance: The Case of Korean Immigrant Parents in West Michigan

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Parents’ Attitudes Toward Their Children’s Heritage Language Maintenance:
The Case of Korean Immigrant Parents in West Michigan
Duckyoung Jung Becker

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Duckyoung Jung Becker
Abstract

Research shows that many immigrant parents in the United States struggle with heritage language maintenance as their children start school in the dominant society. Many studies also reveal that immigrant parents value heritage language maintenance highly and wish their children to maintain home language. Although heritage language research has increased in the recent years, there is still a dearth of research among immigrants who reside outside of large metropolitan cities in the United States. By taking the case study approach, the present study identifies Korean immigrant parents who reside in West Michigan towns and, through interview and observations, explores their attitudes toward their children’s heritage language maintenance. The study also investigates parents’ efforts in maintaining Korean and identifies difficulties associated with heritage language maintenance.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

The issue of heritage language maintenance has become a concern among immigrant families in the United States because children do not maintain their heritage language as the English language takes precedence (Guardado, 2002; Kim 2011; Lai Yu-Tung, 2009; Wong Fillmore, 1991, 2000, 2003). As with other ethnic minorities in the United States, Korean immigrant families encounter challenging situations when home language usage diminishes as their children begin schooling (Shin, 2005). Lee and Shin (2008) reported, “the rate of heritage language attrition among second-generation Koreans is one of the highest among Asian Americans” (p. 8). With an increasing Korean-American population in the U.S. (Jeon, 2008), heritage language maintenance has become a significant matter to Korean immigrant families throughout the nation.

When heritage language is not maintained, it can eventually become lost. While heritage language loss is an equally important social phenomenon, this study is mostly concerned with heritage language maintenance. Fishman (1966) explained this as “efforts of minority cultural groups to maintain and develop their particular heritages as vibrant lifeways” (p. 21). Without maintenance, these lifeways are not given a chance to fully develop. With this in mind, this study sought to gain a better understanding of what families face and the challenges posed by heritage language maintenance.

Several studies have explored heritage language issues among Korean immigrant parents in the U.S.; however, such studies have been conducted predominantly on families living in large metropolitan areas such as San Francisco, Vancouver, Philadelphia, Montreal, and Los Angeles (Guardado, 2002; Jeon 2010; Lao, 2004; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Shibata, 2000; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). Korean populations
living in mid-sized or smaller U.S. cities have received little attention, and to this point, there is a dearth of literature related to their heritage language maintenance.

This study identified Korean immigrant parents who reside in West Michigan and explored their attitudes toward maintaining their children’s heritage language. The study further investigated issues and/or difficulties parents might experience in order to maintain heritage language.

**Importance of the Problem and Rationale of the Study**

When the home or heritage language is not maintained and its use diminishes, immigrant families encounter numerous challenges that include the loss of both cultural identity and the heritage language itself (Guardado, 2002; Jeon, 2008; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Ro & Cheatham, 2009). Guardado (2002) argued that language, identity, and culture are fundamentally linked and that first language loss can have a great impact on an individual’s identity formation (p. 344). If one loses the heritage language, his heritage culture and ethnic identity may fade away (Ro & Cheatham, 2009).

The loss of the heritage language can also degrade emotional connections between children and their parents (Ro & Cheatham, 2009). Furthermore, this loss places immigrant families at great risk of losing generational relationships (Wong Fillmore, 2000). The latter was illustrated by Polinsky and Kagan’s (2007) study in which a young Korean immigrant descendant, graduating from one of the most prestigious colleges in the U.S. and holding great academic and social honors, could not carry on a conversation with his Korean grandparents. Similar stories of immigrant families who experienced generational disconnect due to the absence of heritage language can be found in numerous heritage language-related studies and are prevalent throughout the American
While heritage language loss may have a devastating impact on individuals and families, research shows that maintaining one’s native language results in positive outcomes. According to Krashen (1999), when children are provided quality education in their heritage language at school, they develop knowledge and literacy in second language acquisition. In addition, knowledge and literacy in the heritage language are believed to be critical because subject matter knowledge gained in the first language can help English learners excel in school.

Positive outcomes for heritage language maintenance extend beyond increased academic success (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Lee & Oxelson, 2006) heritage language maintenance also assists individuals in creating strong ethnic identities (Farruggio, 2010; Guardado 2002; Li-Yuan & Larke, 2008; Ro & Chatham 2009). Farruggio (2010) reported in detail that Latino immigrant parents believed that Spanish is an important survival tool that creates a strong ethnic identity, encourages respect, preserves cultural knowledge, and promotes healthy family relationships. In Li-Yuan and Larke’s (2008) study, Chinese parents also believed that maintaining Chinese will keep ties to their cultural and linguistic heritage. Likewise, Korean parents in Kim’s (2011) study believed that maintaining the Korean heritage language can make it possible for their children to gain career benefits by helping them assimilate into either their current or heritage cultural setting.

While scholarly awareness of heritage language, notably in the applied linguistics field, has grown substantially in the past decade (Garcia, 2003), studies of how ethnic
language minority immigrants handle their heritage language at home and the dominant language outside the home are lacking. In the case of Korean immigrant families, there seems to be a consensus in the previous research that most second- and third-generation Korean immigrant descendants speak mostly English (Jeon, 2008; Shin, 2005). Despite the continuous increase in the Korean-American population, studies on their heritage language maintenance are scarce, especially in areas where the Korean immigrant population is smaller, representing a minor percentage of the total.

It is very important to learn about the heritage language experience of Korean-Americans because it often takes place in a unique context: their homes may be the only place where their heritage language is used. Particularly in mid-sized or smaller cities, the responsibility of heritage language maintenance may continue to be placed only on individuals and families because heritage language resources and community support may be insignificant or unavailable. More studies should be conducted to explore the experiences and challenges faced by families in these areas to explore how they perceive heritage language maintenance and what they face each day in their unique contexts.

**Background of the Problem**

While the heritage language issue has been acknowledged for quite some time (Wong Fillmore, 1991), studies on immigrant parents’ attitudes toward language maintenance do not have an extensive history. Fishman (2006) argued that immigrant languages were rarely regarded as a national resource, thus study of immigrants’ language situations has been neglected (p.15). While heritage languages have been disregarded, a greater interest has been placed in second language acquisition over the past decade (Garcia, 2003; Guardado, 2002; Park & Sarkar, 2007).
Despite the scarcity of studies investigating immigrant parents’ attitudes towards heritage language maintenance, a few do exist. One of the early pioneer works is Wong Fillmore’s (1991) study. In her national survey, parents and guardians of many ethnic minority families (Latinos, East and Southeast Asians, American Indians, Arabs, etc.) were asked about their languages spoken at home and at their children’s schools. In addition, children’s language use patterns and parental concerns regarding their heritage language were investigated. The result revealed that children were not maintaining their home language but rather were losing it as they began schooling in mainstream English-speaking schools.

Wong Fillmore (1991) raised the important question of why second language learning directly contributed to failure in heritage language maintenance. She hypothesized that immigrant families feel social pressure to assimilate into the mainstream society by rapidly learning English. She further added that this strong desire towards assimilation might have been shaped by the mainstream society, where linguistic and ethnic diversity is not respected or valued (p. 343; see also Wong Fillmore, 2003 and Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009, p. 78).

Jeon’s (2008) study recognized the strong parental desire for assimilation as well. First-generation Korean immigrant parents in the study hoped for their young children to learn English quickly and speak the mainstream language like American native speakers, without a Korean accent (p. 61). They adopted multiple strategies to promote English learning by prohibiting Korean use at home and Korean learning opportunities at local Korean churches. However, Jeon added that the Korean parents who held assimilationist
ideologies “shifted to a more pluralist position” when their children went to college (p. 66).

In contrast, several studies revealed positive parental attitudes toward heritage language maintenance among various ethnic groups. In the case of Chinese immigrant parents, Lao (2004), Li-Yuan and Larke (2008), and Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) found that the parents strongly believed that heritage language is important for identity formation, family communication and future career building. In their studies of Latino cultural identity, Farruggio (2010) and Guardado (2010) investigated Hispanic parents residing in areas of high Hispanic population in California and Vancouver, respectively. Their findings revealed that the parents highly valued Spanish maintenance as a way to secure cultural identity.

Efforts to investigate Japanese immigrant parental attitudes were made as well (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Kouritzin; 2000, Shibata, 2000). As a researcher and mother of two heritage language-learning children, Kouritzin (2000) shared her personal and private view of Japanese maintenance. She emphasized the importance of family ties and cultural traditions in identity formation. While Kouritzin raised the awareness of heritage language study in a multi-racial setting, Shibata (2000) discovered positive attitudes held by Japanese parents residing in an area with a small Japanese population. In addition, Shibata’s study presented an unusual case of a Japanese parent group which established a Saturday Japanese school, on their own, in order to provide Japanese learning opportunities for their children.

Looking further into Japanese parents’ attitudes, Hashimoto and Lee (2011) focused on heritage literacy practices among three Japanese families. Living in a city
with 0.8% Japanese population, the Japanese parents in their study had challenges similar to the Japanese parents in Shibata’s (2000) study: parents had positive attitudes toward Japanese maintenance for their children “with limited access to Japanese heritage language networks and resources” (p. 180). Having little or no access to share their heritage culture to promote literacy learning made heritage language maintenance difficult for them.

Studies have revealed positive parental attitudes among Korean immigrants toward heritage language maintenance as well (Park & Sarkar, 2007; Ro & Cheatham, 2009). In Park and Sarkar’s (2007) study, Koreans residing in Montreal, Canada, had positive attitudes toward Korean maintenance that were deeply associated with cultural identity formation and preservation. Furthermore, the parents believed that Korean maintenance would give their children a career advantage by being bilingual and would also allow them to communicate with their grandparents effectively. Such parental attitudes are present in Ro and Cheatham’s (2009) study as well. Their findings suggested that both the child and his parents had a strong desire for learning and maintaining Korean as a heritage language. The participants also held the belief that maintaining their heritage language would secure ethnic identity and offer full bilingualism and bi-literacy. The parents supported their child with learning opportunities that included private lessons, storybooks, and movies in Korean, as well as trips to Korea for their vacations.

While some parents have sufficient financial resources to support Korean heritage language maintenance and reside in areas where the Korean language is seen on billboards, spoken by other Koreans, and taught at heritage language schools/programs, this is not the situation for all. Numerous parents lack the resources to provide such
opportunities. Lee and Shin (2008) also pointed out that Korean heritage language classes, in formal academic settings, are limited at best.

Although more attention has been given to the heritage language field and its literature, there is a dearth of research on Korean immigrant families, especially those who reside in mid-sized or smaller cities and towns. The majority of heritage language literature reviewed in this chapter focused on participants living in large metropolitan areas. Studies on Korean heritage language issues also seem to share this same focus. Future heritage language studies should include the experiences of immigrant parents who live in mid-sized or smaller cities, where their homes may be the exclusive locale of heritage language use and where community support may be non-existent.

**Statement of Purpose**

The primary goal of this study was to explore Korean immigrant parents’ attitudes toward heritage language maintenance for their children in the context of less populous cities compared to large metropolitan cities in the United States. The areas included mid-sized cities in West Michigan. In particular, the study explored practices used to nurture heritage language maintenance. Additionally, difficulties associated with heritage language maintenance, both at home and in community settings, were examined. This study would allow other heritage language researchers to learn about these immigrant families’ heritage language experiences. Analysis of the collected data offers implications that both educators and parents can consider when teaching and raising heritage language learners.
Research Questions

The following research questions were developed based on the research purpose:

1. What are Korean immigrant parents’ attitudes towards heritage language maintenance for their children in West Michigan?
2. What efforts do Korean immigrant parents make in order to maintain their heritage language in West Michigan?
3. What issues and difficulties do Korean parents encounter in attempting to maintain their heritage language in West Michigan?

Design, Data Collection, and Analysis

This study took a descriptive qualitative case study approach to investigate parents’ attitudes towards heritage language maintenance for their children. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted, followed by observations to identify and interpret parents’ language attitudes toward heritage language maintenance.

Semi-structured interviewing was chosen for the study because it helps the researcher gain in-depth knowledge of respondents’ thoughts and provides the flexibility to present new questions when needed (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). By meeting with participants face-to-face, richer information derived from their social cues, such as voice, intonation, and body language can be gained in addition to their verbal answers. While interviews allowed understanding of participants’ attitudes and thoughts, observations helped find out what they truly do (Fraenkel et al., 2011). In this study, participant observation took place where the participants were aware of the researcher’s presence and the researcher interacted with them. By involving multiple research instruments, the study aimed to enhance trustworthiness (Fraenkel, et al., 2011; McKay, 2005).
Participants were first-generation Korean immigrant parents who were residents of West Michigan. Their children were born in the U.S. or immigrated to the U.S. at an early age. The study utilized reputational sampling to identify and select participants. In reputational sampling, consulting a community expert helps with identifying participants by drawing on the expert’s knowledge of community members in the research sites (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

The data collected from video-recorded interviews, observations, and field notes were analyzed through deductive and inductive coding methods. The data were read several times to identify key ideas, topics, patterns, or themes that emerged. Inductive analysis was achieved by developing “a model incorporating the most important categories” (Thomas, 2003, p. 6). The researcher also compared and/or triangulated the findings from the data collection to identify common elements as well as differences. Representative examples from the interview data were transcribed and translated into English to support the major findings. Direct quotes from participants were included to illustrate findings as well. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to the study (see Appendix A).

**Definition of the Terms**

**Attitude**—Defined early by Gardner (1985), “*attitude* has cognitive, affective, and conative components (i.e., it involves beliefs, emotional reactions, and behavioral tendencies related to the object of the attitude) and consists, in broad terms, of an underlying psychological predisposition to act or evaluate behavior in a certain way” (as cited in McGroarty, 1996, p. 5). Attitude is “thus linked to a person’s values and beliefs
and promotes or discourages the choices made in all realms of activity, whether academic or informal.”

Heritage Language—Lee and Shin (2008) pointed out that the term *heritage language* is also interchangeable with “mother tongue,” “native language,” and “community language,” in the sense that it is a language other than English used by immigrants and their children. In this study, all terms mentioned above are interchangeable; however, the term *heritage language* is mainly used.

Heritage Speaker—First used in Canada in the mid-1970s, the term *heritage speaker* includes children and adults from linguistic minority groups who were exposed to their home language while growing up learning and speaking the majority language (Montrul, 2010, p. 4).

Supplemental Information about Korean and Korean Speakers

The Korean language. Simply stated, the Korean language, known as *hankwukmal* in Korean, can be best described as the language of the Korean people. The Korean language is “a member of the Altaic family and shares similarities with the Mongolian and Mangurian languages” (Hur, Hur & Hur, 2000, p. 13). While one can say that the Korean language has been spoken for over 1,000 years, the history of their writing system, *Hangul*, only dates back to 1446, when King Sejong created it.

China had a great impact on every facet of Korean culture, including language (Song, 2005, p. 18). Although Chinese and Korean are different languages, Chinese characters were used in writing by Koreans, predominantly scholars and *yanban*, the higher-ranked group of people (Korean Overseas Information Service, 1996). However, lower social classes did not have access to literacy until the birth of Hangul (Hur et al.,
King Sejong acknowledged the common people’s illiteracy and invented Hangul for “the benefit of illiterate common Koreans” (Song, 2005, p. 45).

Undoubtedly, Hangul has evolved to become the national writing system of Korea and receives much respect from both native and non-native Koreans. In Korea, October 6 is commemorated each year as a national holiday to celebrate the birth of Hangul (Song, 2005).

The Korean speakers in the United States. While major languages such as English or Spanish find more of their speakers in regions outside of their countries of origin, most Korean speakers are found in Korea (Song, 2005). Korean is reported to be used by 70 million people on the Korean peninsula (48 million in South Korea and 22 million in North Korea) and also by a sizable number of Korean immigrants and their descendants living in countries such as China, the United States, Japan, the former USSR, and, more recently, Australia, Canada and New Zealand (Song, 2005).

In the case of the United States, among the 55.4 million immigrants identified in the 2007 U.S. Census, 1.06 million are Korean; this population has experienced a growth of 299% over the past decade, which is the second-highest increase among Asian ethnicities in the U.S (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). According to the 2010 Census data, an increased number of 1.7 million Koreans in the U.S. was identified, of whom 38% resided in the three large metropolitan areas: 333,329 (19.6%) around Los Angeles; 218,764 (12.9%) in Greater New York; and 93,000 (5.5%) in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

According to Shin (2005), Korean-Americans are “among the most recent immigrant groups to enter the United States” (p. 41). Shin added that over two-thirds of
the present Korean population in the United States arrived after 1970. He further explained that three major Korean immigration waves to the United States took place: labor immigrants to Hawaii, Post-Korean War immigration, and full-scale family immigration.

Korea was also the final Northeast Asian country to form diplomatic ties with the United States (Shin, 2005). In 1882, through the Chemulpo Treaty, Koreans were finally allowed to travel outside of the country to live and work in the United States. From that time, until the early 1950s, only approximately 10,000 Koreans had immigrated to the United States (Yu et al., 2002). Shin explained that the first immigration of Koreans to the United States in the 20th century consisted of students, herb/medicine merchants, political refugees and laborers.

The next immigration wave took place between the 1970s and 1980s, after the Immigration Act of 1965 (a national origin quota system based on ethnicity) was abolished (Yu, et al. 2002, p. 2). These groups of Koreans were mainly college educated, middle class professionals seeking upward mobility and political freedom, unaware of the reality that their degrees and technical proficiencies carried little weight in the United States (Shin, 2005). Without English language skills, they often settled for jobs that did not reflect their level of competency (Lee & Shin, 2008). The fact that many Koreans experienced difficulties with integrating into the U.S. society and workforce has been a catalyst for many Korean parents in the United States to focus on their children’s rapid English learning, shifting away from heritage language maintenance (Shin, 2005).
According to Shin (2005), Korean immigration to the United States has slowed down over the past decade due to a vastly improved Korean economy and changes to U.S. immigration policy. However, Lee and Shin (2008) reported that the temporary resident population of Koreans in the United States has increased recently. In 2002, according to their study, approximately 94,000 students and exchange visitors came to the United States from Korea, including *goose families*, which are families that are separated by parents’ wishes to send their children to the United States with their mother while the father remains in Korea working and sending money to support his family (Jeon, 2008; Lee & Shin, 2008). This unique birth of migrating families well represents Korean parents’ strong desires for better education for their children. Lee and Shin added that English learning has become increasingly valued and that many families are seeking a change from rote and standardized test-focused approaches to English learning that has become the norm in Korean society, in a perceived attempt to gain an advantage in the competitive university admission process (p. 3).

Yu et al. (2002) pointed out that the Korean American population includes not only native Koreans who immigrated to the United States, but also U.S.-born Korean immigrant descendants, adoptees, and multiracial Koreans. However, Lee and Shin (2008) explained that the majority of Korean learners in the U.S. are descendants of first-generation Korean immigrants who were “raised in a home where Korean is spoken and are to some degree bilingual” (p. 2). Although they are bilingual, they often become English-dominant once they begin school, and most second-generation Korean-Americans speak predominantly English while their parents speak Korean (Hing & Lee, 1996, as cited in Lee & Shin 2008). Min (2000) noted that approximately 70% of the
second-generation Korean Americans reported speaking only or mostly English to their parents after the age of 5 (as cited in Lee & Shin, 2008).

**Delimitation of the Study**

The study dealt with attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, not heritage language loss. The target population under investigation was Korean parents. Given these parameters, children’s attitudes toward their heritage language were not studied. Only first-generation Korean immigrant parents participated in the study. The study did not include Korean immigrant families residing in large metropolitan cities, but rather in a mid-sized metropolitan city or small town in West Michigan.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations inherent to the study. First of all, since the study explored six Korean immigrant parents from three families, the findings are limited to the small sample size. Therefore, the study does not intend to draw a conclusion to generalize its findings to the larger population and represent the entire population of Korean immigrant parents in the United States. In addition, while there are various types of Korean families (first- and second-generation Korean immigrants, multi-racial Korean descendants, and adopted Koreans), the study only investigated first-generation Korean parents who have settled in the United States in the past decade.

The study also excluded the voices of the participants’ children, which may factor influentially in parents’ attitudes toward heritage language maintenance. Furthermore, while the study claims its significance from its context, which is that these families live in an area where the Korean population and community support are low, the study did not account for an in-depth investigation of outside-the-home heritage language situations to
verify the level and quality of heritage language support within the participants’ communities.

In addition, the study offered observation data from two visits made to each family. This was limited due to the time constraints in the given research period, which may be problematic because the limited observations may not fully detect the families’ normal behaviors or interactions.

The chosen methods for data collection contained some disadvantages as well. Video-recording an interview provides immediate feedback and preserves what the participants actually say for data analysis. However, participants may overreact during the interview with the presence of a recording device (McKay, 2005, p. 56), and the recording process could experience minor technology-related problems. Field notes were logged to better secure a complete data collection.

**Organization of the Thesis**

The next chapters of this thesis are presented in the following format: Chapter 2 offers a literature review on heritage language maintenance, with focus placed on parents’ attitudes. Krashen’s (1999) and Wong Fillmore’s (1991, 2000) work is introduced as a theoretical framework of the study, followed by multiple studies investigating immigrant parents’ attitudes towards heritage language maintenance. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methods, which include participant selection, instruments, and procedures, as well as data collection and analysis. Results of the data and findings are offered in Chapter 4. To conclude, Chapter 5 presents implications of the findings as well as recommendations for future policy, practice, and research on heritage language maintenance.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Immigrant families have always faced challenges when learning English while also attempting to maintain their heritage language in the United States (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). Heritage language maintenance has become important to immigrant families, regardless of their ethnic origin, because when the home language is maintained, the outcome is substantially beneficial to the individuals and their families. Shin (2005) stated that the majority of Korean immigrants wish for their children to maintain the home language.

In order to understand the heritage language maintenance situation among Korean immigrant families in the United States, this chapter begins with the theoretical framework that serves as a foundation for the review of literature. The review of literature followed with two major categories: 1) heritage language maintenance in the United States, and 2) immigrant parents’ attitudes toward heritage language maintenance. The first category offers an overview of how heritage language is dealt with in the United States and includes supplemental information on the current educational status of Korean as a heritage language. The second category is a comprehensive review of various ethnic immigrant parents’ attitudes toward heritage language maintenance from related studies. Lastly, a summary and conclusion drawn from the reviewed literature complete this chapter.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Krashen’s (1999) ideas that heritage language can help English learners do better academically at school when subjects are taught in their first language. He also added that heritage language can help English learners with second language acquisition. While Krashen found heritage language to be important in immigrants’ academic success, Wong Fillmore (1991, 2000) identified it as a critical factor to immigrants’ quality of life. When heritage language is not maintained, children and their parents cannot communicate with each other as fluidly (Wong Fillmore 1991, 2000). Family relationships and children’s identity formation are affected.

Although many studies support heritage language maintenance, including Krashen’s (1999) and Wong Fillmore’s (1991, 2000), opposing views towards it also exist. One of the major roadblocks to heritage language maintenance can be found in English-only policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NLCB). Wright (2007) explained that, although such policies do not openly oppose bilingual programs, they require ELL students to learn English as quickly as possible, thereby discouraging the offering of heritage language programs. This is due to the weight of English-only high-stakes testing and focus being placed on higher test scores. Wright concluded that these policies are “moving the country in the opposite direction in terms of the needs for heritage language programs which can address students’ and the country’s linguistic needs” (p. 1; see also Wiley, 2007 and Wong Fillmore, 2003).

However, evidence of the positive influence of heritage language maintenance is continuously emerging in published literature. Garcia (2003) simply stated that,
undoubtedly, one’s heritage language must be maintained. Wong Fillmore (2000) suggested that educators should have an understanding of their immigrant students’ backgrounds, as well as the challenges the children face in an English-dominant environment. In addition, she emphasized the importance of educators and parents collaborating to help immigrant children. With this in mind, the study aimed to hear immigrant parents’ thoughts and perspectives towards heritage language maintenance to better understand their backgrounds, struggles, and successes.

Synthesis of Research Literature

In this section, a review of important literature on parental attitudes toward heritage language maintenance is offered, beginning with an overview of how heritage language has been dealt with in the United States. A review of the current educational status of Korean language in the United States and parental attitudes on heritage language maintenance follows. Lastly, a summary and a conclusion complete the synthesis of research literature.

Heritage language maintenance in the United States. Heritage language in the United States was introduced with the first European settlers. One of their heritage languages, English, was successfully maintained and eventually became the dominant language of the United States. Although one of the current definitions of heritage language is “languages other than English” (LOTE), (Fishman, 2006, p. 12), English itself was one of the first non-native languages in North America. While it is generally agreed that heritage language should be valued in multilingual societies, heritage language learning has yet to be promoted in the United States.
The most representative voice of opposition towards heritage language promotion is the English-only movement (Wang, 2009). Wang argued: “English-only policies drive minority home languages out of school” (p. 14). She explained that such policies are made based on the assumption that making English an official language will help immigrants learn English quickly and, consequently, expand their opportunities for a better life. Such a notion also posits that the nation will be more unified, and thus become a stronger nation as a whole.

Wiley (2007) pointed out that majority-led language policies are not the absolute opponent of heritage language promotion. Stating that opponents of immigration tend to believe that language diversity may harm the hegemony of English, he noted that stereotyping immigrants as lazy English learners also contributes to the belief that English must become the only language in the nation and immigrants need to be forced to learn English. Wiley concluded that the anti-immigrant sentiments go hand-in-hand with the English-only movement.

Heritage language continues to be caught in the middle of this debate. Fishman (2006) stated: “immigrant languages have rarely been regarded as a national resource, and for the most part have suffered the same sad fate here that immigrant languages typically suffer around the world” (p. 15). While English continues to be used as the national and global language, other immigrants’ ethnic languages experience repetitive loss from generation to generation. At present, despite the increase in heritage speakers, “most languages other than Spanish have scant representation as subjects for instruction” (Wiley, 2007, p. 252). With the dominant society’s lack of interest, along with a growing
number of heritage speakers, immigrant parents with little or no heritage language support face growing difficulties.

The current educational status of Korean as heritage language in the United States. In their 2008 study, Lee and Shin presented a brief yet comprehensive overview of Korean heritage language education in the United States, noting that the opportunities for learning Korean are limited. Available learning opportunities are typically found in weekend schools provided by community-based programs and Korean churches, both of which are predominantly operated by volunteers. Based on their 2008 data from the U.S. Korean Embassy, Korean community language schools were reported to number approximately 1,200. The majority of the schools were concentrated in areas heavily populated by Koreans, such as Los Angeles and New York. The actual number of these schools might be larger because many small schools may not be officially registered in the U.S. Korean Embassy database (You, 2011). Lee and Shin (2008) also explained that the availability of space and resources makes Korean churches optimal venues for language classes.

Apart from church-based schools operated by volunteers, Korean heritage language schools run by two national organizations can also be found. According to You (2011), the National Association for Korean Schools (NAKS) and the Korean School Association in America (KSAA) offer 1,000 Korean heritage language schools nationwide, of which 182 Korean community schools are located in the western United States. At the college level, more than 110 U.S. universities offer Korean language courses (Byon, 2003).
Korean churches serve their role of meeting their congregants’ spiritual needs and also provide valuable opportunities for members to socialize and exchange information about jobs and housing. Moreover, churches facilitate Korean language learning opportunities by running weekend Korean language classes (Shin, 2005). While heritage education in general is not supported by the public education system (Jeon, 2008; Wiley, 2005; Wong Fillmore, 1991), the church-based schools have been helping immigrant families who harbor hopes of maintaining and developing their heritage language (Shin, 2005). However, a comprehensive examination of these heritage language programs/weekend schools has yet to take place. Several heritage language-related studies (Lee & Shin, 2008; Kim, 2011) have noted the lack of research into these learning institutions and the need for such investigation.

In order to understand the role of Korean heritage schools, Kim (2011) explored how Korean immigrant mothers, grandmothers, and heritage language teachers perceived their church-run Korean heritage school. Her findings revealed that the Korean mothers and grandmothers sent their children to weekend heritage language schools because they highly valued the preservation of their heritage language. The participants in her study viewed heritage language schools as a “safety zone” for their children’s social and emotional development, while they felt no support for such needs from formal schools in the mainstream society (p. 137). Although the study investigated the role of heritage language schooling, it did not provide a detailed description of the school, including information on instruction, curriculum, status of resources, or teaching methods.

While there is insufficient information on Korean heritage language schools, whether church-led or independent academic institutions, a few studies report several
challenges that such schools/programs face (Lee & Shin, 2008; You, 2011). Lee and Shin (2008) pointed out that church-based heritage classes are presented with multiple challenges: (a) there are no proven data to correlate attending heritage language school with proficiency performance, (b) teaching styles may not adequately support Korean-American youths’ learning styles, resulting in lower motivation among students, and (c) classroom materials are irrelevant to students’ lives, which may also contribute to lower success.

Institutional Korean heritage schools also experience difficulties. You (2011) noted that schools are solely dependent on tuition and fundraising that are only sufficient to pay teachers. You also explained that there are not enough funds to support other critical areas of schooling, such as teacher training and buying or updating class materials. Lastly, the schools’ limited availability of instruction, which often amounts to just a few hours of lessons per week, discourages parents and their children from enrolling.

Based on information from available literature, it is concluded that Korean heritage language schools are available to Korean immigrant families. However, these schools are limited in number, mostly concentrated in large metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, and are faced with numerous challenges to maintaining their existence. Further in-depth investigation seems needed in order to understand and validate the report of Korean immigrant families’ positive attitudes toward such schools and the effectiveness of the schools themselves.

**Parents’ attitudes towards heritage language maintenance.** This section offers a review of important literature on parents’ attitudes in three sections: parents’ attitudes, attitudinal shift, and parental efforts to maintain heritage languages.
Parents’ attitudes. Numerous studies have suggested that parental attitudes are strong factors in children’s success with heritage language maintenance (Garcia, 2003; Kouritzin, 2000; Lao, 2004; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Wong Fillmore, 2000; Yan, 2003). Their findings point to positive parental attitudes (e.g., higher levels of parental engagement) being directly associated with more successful heritage language maintenance (Guardado, 2002; Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Shin, 2005; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). This study acknowledges that parental attitudes are likely critical factors in heritage language maintenance and offers details of recent studies concerning the topic.

Over the past decade, several studies have explored parents’ attitudes towards their children’s heritage language maintenance. These parents were members of different ethnic minority language groups that included Hispanic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. All of the studies revealed parental support of heritage language maintenance, their reasoning(s) being multifaceted.

Many parents viewed heritage language maintenance as a way to preserve their cultural identity and wished for their children to maintain the heritage language (Cho, Cho, & Tse, 1997; Farruggio, 2010; Guardado, 2002, 2010; Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Jeon, 2008; Kouritzin, 2000; Lao, 2004; Li-Yuan & Larke, 2008; Oriyama, 2010; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Ro & Cheatham, 2009; Wang, 2009; Wong Fillmore, 1991, 2000; Yan, 2003, Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). In his study of Latino immigrant parents, Farruggio (2010) explained that parents perceived Spanish preservation as “a marker for ethnic identity” and believed that it “should serve as tool for preserving Latino cultures and values and family unity” (pp. 8, 11). Chinese, Korean, and Japanese parents also expressed the importance of heritage language maintenance for their children’s identity.
formation and preservation. One parent in Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe’s (2009) study stated, “I tell my daughter that since you are a Chinese. Chinese people can’t forget Chinese, right?” (p. 84).

In addition to preserving ethnic identity, many studies found that parents believed heritage language maintenance plays a critical role in building family relationships and communication (Cho & Cho & Tse, 1997; Li-Yuan & Larke, 2008; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Yan, 2003; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). The direct association between the lack of heritage language proficiency and family disconnect was well described by Wong Fillmore (1991, 2000), who noted that, when home language is not maintained, family ties could be sacrificed, resulting in a devastating outcome for a family. It seems that both generations (parents and children) perceive this heritage language role in family communication.

In Park and Sarkar’s (2007) study, all nine Korean parents wanted their children to maintain Korean in order for them not only to maintain their Korean identity but also to communicate effectively with their grandparents. In the case of Chinese immigrant parents, Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) explained that most Chinese first-generation immigrant parents, regardless of their English proficiency, may prefer to talk in heritage language to communicate fully and effectively with their second-generation immigrant children. This is due to the concept of “Shen Ru Jiao Liu,” which literally means, “to communicate deeply” (p. 86). In addition, Tse, Tse, and Cho (1997) reported a case of adult Korean children who were enrolled in Korean heritage class with hopes of overcoming their limited Korean proficiency so they could develop more “meaningful relationships” with their parents and relatives (p. 108).
In addition to preserving ethnic identity and improving family communication, parents in Lao (2004) and Park and Sarkar’s (2007) studies believed that heritage language maintenance would give their children academic benefits for both subject learning and English acquisition and development. This notion echoes Krashen’s (1999) argument mentioned earlier: “subject matter knowledge gained in the first language makes English input more comprehensible, and literacy developed in the first language facilitates literacy development in English” (p. 11). The Chinese parents in Lao’s (2004) study supported Chinese-English bilingual programs for better English development and academic advancement. One Korean parent in Park and Sarkar’s (2007) study also shared a similar view, in that she kept encouraging her children to develop Korean for effective second language learning and academic success (p. 228). While the Korean parent in Park and Sarkar’s study actually promoted heritage language, it is interesting to note that the Chinese parents in Lao’s (2004) study showed conflicting opinions on their thoughts. Although the Chinese parents showed support for the bilingual program, when specifically asked about English development, the parents offered the conflicting idea that “all-English” class would make English acquisition faster than bilingual class (p. 113).

Lastly, numerous studies showed that parents valued heritage language maintenance highly because they believed it could enrich their children’s lives in the future (Guardado, 2010; Lao, 2004; Li-Yuan & Larke, 2008; Park & Sarkar, 2007). Li-Yuan and Larke (2008) stated that “many parents felt that learning Chinese would help them be more marketable in the future” (p. 6). While parents from several studies focused on better employment opportunities derived from maintaining heritage language, the
parents in Guardado (2010) and Oriyama’s (2010) studies understood heritage language maintenance on a higher level by viewing heritage language learning as a starting point for learning other languages, thereby achieving multilingualism and ultimately becoming a world citizen, which would allow their children to compete globally. Guardado (2010) described his interpretation of the parents’ beliefs:

Contrary to popular opinion, language development and maintenance was not just about preserving a mythic past; it was about raising their children as cosmopolitan people with the ability to establish social relations and to bridge gaps between local and global ways of thinking. (p. 341)

**Attitudinal shift.** While positive attitudes are dominant among immigrant parents, Jeon (2008) reported of an attitudinal shift (moving from negative to positive) among first-generation Korean immigrant parents who had negative attitudes toward Korean preservation because they wanted their children to acquire English rapidly and without a Korean accent. The parents placed a great deal of pressure and emphasis on English learning, prohibiting Korean use at home and Korean learning opportunities in local Korean churches, in hopes of rapid assimilation into the mainstream culture and language. However, as their children grew, the now-elderly parents switched to positive attitudes toward Korean maintenance because, after all, they wanted their children to build a healthy identity as Korean-Americans. Jeon’s study revealed misconceptions held by many first-generation immigrant parents; which subsequently led them to prevent heritage language use in their homes. Ro and Cheatham (2009) also reported the negative attitudes held by Korean parents who believed that the exclusive usage of English at home would help their children blend into their new society faster.
Although many Korean immigrant parents possess a strong desire for their children to assimilate, they also wish that their children will maintain Korean language (Jeon, 2008). Shin (2005) added that Korean-Americans follow the same behavior as other ethnic immigrants, in that they succumb to pressures of assimilation in order to achieve success while, at the same time, they desire to maintain their ethnic identity. Parents often willingly turn into bystanders as their children are pulled into the folds of American society and language, knowing that, more often than not, success is predicated on this transition (p. 66).

One can question what may contribute to the shaping of such different attitudes. McGroarty (1996) explained that parental attitudes are shaped by “personal histories, including their responses to the wider cultural themes framing their own experiences” (p. 19). For example, if parents experienced prejudice as a result of their own language, then they may be exceptionally enthusiastic about their children learning a standard language. Shin (2005) explained earlier in this chapter how the first wave of Koreans was much like other immigrants and did not possess education or wealth. As immigration continued, class and education levels improved; yet the adjustment to a new language remained a significant obstacle to social and economic success. The importance of assimilation remained, and English acquisition became the highest priority for many Korean immigrants. An absence of ethnic accent was considered a priority.

**Parental efforts to maintain heritage languages.** Several studies looked closely into the efforts parents made to help their children maintain their heritage language. In his 2002 study, Guardado explored the heritage language experiences of four Hispanic families who lived in large metropolitan cities in Canada. Through interviews, parents
were asked to identify the causes of heritage language loss among their children as well as their feelings towards this loss. Initially, the main cause of heritage language loss among the participants’ children was the parents’ failure to emphasize and encourage heritage language development. Most importantly, data showed that children who maintained heritage language received encouragement from their parents to learn their heritage language. Guardado (2002) emphasized the importance of parental enthusiasm and encouragement of heritage language maintenance. For example, parents should display positive attitudes toward heritage language and attempt to fulfill their children’s needs in maintaining it.

In a related vein, a number of researchers (Guardado, 2010; Kouritzin, 2000; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009) have found that many parents enforce an informal rule of home language use with their children, even though they could speak English. In Kouritzin’s (2000) narrative study, she purposely delayed English exposure to her children as long as she could by speaking only Japanese at home in the hope of securing Japanese preservation early on. Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) also reported of the great efforts taken by Philadelphia resident Chinese immigrant parents to speak only in Chinese at home to help their children learn and maintain Chinese. While some parents strictly established and applied heritage language-only policy at home, other parents, such as the Korean parents in Ro and Cheatham’s (2009) study, promoted English as well as Korean use at home in the hope of raising their child as a bilingual.

Several studies showed that immigrant parents teach heritage language to their children at home (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Ro & Cheatham, 2009; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). All of the Japanese parents in Hashimoto and Lee’s (2011) study taught
Japanese characters early on to their children by utilizing workbooks. When working with the workbooks became unsuccessful and boring for their children, the parents introduced a wide variety of more interesting learning materials, such as storybooks, manga (Japanese comic books), cartoon character cards, Game Boys (a hand-held game device), and playing cards for young children (p. 172). Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) reported of highly-motivated Chinese parents in their study who not only taught Chinese at home but also who became Chinese heritage teachers to teach in other settings.

While some parents took heritage language teaching into their own hands, others sought different ways to provide their children with heritage language learning opportunities (Farruggio, 2010; Guardado, 2010; Li-Yuan& Larke, 2008; Ro & Cheatham, 2009). Some parents enrolled their children in heritage language classes or programs while others hired a tutor when heritage language class was unavailable. In Wang’s (2009) study, the Chinese immigrant parents requested their children’s public school to open a Chinese as a foreign language class. The parents actively involved themselves in creating heritage language learning opportunities for their children by meeting with school officials. Furthermore, parents who were unable to make time due to busy work schedules made efforts to attend cultural events with their children or sent their children to heritage weekend schools (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Guardado, 2010). To summarize, multiple studies show positive parental attitudes of immigrant parents who made efforts to provide heritage language learning opportunities both at home and outside the home in order to allow their children to hear and use their native language and experience their heritage culture.
Challenges

Parents’ positive attitudes toward heritage language maintenance for their children can sometimes be discouraged by a broader educational system. Wong Fillmore (2000) argued that, while parents’ attitudes are one of the critical factors in heritage language maintenance, the lack of heritage language support in broader education systems should also be considered as a challenge. She claimed that many children from immigrant families lose family language due to social and political factors that force them to turn away from it.

An example of social and political factors can be found in Wang’s (2009) study, which depicted a conflict between Chinese parents and the mainstream school officials involving a lack of heritage language support from the public school in a small, Midwestern U.S. town. The high school, with 16% of its student population consisting of Chinese students, denied these students and their parents’ requests to run a Chinese as foreign language class due to a lack of financial resources and unavailability of teachers. The parents felt injustice in the school’s rejection because the school was already providing three other foreign language classes, including Spanish, and the school never addressed their questions.

Lack of support in heritage language maintenance is sometimes guided by teachers and school programs. Kouritzin (2000) and Shibata (2000) reported that immigrant parents are often told by “inexperienced teachers” to encourage their children not to speak heritage language, but to speak English at home to gain English proficiency. Shibata asserted that even bilingual education available in school systems is aimed at
helping children shift from their minority language to English as soon as possible, ultimately making heritage language maintenance difficult (p. 466).

Wong Fillmore (2000) noted that educators should understand their immigrant students’ background as well as the challenges the children face outside the home. In that sense, she suggested that educators and parents collaborate to help immigrant children by sharing detailed advice for educators to consider (Lao, 2004). Such a view toward Korean language maintenance was also advocated by Shin (2005): “Without systematic support for Korean maintenance, many of these children have, in turn, become fantastically monolingual in English, unable to communicate even at basic levels with their mostly Korean-speaking parents” (p. 6). In some countries, like Finland for example, heritage language is treated as equal to the dominant language in the public school setting (Protassova, 2008).

As a group, these studies suggest that heritage language maintenance must also be supported by a broader educational system, where the collaborative efforts of parents, teachers, and school officials are required to help immigrant parents and children succeed in their heritage language maintenance.

Summary

Multiple studies show that heritage language maintenance has become an important issue to immigrant families regardless of their ethnic origin because heritage language builds cultural identity, secures family ties and relationships, and provides better career opportunities. Under Krashen (1999) and Wong Fillmore’s (1991, 2000) theoretical framework (e.g., heritage language helps academic learning and influences cultural identity formation as well as family relationships, respectively), this chapter
offered a review of important literature on parents’ attitudes towards heritage language maintenance, beginning with an overview of how heritage language has been regarded and the current educational status of Korean heritage language.

In this modern time, heritage language is defined as “languages other than English” (LOTE), (Fishman, 2006). Although heritage languages should be valued in multilingual societies, heritage language learning has yet to be promoted in the United States. In the U.S., immigrant languages are not respected socially, and some educational policies, such as English-only policies in most public schools, drive minority home languages out of school.

While heritage language is given less attention and support outside the home, many studies revealed that heritage language is greatly respected and favored by many immigrant parents. Such parents viewed heritage language maintenance as a way to preserve their cultural identity and build family relationships and communication. Negative parental attitudes were reported among the first-generation Korean immigrant parents, however, the parents who once favored extreme assimilation into the mainstream shifted to positive attitudes when their children grew up because they wanted their children to build healthy Korean-American identities.

Examined parents’ efforts in heritage language maintenance, several studies found that many parents adopted different strategies: making heritage language-only rules at home; teaching the heritage language; seeking out heritage language learning program at school or even creating a program on their own when opportunities were scarce. This section also presented the challenges that parents face. While many immigrant parents wish their children to maintain heritage language and make conscious efforts to help
them, parents receive no or little support from educational policy, schools and school officials. Several studies concluded that heritage language maintenance must also be supported by the collaborative efforts of parents, teachers, and school officials.

Conclusion

Heritage language speakers, mostly immigrants and their descendants are increasing in the U.S. at a time when there is still no nationwide educational support. Maintaining heritage language remains the sole responsibility of immigrant families. Heritage language loss is increasingly seen among second- and third-generation immigrants. Immigrant parents generally wish for their children to maintain their heritage language in order to secure their ethnic identity and family ties, as well as to obtain better opportunities in the future. The parents’ role in heritage language maintenance is indeed very important, and their positive attitudes and encouragement result in better success for their children’s heritage language maintenance. In an effort to help their children maintain their heritage language, parents utilize multiple strategies, such as talking to their children in the heritage language, teaching it to their children, enrolling their children in heritage language class, and providing resources, such as tutors, books, and trips to the home country.

However, parents alone cannot succeed in teaching and maintaining their children’s heritage languages (Lao, 2004; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Shibata, 2000; Wong Fillmore, 2000; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). In particular, the task becomes all the more challenging for parents with fewer economic resources or low community support. In the case of low community support, Oriyama (2010) noted that a lack of community
and social networks had a negative impact on the Japanese families’ attitudes toward heritage language maintenance (p. 92).

As the number of immigrant families moving to areas with scarce heritage language communities is increasing, it is naturally expected that these families’ heritage language maintenance efforts could benefit greatly if support mechanisms are present (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011, p. 180). However, there is a dearth of research focusing on Korean immigrants’ heritage language experiences in mid-sized or smaller cities. For this reason, this study intended to bring insight on the topic from voices of the Korean immigrant parents residing in mid-sized or smaller cities in West Michigan.
Chapter Three: Research Design

Introduction

The primary goal of this study was to investigate Korean immigrant parents’ attitudes toward heritage language maintenance for their children in the context of mid-sized or smaller cities in West Michigan. The study also explored parents’ practices used to nurture their children’s heritage language maintenance. Additionally, difficulties associated with heritage language maintenance, both at home and in community settings, were examined. These research goals were specified in the following three research questions:

1. What are Korean immigrant parents’ attitudes towards heritage language maintenance for their children in West Michigan?
2. What efforts do Korean immigrant parents make in order to maintain their heritage language in West Michigan?
3. What issues and difficulties do Korean parents encounter in attempting to maintain their heritage language in West Michigan?

To answer the questions, the study took a case study approach, utilizing qualitative research methods. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and observations were utilized to reach triangulation, which enhances trustworthiness (Fraenkel et al., 2011; McKay, 2005).

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design, beginning with the rationale for the chosen research method and design. Information pertaining to participants, the participant selection process, research instruments, data collection, and
data analysis are followed with a brief summary of the overall research design to conclude the chapter.

**Rationale of the Design**

The case study approach was preferred because the study aimed to investigate a social phenomenon and obtain answers to “what” and “how” questions rather than to find statistical correlations (Silverman, 2011; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) stated, “the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 4). Ro and Cheatham (2009) were able to extract rich information utilizing case study methodology in their investigation of a bilingual child and his parents’ perception toward Korean-English bilingualism. Their study also sought to obtain holistic understanding of participants’ perspectives and gather in-depth information through a case study approach. This was accomplished by relying on interpretations of interview answers and observations that took into account both verbal and non-verbal behaviors.

**Research Site**

The study was conducted in the following three West Michigan cities: Anderson, Burto, and Coast City (pseudonyms). Anderson is the largest city in West Michigan, with a population of approximately 200,000. Of the total population, 641 are reported to be Korean (U.S. Census of Bureau, 2010). Multiple suburbs are formed around Anderson; on the southwest side is Burto, with approximately 16,000 residents. Small cities can be found near Anderson as well. Coast City is located approximately 30 miles southwest of Anderson and has a population of approximately 35,000. Data for the Korean population in Burto and Coast City are unclear. Considering that their Asian populations are 1.5% and 3.0% respectively, the Korean population in these areas is
thought to be minor. The selected research sites are in accordance with the study’s aim to explore Korean immigrants residing in non-major-metropolitan areas. The total Korean population of Michigan is reported as 24,186 with nearly 50% concentrated on the state’s east side (Metzger & Booza, 2001).

Participants

Participant selection and sampling. A total of three families were thought to be appropriate for the given study period as well as the insignificant Korean population in the areas. Initial approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained prior to the study. Due to the researcher’s limited knowledge of the local Korean community and population, a reputational sampling method was utilized for participant selection. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), reputational sampling is suitable when the researcher seeks the "recommendations of knowledgeable experts of the best examples" (p. 402). Based on their knowledge of and involvement in the Korean community, two community leaders were identified and consulted to locate potential participants who fit the study criteria: first-generation Korean immigrant with children who attend mainstream schools in West Michigan.

Upon IRB approval, the two community experts were consulted. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the participants. The first community expert, Miyoung, is a first-generation Korean immigrant mother with over 20 years of residency in Anderson. She is an active member at a Korean church in one of the cities listed above. Her expertise in the Korean community was verified by her reputation and her active involvement at her church. Since Miyoung has attended college, worked as a professional, and raised a child in Michigan, Korean first comers—immigrants,
exchange students, businessmen and women, and temporary visitors-- are often introduced to her when they are seeking information about life in the United States. The researcher first met Miyoung a few years ago when she was seeking information on the local Korean community. Miyoung knew of several first-generation Korean immigrants; however, only a few met the research criteria completely. Of the four families Miyoung recommended, two families agreed to participate: the “Yoo” family from Burto and the “Che” family from Coast City.

The researcher also contacted another Korean church in Anderson to find a third family. Various church leaders introduced the researcher to several families on site, and one of them was the “Park” family. Mr. and Mrs. Park have lived in the area for over 15 years with their two children. Mr. Park was actively involved in the church’s heritage language program.

Informed consent was obtained from each family after confirmation of their participation (see Appendix B). This informed consent included detailed information about the study (e.g., purpose, method, benefit, risks).

**Instrumentation**

**Semi-structured interview.** In this study, semi-structured interviews, observations, and field notes were used as instruments. Semi-structured interviewing was chosen for the proposed study because it facilitates in-depth knowledge of respondents’ thoughts and provides the flexibility to present new questions when needed (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The social cues, voice, intonation, and body language of participants all act as supplements to their verbal answers (Fraenkel et al., 2011). Multiple studies, such as Farruggio (2010), Guardado (2002, 2010), Hashimoto and Lee (2011), Jeon (2008),
Li-Yuan and Larke (2008), Park and Sarkar (2007), Ro and Cheatham (2009), and Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009), have adopted this strategy to obtain expansive knowledge and understanding of the participant parents’ perspectives and feelings.

**Interview questions.** The interview questions were created by the researcher for the study. In order to gain a holistic understanding of participants’ views, the interview questions were developed under four major focal areas: home language use, parental attitudes, efforts to maintain the Korean language, and difficulties in Korean language maintenance (see Appendix C). These elements were later utilized in data analysis as deductive coding categories. The developed questions were reviewed by three professors in the English and Education departments at Grand Valley State University and pilot tested with two candidates.

**Pilot interview.** The study utilized two first-generation immigrant mothers for pilot interviews: one Filipino mother and one Korean mother. Although the Filipino candidate was not Korean, the study found her participation meaningful because she shared a similar language background with the study: she was a first-generation immigrant who lived in a Midwestern town with a school-aged child. The two candidates were invited into pilot interviews separately. For the Korean immigrant mother, the researcher offered a language option to conduct the interview in English or Korean. The candidate chose to speak Korean during the interview. After each interview, the mothers were asked to comment on the questions for any clarification or improvement. The results were reviewed together and two modifications were made.
Modification 1. The original question seemed to induce a simple answer when asked to both candidates. The question was modified with the addition of a self-rating scale at the end in order to better gauge how much it was important.

(Original)
Is your child(ren) maintaining Korean important to you? Please tell me why.

(Modified) How is your child(ren) maintaining home language important to you?
Please rate in the following manner: Extremely important-important-somewhat important-not important at all. Please tell me why you think so.

Modification 2. Both candidates had difficulty answering the original question because they seemed to have a hard time understanding what the question meant. The question was modified into an exemplary style of question. The researcher provided an example of a bilingual school setting with more details, as following.

(Original) Do you think your child(ren) can do better academically when instruction is given in their LI?

(Modified) Let’s say your child is an English language learner attending American school. At this school, subjects are also taught in your child’s first language. In this case, do you think your child can academically benefit (do better) from the class taught in his/her first/home language?

After modifications were made, the interview questions were translated into both English and Korean. The close-ended questions were expounded upon to elicit additional information during the interview, when necessary. Participants were able to choose a language to speak in the interview that they preferred (English or Korean).
**Interview procedures.** Upon obtaining approval of the consent form, the researcher contacted participants to schedule an interview. Participants chose a location that they desired. Four participants (three mothers and a father) wished to meet at home, while one father chose to meet at his business and another father at a restaurant to utilize his lunch break. Parents were interviewed separately. All interviews were video-recorded with the researcher’s laptop, which has a built-in video recording application. To minimize distraction, the laptop screen was covered with opaque paper during the recording session. There were no technology-related issues during recording.

**Observation.** Fraenkel et al. (2011) stated that, while the interview allows understanding of participants’ attitudes and thoughts, observations help researchers find out what they actually do. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) added that participant observations “provide deeper insights and understanding of behavior” and are beneficial for “getting deeper, more solid contacts with people and situations rather than the method in itself” (p. 13; p. 93). Ro and Cheatham’s (2009) study utilized participant observation and gained understanding of “the atmosphere, environment, daily life, linguistic interactions, and family values on literacy development” (p. 296). This study also utilized participant observation and concentrated on the families’ language interaction as well as events related to Korean heritage language maintenance in daily life.

**Observation procedures.** After the interview, two 90-minute observations were scheduled with each family in order to observe the parents’ language interactions with their children. Preference was given to times when all family members were present, or at least when one parent was at home with his/her children. All observations were video-recorded with a hand-held video camera. While the researcher was open to participate in
all activities, she limited her participation during times when her presence might have affected the interactions and/or ambiance.

**Trustworthiness and Consistency**

To enhance trustworthiness, multiple strategies were utilized. First, the interview questions were created to directly answer the research goals and were pilot tested to ensure relevance and clarity. Second, observations and field notes were utilized to realize triangulation. The interview question pilot test was conducted with two candidates who shared similar characteristics with the actual participants in order to ensure consistency with the study. Later, suggestions gained from it were applied to the final questionnaires.

**Data Collection**

To ensure a complete collection of data, the interviews and observations were video-recorded using a laptop computer and a small camcorder respectively. Each recording session was coded in numbers.

**Video recording.** Video recording makes it possible for the researcher to preserve and replay data for assurance and clarification (Gill et al., 2008). Dufon (2002) claimed that video recording is one of the most effective ways to truly capture non-verbal expressions, such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures.

While the advantages of video recording are tremendously powerful, the method also has major concerns (Richards, 2003; Saldana, 2011). Saldana (2011) explained that some participants may become self-conscious during interviews with the presence of recording equipment. Participants can also feel that they are being “evaluated” or “judged by another person” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 33). They may act differently than normal, which could influence data quality (Al-Yateem, 2012; Richards, 2003). To
minimize negative effects, Al-Yateem (2012) provided strategies for researchers to adopt. One of these is building a rapport with the participants to establish mutual trust prior to the interview. Organizing appropriate technology for recording and avoiding any visual sign that the interview is being recorded (e.g., exposed external microphones, changes of tapes or batteries) can be helpful as well. These strategies were considered and incorporated into the video recording process.

The study also sought to protect participants’ confidentiality as much as possible because video recording can allow participants’ identities to be inadvertently exposed (Richards, 2003). To minimize the possibility of this occurrence, recorded materials were coded and secured in the researcher’s locked personal file cabinet at home, which is only accessible by the researcher. Participants were also given an optional consent, which allows the recorded data to be used by the researcher in future academic conferences. Only one family accepted the optional consent.

Field Notes. Technology-related problems during the recording of interview and observation can occur. For this reason, field notes were also utilized to help collect the data.

The Role of the Researcher

In this study, the role of the researcher was interviewer, participant observer, data analyst, and translator. The researcher conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and played a participant observer role during observation. The researcher video recorded all interviews and observations, and coded the recordings for later data analysis. Lastly, the researcher translated participants’ interview answers from Korean into English.
Data Analysis

The data collected from video-recorded interviews, observations, and field notes were analyzed through deductive and inductive coding methods. Interview answers were placed into deductive categories on the same day as the interview took place. Observation summary notes were created on the day of each observation. All video recording files were coded and saved on an external hard drive, which was kept in a locked file cabinet when not being used. The deductive categories were established from the four interview categories: home language use, parental attitudes towards Korean language maintenance, parents’ efforts, and difficulties in Korean maintenance. The recorded interview and observation data were read over several times in order to identify key ideas, topics, patterns, or themes within the research questions. Emerging categories were created from the collected data. The researcher also triangulated the findings to find common and divergent elements. Several tables were created to identify the most important information. In addition, Perry’s (2005) five tactics of verbal data analysis (i.e., representativeness, prolonged engagement and persistent observation, clarifying researcher bias, check for researcher effects, and weighing the evidence) were considered to help eliminate simple face value analysis of data (p. 151).

Representative examples from the interview and observation data were transcribed and translated into English by the researcher to support the major findings. Direct quotes from participants were extracted from the collected data to illustrate findings as well.
Summary

The study investigated Korean immigrant parents’ attitudes toward heritage language maintenance for their children in the context of West Michigan cities. The study utilized the qualitative research approach, and, in particular, a case study approach. Semi-structured interview and participant observation instruments were used to reach triangulation. Interviews and observations were video recorded. Recorded data were analyzed with deductive and inductive coding methods to identify important themes or patterns under the research questions. Analysis of the collected data is presented in Chapter Four.
Chapter Four: Results

Context

In this study, a total of three Korean immigrant families who live in West Michigan cities were identified by recommendations from two community experts. All six parents, three fathers and three mothers, were first-generation Korean immigrants with children whose ages ranged from 4 to 20 years. Each parent met with the researcher individually at a location determined by the parent, with one exception. Mr. Yoo requested to be interviewed at home during his break, when his wife and younger child were present in the house. Later, the researcher visited their homes twice to observe family language interaction between the parent-participants and their children. The interviews and observations took place over a period of approximately four weeks, from mid-February to early March of 2013.

Demographic information. All six participants were between 35 and 54 years of age, with an average of 13 years of living in the United States. All participants were born in South Korea and moved to the United States between 1996 and 2001. All were married and living with their biological children in Anderson, Burto, and Coast City, Michigan. Pseudonyms were used for the participants and cities in order to protect participants’ identities.

The Park family. Mr. and Mrs. Park, who are in their late 40s and early 50s, are the oldest parents among the three families. They have lived in the United States for 17 years. They moved directly from South Korea to the city of Anderson and have been living in this city ever since. Mr. Park is a business owner in the city and volunteers at his church every Sunday as a Korean language program director. He was introduced as
“Kyojang Sunsangnim” (Principal) to the researcher when they first met. Prior to becoming a principal, he worked as a volunteer Korean teacher for three years. Mrs. Park stays home with their younger child, who has not started any mainstream schooling yet. Mr. and Mrs. Park attend one of the Korean churches in Anderson every Sunday. Mrs. Park’s family, including her mother, sister, and brother, also live in the city.

Mr. and Mrs. Park have two children, Nahee and Yuna. Nahee is a college student. She was born in South Korea and was 3 years old when her family moved to the United States. Yuna, who is much younger, will start preschool in the fall. Yuna spends most of her days with her mother during the week, but once a week she plays with her cousins, who also live in Anderson.

The Yoo family. Mr. and Mrs. Yoo are the youngest parents among the three families, and are aged between their mid-30s and early 40s. Mr. Yoo has lived in the United States for 15 years. In 1998, when he was still unmarried, Mr. Yoo and his parents moved from South Korea to Virginia, where they spent 10 years. He then lived in Maryland for 2 years. Mrs. Yoo moved to Canada for 3 years while in college and later met Mr. Yoo in Virginia in 2005. Mr. and Mrs. Yoo moved to Burto in 2010. Mr. Yoo works in the restaurant industry near home, while Mrs. Yoo stays home with their two young children. Mr. and Mrs. Yoo attend one of the Korean churches in Anderson every Sunday with their children, and Mrs. Yoo also participates in the church’s choir program and meets with choir members once a week for socializing.

Mr. and Mrs. Yoo have two children. Sunmi is an early elementary student attending Spanish immersion program at public school; her brother, Namsu, attends a half-day preschool near their home. Both Sunmi and Namsu were born in Virginia. The
Yoo family does not have other family members in Burto; however, Mr. Yoo’s parents live in Virginia. While Sunmi has a play date with other Korean-speaking children once a week at her mother’s choir member social gathering, Namsu has a few more opportunities to meet his Korean friends since he is home every weekday when he is not in half-day preschool.

**The Che family.** Mr. and Mrs. Che are in their early and mid-40s. They have lived in the United States for 12 years. Mr. and Mrs. Che moved to the Metro Detroit area in 2001 from South Korea and moved to Coast City, Michigan in 2010. Mr. Che works as a manager in a manufacturing company while Mrs. Che stays home with their children. Mr. and Mrs. Che attend a different Korean church in Anderson every Sunday with their three children. They do not have any other family members living in the United States.

Mr. and Mrs. Che have three children. Jinhwa is a junior high student, Yesul is in elementary school, and Heeju is in early elementary. All three children attend the same public school near home. The oldest child, Jinhwa, was born in South Korea and was 1 year old when her family moved to the United States. Her two younger sisters were born in the United States. Participants’ demographic information is illustrated in Table 1. Information about the participants’ children is illustrated in Table 2.
Table 1

*Participant Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age*</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Highest Educational Level</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Length of Stay in the United States (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Park</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Park</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Yoo</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>Restaurant Industry</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Yoo</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Che</td>
<td>45-44</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Che</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Ages are given as ranges to protect confidentiality.
### Table 2

*Participants’ Children Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Age*</th>
<th>Birthplace (Age at Immigration)</th>
<th>Length of Stay in the United States (years)</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Park Family</td>
<td>Nahee</td>
<td>19-21</td>
<td>South Korea (3 years old)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yuna</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Yoo Family</td>
<td>Sunmi</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Early Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Namsu</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jinhwa</td>
<td>11-13</td>
<td>South Korea (1 year old)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Junior High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Che Family</td>
<td>Yesul</td>
<td>9-11</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heeju</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Early Elementary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Ages are given as ranges to protect confidentiality.

**Interview setting.** Participants in this study chose the interview location that best fit their schedules. All three mothers and one father, Mr. Yoo, preferred being interviewed at home. All three mothers preferred to meet during the early afternoon to evening hours, after their children returned home from school. Mr. Yoo wished to utilize his afternoon break time spent at home since he had to spend long hours at his work. Mr. Park and Mr. Kim also wished to utilize their break time from their business or work because they work long hours. Mr. Park wished to meet at his business location during a non-busy time, and Mr. Kim preferred to meet at a restaurant during his lunch hour. These accommodations were made to better support the participants’ personal and professional schedules. As a native Korean, the mother of one young child, and a resident
of West Michigan, the researcher could build a rapport with participants throughout the interviews. All participants desired to speak in Korean during the interview and were very open to the researcher and the questions. Interviews ranged from 40 to 90 minutes.

The researcher utilized a built-in video recording application in her laptop computer to record the interviews. There were no technology-related issues.

**Observation setting.** Two 90-minute observations were made of each family in this study after the interviews had been conducted. The observation schedule was determined with the mothers exclusively, since they were more knowledgeable about their children’s schedules and managed their children’s afterschool activities. Mrs. Yoo and Mrs. Che preferred the observation visits to be made between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. after their children returned home from school. Mrs. Kim offered more flexible hours since she and her younger child are home most of the day. All observations were video-recorded with a hand-held recording camcorder. There were no technology-related issues.

The researcher also took field notes at times during the observations.

**Findings from Interview Data**

The findings of the study are arranged to answer each of the research questions directly, under the four pre-established deductive categories: home language use, parental attitudes towards Korean language maintenance, parents’ efforts, and difficulties in Korean maintenance. Direct quotes of participants and their children are offered to support the findings. In addition, several tables were created to organize the most important information. To begin, participants and their child(ren)’s language use must be reviewed to gain a better understanding of each family’s language situation.
Home language use.

Participants’ spoken language(s). As stated in Chapter One, the term first language in this study is synonymous with mother tongue and heritage language. That is, first language is one’s language at birth, and the one used between parents and child(ren). All participants identified Korean as their first language: it is the language they were born into and use to communicate with their family members, including their spouses and children.

All participants identified English as other language spoken. Mr. Park self-rated his overall English proficiency between fair and poor. He stated that speaking was the most challenging element, while reading and writing were slightly better due to his previous work experience in Korea reading English laboratory textbooks for eight years. Mrs. Park self-rated her speaking proficiency as fair and placed reading as poor and writing as very poor. As an example, she stated that she has difficulty understanding forms or written information at places like hospitals. She added that her first child, Nahee, helps her most of the time with her English reading and writing. Mr. and Mrs. Yoo self-rated their English as fair. Mrs. Yoo stated in Korean, “I don’t do well at all…just enough to get around.” Mr. and Mrs. Che also self-rated their English proficiency between fair and poor. All participants seemed moderately shy answering this question. It is unclear how closely their self-rating truly reflects their English competency. Participants’ self-rated English proficiency is present in Table 3.
Table 3

*Participants’ English Proficiency Self-rating*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Overall Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Park</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair-Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Park</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair-poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Yoo</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair-poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Yoo</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Park</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Park</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Children’s spoken language(s).* Parents were asked a question regarding their children’s first language as well. Mr. and Mrs. Park identified Korean as their children’s first language. Both Mr. and Mrs. Park stated that their two children have been using Korean since birth, and they use Korean when talking to parents and other family members. While Mr. and Mrs. Yoo spoke in a very similar manner about their children’s first language, Mrs. Yoo added a comment that carried a little doubt: “지금은 한국어 인데요. 좀 크면 영어가 되지 않을까 싶어요.” *(It is Korean now. But it may change to English as they grow up.)* When the researcher asked why, Mrs. Yoo replied that her children’s English might become dominant in the future because they would spend more time at school with their English-speaking peers and, consequently, spend less time with their Korean-speaking parents as they grow up. This is why she thought their present first language might diminish.

Mrs. Yoo’s expressed doubt towards first language was shown as a reality in Mr. and Mrs. Che’s case. Mrs. Che explained that, although all three children used to speak...
Korean fully, English should be considered her children’s first language (dominant language) now because they speak English better than Korean. In detail she said:

Before the kids started Kindergarten, they spoke Korean, but this completely changed after the first (Kindergarten) year. After that year, their first language changed to English.... They seem more comfortable speaking in English. When they express how they feel, I think they express it better in English than Korean, and I can feel that too.

She added that, while this is evident in her two older children, Korean may remain stronger with her youngest child. However, she predicted that English will soon take over the first language status in her youngest child’s case as well.

While Mr. and Mrs. Che reported their children’s language shift upon the completion of Kindergarten, the parents in the Park and Yoo families stated that they have not experienced such a shift with their older children, Nahee and Sunmi. Mrs. Park added, “She [Nahee] didn’t speak English at home, although she started school. She must have understood very well that she wouldn’t be able to communicate if she spoke English at home to her grandma or me because we can’t speak English.” Mrs. Yoo also said that she has not seen any increase of English in Sunmi’s speech at home. She said, “A few times, I heard Sunmi talking to Namsu in English, but that was it. They were speaking Korean to each other right away.”
Parents provided more information on their children’s other spoken languages as well. According to Mr. and Mrs. Park, their first child, Nahee, speaks English and French with native-like to advanced proficiency. Nahee has been studying French since high school and minors in it at college. On the other hand, the Parks reported that their second child, Yuna, does not know any other language but Korean. Mr. and Mrs. Yoo identified English and Spanish for their first child, Sunmi, with fluent-advanced and moderate proficiency levels respectively. Mr. and Mrs. Che rated their children’s English proficiency as native-like. Parents’ ratings on their children’s spoken language(s) proficiency is provided in Table 4.

Table 4

*Parents’ Ratings on their Children’s Spoken Language(s) Proficiency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Other Language Spoken 1 (Proficiency)</th>
<th>Other Language Spoken 2 (Proficiency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Park Family</td>
<td>Nahee</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English (native-like)</td>
<td>French (advanced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yuna</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Yoo Family</td>
<td>Sunmi</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English (fluent-advanced)</td>
<td>Spanish (advanced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Namsu</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English (basic)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Che Family</td>
<td>Jinhwa</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Korean (advanced)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yesul</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Korean (basic)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heeju</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Korean (fluent-advanced)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**A closer look at language use between family members.** Mr. and Mrs. Park said they speak only Korean at home to each other and their children. However, Mr. Park added that lately he used English phrases (e.g., “What do you want?”) to his younger child once in a great while in order to introduce some English to her since she has not started any mainstream schooling yet. Mrs. Park answered that their first daughter has also been doing this to teach her little sister some English before her preschool starts in the fall. Both parents confirmed that their two children speak to each other in Korean nearly exclusively as well.

Mr. and Mrs. Yoo also answered that they speak only Korean to each other and their children. They confirmed that their two children speak to each other in Korean as well. However, Mrs. Yoo added that she has heard her two children speaking in English once in a while. She explained that those were rather simple and short sentences. She added that her children often resume their conversation in Korean. To conclude, both parents confirmed that their home language is, without a doubt, Korean.

Mr. and Mrs. Che also said they speak Korean only to each other because that is the language they speak the best and feel most comfortable using. Regarding their children, they offered a different story. In detail, Mr. Che rated that nine out of 10 times, he speaks Korean to his oldest child. To his middle child, the ratio was considerably wider, with Korean being spoken on six out of 10 occasions. With his youngest child, his Korean use increased again, to nine out of 10 occasions. Mrs. Yoo answered similarly, saying that she often uses English words in her Korean speech for her children to better understand what she means. Both parents added that using English, especially thematic
words, is inevitable in their communication with their children. Otherwise, their children would not fully understand what they heard.

During Mrs. Che’s interview, all three children were in different areas of the home playing or doing homework. When the question regarding the family’s language use was brought up, especially describing each child’s language pattern in detail, Mrs. Che encouraged her middle child, who was sitting the closest to her at that time, to move to another room and start doing her reading schoolwork. After her daughter moved, Mrs. Che lowered her voice and looked around to make sure her middle child was not near. Then she explained that her middle child had spoken level-appropriate Korean until the age of 4, when the family lived in Troy in the Metro Detroit area. She confirmed that all three children experienced a language shift from Korean to English at the start of Kindergarten.

However, while the oldest and youngest Che children still possess fair Korean proficiency and use it at home with their parents, the middle child mainly spoke English because she lost Korean during Kindergarten. Mrs. Che recalled the time as this: “I missed a window of opportunity for preserving Korean for her.” Because Yesul (the middle Che child) did not learn English before starting Kindergarten, Mrs. Che felt comfortable when her English use increased at home. Mrs. Che said, “She didn’t know much English before starting Kindergarten. So I wanted her to learn English and didn’t talk to her in Korean.” While Yesul learned English quickly and Korean use at home was not encouraged, Mrs. Che noticed that Yesul’s Korean seemed “wiped out” after the first year of Kindergarten. Yesul started to lose more confidence in her speech. Her mother explained that Yesul did not want to speak Korean for the 2 years following Kindergarten.
Mrs. Che stated that, after this experience, she was determined to continue speaking Korean to her youngest child at home so that what the family experienced with their middle child would not be repeated. While both parents spoke Korean to their children as much as possible, they also confirmed that their children use English exclusively when talking to each other.

To conclude, all participants reported that they talked to their spouse and children in Korean exclusively, with the exception being the Che family. Mr. and Mrs. Che had to incorporate English words in their speech for their children to understand them fully. While the parents in the Park and Yoo families confirmed that their children mainly speak Korean to each other at home, Mr. and Mrs. Che stated that their children use only English when talking to each other. Tables 5 and 6 summarize the participants’ views on family language use. More discussion on family language use is offered in the observation findings.

Table 5

*Parents Language Use at Home*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>To Spouse</th>
<th>To Oldest Child</th>
<th>To Middle Child</th>
<th>To Youngest Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Park</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Park</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Yoo</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Yoo</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Che</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean/English</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Che</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean/English</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

Child(ren)’s Language Use at Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>To Father</th>
<th>To Mother</th>
<th>To Oldest Sibling</th>
<th>To Older Sibling</th>
<th>To Youngest Sibling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nahee</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuna</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunmi</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namsu</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinhwa</td>
<td>Korean/English</td>
<td>Korean/English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesul</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heeju</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parental attitudes toward Korean language maintenance. To learn the parents’ attitudes towards their children’s Korean maintenance, five questions were asked: (a) how is your children’s maintaining Korean important to you? (b) do you encourage your children to speak Korean at home? (c) what proficiency level do you want your children to achieve? (d) do you believe first language can help second language learning? and (e) do you think English learners can do better at school if subject is taught in their first language? Findings are arranged following each question.

How is your child(ren)’s maintaining Korean important to you? The parents of the Park and Yoo families showed very positive attitudes towards their children’s Korean language maintenance. When they moved to the United States, Mr. and Mrs. Park made sure that their oldest child, Nahee, learned Korean before starting Kindergarten. Mr. Park stated that some friends of his showed concern at that time that Nahee should learn English right away by joining the mainstream preschool program. However, Mr. Park
chose not to send Nahee to preschool. Instead he taught her Korean, including the writing system, Hangul. It was very important to Mr. and Mrs. Park that Nahee knew her first language very well before starting school. His belief is carried forward in their second child’s education. They wish to continue speaking Korean only to their second child in order to secure her first language before she starts Kindergarten. Mr. Park explained, “[한국어 유지하는 게] 아주 많이 중요해요. 한국사람이니까…, 미국에 살지만, 한국사람이니까, 한국사람인걸 몇몇하게 알아야지.” ([Maintaining Korean] is very important. Because [my children] are Korean … although they live in the States, because they are Koreans. They must acknowledge themselves as Korean.) Mrs. Park also spoke in a similar manner: “아주 중요해요. 한국 사람이니까, 모국어는 잊혀지지 않아야 한다고 생각해요. (Because she is a Korean. I think she should not forget her roots.)

Mr. and Mrs. Park also valued family ties and communication highly. Mrs. Park added that, if her children do not speak Korean, their family relationship will be jeopardized because she cannot speak English very well; thus, she will not be able to communicate with her children. Lastly, Mr. Park added that maintaining Korean is important because it will provide more opportunities for his children in the future. During the interview, both Mr. and Mrs. Park showed passion, satisfaction, and pride in their children’s Korean competency.

Mr. and Mrs. Yoo also rated Korean maintenance as “extremely important.” Mr. Yoo emphasized the importance of preserving Korean identity for his children:
While Korean identity preservation and family communication were the most important matters to Mr. Yoo, Mrs. Yoo viewed Korean maintenance as a foundation for multilingualism for her children as being the most important: “애네가 앞으로 살아가면서...저는 포커스가 많은 랭귀지를 하는게 중요이에요. 한국말, 영어, 스페인어를 하는게 나중에 기회가 많잖아요.” (My focus for my children is helping them learn as many languages as possible because being able to speak Korean, English, and Spanish will give them many opportunities in the future.)

In fact, their oldest child, Sunmi, has been enrolled in Spanish immersion programs since Kindergarten. Their middle child, Namsu, is to be enrolled in the same Kindergarten program in the fall. Mrs. Yoo hoped that, ultimately, her children will master multiple languages for more opportunities later in their lives. Secondly, Mrs. Yoo wanted her children to maintain Korean for family ties and increased communication with the children’s grandparents. Regarding Korean identity, Mrs. Yoo left the question for her children to negotiate because her children might consider themselves Americans when they grow up. To Mrs. Yoo, Korean was her children’s first language, to be maintained as the foundation for multilingualism and family communication.
Mr. and Mrs. Che also strongly favored Korean maintenance for their children’s identity formation. It is well presented in Mr. Che’s comment:

One should know his roots. [Speaking Korean] is not because of others, it should be because of oneself. If a Korean speaks Korean that means he knows Korean culture, without knowing Korean culture how one can claim that he is a Korean?

In addition to Korean identity formation, Mrs. Che viewed Korean maintenance as the critical element for family communication. She shared an example of their weekly phone communication with grandparents, who live in Korea. While the oldest and youngest children normally carry on longer conversations, the middle child mainly replies with “Yes” or “No” and often says she cannot hear them.

**Do you encourage your children to speak Korean at home?** All participants replied with “Very Strongly” to this question. Mr. and Mrs. Park said when they moved to the United States, they spoke only Korean to their first child, who was 3 years old at that time. Mr. Park taught Nahee to master Hangul before starting Kindergarten. Mrs. Park had Nahee write a diary in Korean every night for three years when she was attending elementary school. Nahee also attended a Korean heritage language program every Sunday afternoon from the age of 5 until she became a high school student. While both parents worked, Mrs. Park’s mother, who only speaks Korean, babysat Nahee and her Korean-speaking cousins for several years. Mr. and Mrs. Park continued speaking
Korean when their second child was born and are planning to teach Hangul to her next year.

Mr. And Mrs. Yoo also answered that they strongly encourage their children to speak Korean at home. Their two children were taught Hangul by their mother, and they read many Korean stories. Mrs. Yoo said she read Korean books so much to them that her voice was hoarse many nights during their first years. Both children attend a Korean heritage language program at church, where Mrs. Yoo works as a volunteer Korean teacher. Mrs. Yoo also added that strong encouragement does not necessarily have to be made at home because her children are used to speaking Korean there.

Mr. Che also said he strongly encourages his children to speak Korean at home; however, he expressed that doing so is not easy. He said that, although he constantly reminds his children to speak Korean, the children often forget to do so and speak English to him. To help his children use more Korean, he adopted a strategy of pretending he does not understand when his children approach him in English. However, Mr. Che added that such a strategy is not always effective; since his children are so accustomed to speaking English, it is a “natural” choice of language to them.

In the case of Mrs. Che, she first answered “absolutely!” to the question, then corrected her answer to “Fair”: "I said “absolutely” because that is how much I want my children not to lose Korean. However, I gave 50% not 100% to that"
question, because language is not just listening and speaking. It is also reading and writing. I am not doing any reading or writing for my children at home, so I can give 50% only.)

It seemed apparent that Mrs. Che wished to encourage her children more; however, she seemed to have some difficulties doing so. She explained that, increasingly, her children do not understand fully unless she uses English words. English has become more important in family communication as their children’s time spent at home decreases and time spent at school increases. Because she understands that her children feel more comfortable using English, she added that she does not want to push them too hard by demanding them to speak Korean at home, which is challenging for her children to do.

What proficiency level do you want your children to achieve? Participants wished for their children’s future Korean proficiency to range from “fairly well” to “native-like.” Mr. and Mrs. Park showed a great amount of pride in their college-age child’s level-appropriate Korean proficiency. According to them, Nahee could speak, read, and write Korean as well as her native peers. They expressed their wish for their second child to achieve a high Korean proficiency, as Nahee has done. Mr. and Mrs. Yoo also replied that they wish for their children to obtain level-appropriate Korean not only in speaking but also in reading and writing. Mr. Che hoped for his children to understand and speak Korean fully, without having to use English words, if possible. Mrs. Che also stated that she wants her children to speak level-appropriate Korean—specifically, the level where one can sound culturally appropriate in formal settings, such as in government agencies.
Do you believe first language can help second language learning; Do you think English learners can do better at school if subject is taught in their first language?

Three participants, Mr. Park, Mrs. Yoo, and Mrs. Che, believed that the first language can help second language acquisition. Mr. Park added that his belief might have come from his first child’s successful language development in Korean, English, and French. Although Nahee did not know any English before attending Kindergarten, Mr. Park explained that she learned English quickly and well. When Nahee was in fifth grade, she and another student were selected to compete at a spelling contest, representing their school. The other three parents, Mrs. Park, Mr. Yoo, and Mr. Che answered that first language will not be helpful in second language acquisition because every language has a different system.

The second question, regarding the relationship between first language and academic success, created confusion among most of the participants, as it did to the interview pilot candidates. The biggest barrier to their understanding seemed to be associated with the reality that they have not seen or heard of any U.S. public school that provides regular classes conducted in Korean language. The researcher encouraged them to think free of this barrier and asked them for their opinion again. Mr. Park and Mrs. Che offered similar thoughts: Although classes would be taught in a child’s first language, it may not benefit him/her in academic performance because the world outside of class operates in English. Only Mrs. Yoo understood the question without confusion or second-guessing, stating her belief that, when classes are taught in English learners’ first language, it will help the child do better at school. Table 7 summarizes the participants’ answers to the five questions addressed above.
Table 7

*Participants’ Answers to the Five Main Questions in Parents’ Attitudes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mr. Park</th>
<th>Mrs. Park</th>
<th>Mr. Yoo</th>
<th>Mrs. Yoo</th>
<th>Mr. Che</th>
<th>Mrs. Che</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How is your child(ren) maintaining Korean important to you?</strong></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you encourage your children to speak Korean at home?</strong></td>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What proficiency level do you want your children to achieve?</strong></td>
<td>Native like</td>
<td>Native like</td>
<td>Native like</td>
<td>Native like</td>
<td>Fluent-advanced</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you think first language can help second language learning?</strong></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you think English learning child(ren) can academically benefit (do better) from the class taught in his/her first/home language?</strong></td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Efforts made to maintain Korean.** All participants answered that they talk to their children in Korean at home as much as they can to help their children maintain Korean. When the children were young, especially from birth to preschool age, all participants said they read stories from Korean children’s books and participated in social gatherings (church meetings, dinner with friends, play dates, etc). In addition to the practices mentioned above, each family described other efforts to help their children maintain Korean, as detailed below.

Mr. Park taught math in Korean to Nahee every day for 3 years when Nahee was attending middle school. This study session had helped Nahee not only to improve her knowledge about math but also to gain experience by practicing complex academic Korean language. When the parents were at work and away from home, and Nahee
started Kindergarten, her grandmother, who does not speak English, cared for her and three other grandchildren who spoke Korean since birth.

Furthermore, Mr. Park stated that Nahee also received positive feedback about Korea from her middle school. Nahee’s social studies class studied Korea for three months one year, which consequently made Nahee famous for her Korean knowledge and speaking ability. Mr. Park added that the positive reaction Nahee received from her peers at school worked as a powerful booster in Nahee’s motivation to study Korean. No other children in this study received such positive attention or heritage language-related awareness from their school or peers as Nahee experienced.

In addition, Mrs. Park pointed out that Nahee always has been interested in different languages, including Korean, French, and Japanese; she studies Korean on her own. According to Mr. and Mrs. Park, Nahee reads college-level Korean books and writes in Korean every day (e.g., writing emails or instant messaging in Korean). Mr. and Mrs. Park also presented Nahee with a trip to Korea 3 years ago. This was her first visit since her move to the United States. Mrs. Park explained that Nahee enjoyed her visit very much, spending time with her relatives, grandparents, and cousins, as well as experiencing the nation’s culture, entertainment, and food. Mr. and Mrs. Park also showed pride in their daughter’s trip because she was able to travel by herself without a “translator” since she speaks, reads, and writes Korean almost perfectly. When the family finds time, Mr. and Mrs. Park said they watch Korean TV shows together.

In addition to talking to their children in Korean, Mr. and Mrs. Yoo said they teach Korean reading and writing at home. Mrs. Yoo said she still reads many Korean storybooks to both children and teaches them how to write. Writing Korean is not limited
to Hangul letters or word writing; she encourages her children to write stories with themes to produce longer, more complex sentences. Namsu, who is home for half a day every day during the week, has more time with his parents. Mrs. Yoo takes him to play dates, where he meets other Korean children once a week. Every Sunday, both children attend a Korean language program. They also talk to their grandparents on the phone once a week.

Mr. and Mrs. Che also sent their three children to a Korean heritage language program on Sundays in Anderson, driving 40 minutes each way. However, their children stopped attending after 6 months. Mrs. Che explained that attending the program required almost all of their Sunday and that the family felt that it was too time-consuming. Both Mr. and Mrs. Che said that watching a Korean TV show was one of the most effective ways to increase their children’s interest in Korean learning. Mr. and Mrs. Che also encouraged their children to read Korean books, one book each week; however, they stated that this practice is falling by the wayside more and more. The children in the Che family also talk to their grandparents in Korea once per week.

**Difficulties in Korean language maintenance.** Mr. and Mrs. Park answered that they don’t have any difficulties with their children’s Korean language maintenance. Mr. Park mentioned that carrying deeper conversations with his first child, Nahee, takes effort sometimes because the vocabulary he uses is old-fashioned and complex. However, because Nahee is highly proficient in Korean, Mr. Park stated that she often understands what he means when he provides additional explanation. Mrs. Park did not experience any difficulties; however, she stated that she has witnessed other Korean immigrant families that did:
(There are no difficulties. Not in our case. My children speak Korean to each other.... When they open their mouths, the words that come out are Korean. Korean maintenance comes naturally.... I've seen other families fail to maintain Korean if the older child doesn’t speak Korean at home, then subsequently the younger children can’t speak Korean ... or if parents speak English at home, the children don’t speak Korean.)

Mr. Yoo also said that there are currently no difficulties in Korean language maintenance; however, that difficulties might arise in the future: “However, I tell my children that I want them to maintain Korean. I don’t know if they took my words into their heart, but it seems so since they are doing a great job at it.” Mrs. Yoo also said she has not experienced any challenges yet, although she showed some concern about future days. When the researcher asked why she seemed to have some concern, Mrs. Yoo said she has some doubts because as her children grow, they would spend more time studying at school using other languages more. She ended her comments as the following: “글쎄. 까먹을까 과연?” (Well, would they really forget Korean?)

While the Park and Yoo parents stated that they have not experienced challenges in their children’s Korean maintenance, Mr. and Mrs. Che expressed the opposite. Mrs. Che said maintaining Korean is very difficult because her children do not wish to speak
Korean, as they lack Korean linguistic knowledge and competency. Simply stated,

Korean has become a difficult language:

“It is difficult. My children are more comfortable speaking English. They don’t want to speak Korean. If they rely on Korean only, it takes a long time to get their point across. I also don’t understand right away [when they speak in Korean only]. I have to ask again and again. It is work to them and is frustrating. While English takes one sentence, Korean takes five trials, especially in my middle child’s case.)

To increase the children’s Korean use at home, Mrs. Che said she had adopted Korean-only policies several times in the past, but none were successful. Finally, she said that she “negotiated” with herself and lowered the expectation by changing the policy to a Korean-only-at-dinner-table policy. However, she added that, in reality, this policy also is still hard for her children to follow. Mrs. Che ended her comment with a prediction: “내가 집에서 말 안하면 [아이들 한국말 유지가] 3 개월도 못 갈거야.” (If I stop speaking Korean at home, my children’s Korean won’t last 3 months.)

Mr. Che also pointed out limited opportunities for Korean language exposure in their area beyond the home:

 james 엄마, 아빠와 대화하는 시간은 몇시간 안되니까. 하루종일 학교에서
(The time to talk in Korean at home with mom and dad is minor. My children are at English speaking school all day and when they return home they cannot spend their entire time just talking to us, they have to do their homework and such. It may not even be an hour if I add the time we truly talk to each other before they go to bed. That is not enough for them to maintain the language.)

All participants, in fact, stated that their cities lack the Korean population and community support that would benefit their children’s heritage language learning and maintenance. Mr. and Mrs. Che, as well as Mrs. Yoo, described the various heritage language learning opportunities that were available in the cities where they previously lived. At the end of their comments, they added that they wished for the Korean population in their city to grow in order to build a strong community where their children can see, hear, and speak Korean outside the home.

**Findings from Observation Data**

**The Park family.** The two observation visits to the Park family were made on weekdays, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Mrs. Park and her two children were home during the first observation, and only the second child was home with her during the second observation. Traces of the Korean language were present in some areas of their home. The family’s computer TV in the living room was set in Korean, and their second child’s room was well supplied with Korean vocabulary cards, games, and children’s books. Mrs. Park said that more Hangul learning materials, which were mostly
handed down from Nahee, are available, packed up in boxes and stored in the garage. Mr. and Mrs. Park are planning to utilize them this fall when they teach Yuna Hangul.

Mrs. Park spoke only Korean to her children during both visits. Although Mr. and Mrs. Park said during the interview that Nahee, their first child, sometimes speaks to her little sister in English, Nahee did not speak any English while the researcher was present during the first observation; she spoke only Korean. Nahee seems to be a proficient user of both spoken and written Korean. In her speech, Korean vocabulary sounded level appropriate, and her Korean writing was proficient, which was observed when she instant messaged her native Korean friends on her smart phone. Nahee understood each time when her mother spoke to her, and she replied correctly in Korean. In fact, during the first observation, Mrs. Park asked for Nahee’s help twice, once dealing with a phone bill and then with buying goods online. Mrs. Park had said during the interview that she often relies on Nahee when she has to deal with English reading and writing. This occasion seemed to be one of those moments. Nahee understood her mother’s requests both times and effortlessly took care of the issues by reading the phone contract and running transactions online.

In contrast, Yuna’s language choice was not fixed to Korean only, unlike what her parents stated during the interview. It was observed that Yuna spoke English a handful of times at home while playing by herself or talking to her sister. Samples of Yuna’s English speech are captured below:

Comment 1: [Urging her sister to fill her cup more with water] “Bigger, bigger!”
Comment 2: [Self-talking] “More pony! It’s two DVD.”
Comment 3: [Playing with her toy] “Hey! Come back!”
Mrs. Park had shown strong favoritism towards Korean language maintenance during the interview, and this was evident during the home observations as well. She talked to her children in Korean only, and her two children spoke exclusively Korean to her as well. In addition, Mrs. Park taught new Korean words to her second child, often asking, “이 게 뭐야?” (What is this?) throughout the day as she carried on with her house chores. Mrs. Park also guided Yuna to use polite Korean forms. For instance, when Yuna asked for a spoon, she used the word, “순가락” (Soot-ka-lock). Mrs. Park asked Yuna to say, “수저” (Soo-jeoh), which is a polite form for spoon in Korean. To conclude, it was observed that Korean was the home language in the Park family, at least with Mrs. Park and her two children, and Korean was used at every occasion while the family spent time together.

The Yoo Family. The researcher visited the Yoo family two times during the early evening hours after the children had returned home. The father was at work, and Mrs. Yoo and her two children were present during both observations. The family’s living room, where the children spent most of their time doing homework, had a large bookcase made of 32 small wooden storage cubes that took up the entire wall. Nearly 1,000 Korean children’s books in different themes and series were displayed, filling most of the cubes. The remaining space was filled with educational English children’s books. Educational posters (e.g., math multiplication posters, English sight words, and a world map), both in English and Korean, were hung on the walls, as were the children’s art work and a couple of letters from their grandparents, which were written in Korean.

Like Mrs. Park, Mrs. Yoo only spoke Korean to her two children, and they spoke Korean to their mother as well. Korean was also a dominant language when the two
children talked to each other. Both Sunmi and Namsu spoke level-appropriate Korean. While Sunmi could also write Korean, Namsu was yet to start writing Hangul. During the first observation, Sunmi told her mother that one of her friends at school asked her to write a few words in Korean. Mrs. Yoo seemed very surprised to hear that Sunmi had received such a request from her peer at school. Sunmi had already written the words in Hangul, so she showed it to her mother. Mrs. Yoo pointed out that her American friend would not be able to read the Korean characters. She re-wrote a word in the English alphabet, “Umma,” meaning “Mom” in Korean. During both observation visits, Mrs. Yoo also helped Sunmi with schoolwork by following a planned schedule. Mrs. Yoo explained that Sunmi usually does three to four learning activities every day, including her Spanish vocabulary practice, regular homework (if any), English reading comprehension practice, and Korean Bible reading. As Mrs. Yoo expressed during the interview regarding her concern over Sunmi’s English learning, she had created a way to enhance her daughter’s English development by having her take an English reading comprehension quiz every night.

While Sunmi carried on with her regular at-home learning activities, Mrs. Yoo was always by her side, encouraging and guiding her with the tasks by communicating with her in Korean only. During the first observation Mrs. Yoo and the two children were reading Sunmi’s English reading comprehension story about “hibernation” on the television screen. While looking at a picture of a raccoon on the TV monitor, she asked her children, “저건 한국말로 뭐야?” (What is that in Korean?). Both of her children answered, “너구리” (raccoon).
Sunmi’s English reading continued to the bedtime story time, when Mrs. Yoo asked her to pick an English story to read on her iPad. The reading application displayed pictures as well as text, as the reading program on the TV screen had done. Again, Mrs. Yoo listened to the story together with her two children while watching the iPad storybook. Occasionally Sunmi asked questions to her mother in Korean, and Mrs. Yoo replied in Korean. The two children also read a Korean storybook and the Bible with their mother before going to bed.

Mrs. Yoo’s passion for multilingualism was also observed during the observations. Mrs. Yoo helped her children, especially Sunmi, who is in early elementary, with homework and other language learning activities for Korean, English, and Spanish. She spent most of the evening doing this while interacting with her children exclusively in Korean. In order to develop Sunmi’s Korean writing and raise Namsu’s interest in it, Mrs. Yoo also added a short Korean writing time before they went to bed.

It was concluded that the Yoo family’s home language was Korean and it was being maintained among the children. In addition, Mrs. Yoo practiced multiple strategies at home not only to help her children maintain their first language, but also to develop second and third languages in order to reach multilingualism.

The Che Family. The observation visits to the Che family were made during the early evening hours, after the three children were home from school. The father was at work both times. The researcher stayed on the first level of the house, which had a living room, dining room, bathroom, and the parents’ room. The researcher did not see any Korean books or Korean language-related materials on the first level of the house except
for Korean snacks or groceries between the dining table and the kitchen island, where the family spent most of their evening hours together.

While the children from the Park and Yoo families did not react at all to the researcher or the handheld video recorder, the children in the Che family spoke to the researcher and showed great interest in the camera, as well as discomfort towards it. At the first observational visit, HeeJu greeted the researcher at the door and said, “Hi,” unlike the children in the other families, who did not say anything to the researcher even though their mothers had encouraged them to say, “안녕하세요” (Hello) to the researcher to be culturally appropriate. Since the three Che children reacted to the video recording, the researcher explained to them that recording was being done in order to collect all the data, which would help the researcher write her paper for school.

While the oldest child, Jinhwa, seemed to feel most neutral towards the video recording, the youngest child, Heeju, wished to carry the camera, and the middle child, Yesul, showed discomfort. She said several times that she did not want to be video taped. At the second visit, during the family’s dinnertime, Yesul separated herself from the family at the dinner table because of the camera’s presence, so the researcher decided to turn it off. The researcher felt that the recording device was drawing too much attention and interrupted the family’s normal activity. After the camera was off, the researcher asked Yesul if she would consider allowing audio-taping instead. The whole family seemed to like this idea. The video camera was turned back on; however, it faced the other way for the remainder of the family’s dinnertime.

Mrs. Che mostly spoke Korean to her children; however, she often code-switched by using English thematic words in Korean structure. Jinhwa also spoke mostly Korean to
her mother, often code-switching as well. However, when she spoke to her two sisters, she spoke only English. Heeju also spoke to her mother mostly in Korean, with frequent code switching. Occasionally she made comments to her mother, using only English, and when she talked to her two sisters, she only used English. While the researcher had abundant opportunities to hear Jinhwa and Yesul’s language interaction, she had considerably fewer opportunities to observe Yesul’s language interaction because Yesul was sick the first day (spending most of the evening hours lying in bed), and kept her distance during the second observation. Based on the handful of comments she made, it was concluded that Yesul also spoke only English when she talked to her sisters and used more English when she talked to her mother. Samples of the family’s language interactions are followed below in Tables 8, 9, and 10.

Table 8

Korean Only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Che</td>
<td>“거기다 바로 적을꺼니 나중에 올겨적을꺼니?” (Are you going to write on that paper right away or re-write it on other paper later?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinwha</td>
<td>“나중에 올겨적을켜야.” (I am going to re-write it on other paper.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heeju</td>
<td>[Handing her mother a mechanical pencil] “엄마, 이거 어떻게 넣어? 여기 있는데?” (Mom, how do you put this in? It is here.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Che</td>
<td>“여기에 넣는 가봐.” (I think it goes here.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesul</td>
<td>[looking at the camera near the dinner table] “여기 안 앉을래.” (I am not going to sit here.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9

**Code Switching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Che</td>
<td>“오늘 다해야 돼? 미리 했어야지.” <em>(Do you have to do it all today? You should have finished it earlier.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinhwa</td>
<td>“I know … 처음에 할 때 너무 작게 그려가지구.” <em>(I know … I drew it too small at the beginning.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Che</td>
<td>“layout 을 잡고 시작해. 한 fix 선으로 잡지 말고.” <em>(You should create a layout first, not having it fixed to one line.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Che</td>
<td>“이거에다 먹을래?” <em>(Do you want to eat all of it?)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesul</td>
<td>“bitter 해. 안 먹을래요.” <em>(It is bitter. I don’t want it.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Che</td>
<td>“borrow 하는거야, 아님 니가 갖겠다고??” <em>(Are you going to borrow it, or keep it?)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HeeJu</td>
<td>“갖겠다고.” <em>(Keep it.)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

**English Only**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jinhwa</td>
<td>“You missed it. It is my turn. See, this is what you are doing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heeju</td>
<td>“It is not fair.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[While self-recording, looking at her reflection on the mirror], “Hi me! [turning to the window] It looks pretty outside.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesul</td>
<td>“Who wants to play baseball?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heeju</td>
<td>“Me! I know where it is. But I can’t get through. I want to be a thrower, you bat!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During observation, Mrs. Che said to the researcher that her youngest child, Heeju, has an interesting speech pattern: When someone talks to her in Korean, she replies in Korean, and she does the same when someone speaks to her in English. When the researcher talked to Heeju in English, she indeed replied in English; however, when the researcher talked to her in Korean, her reply was also in English. The researcher asked: “오늘 학교는 어땠어?” (How was your day at school today?). Heeju answered in English: “Bad. The roads weren’t good.” Heeju continued replying in English to the researcher in a few more occasions during observation.

Mrs. Che had said during the interview that, although she wants her children to speak only Korean at home, she does not wish to push her children too much because she understands that speaking only Korean is challenging for her children. She had said, “I negotiated with myself that I should just expect them to speak.” Her self-negotiated expectations for her children’s Korean use was observed during the family interaction as well. She spoke to her children mainly in Korean; however, she did not request her children to use Korean except once at the dinner table, as captured below:

Heeju: “엄마, 근데, Tim 이 3\textsuperscript{rd} grader 인데, cast 있었어요. arm 에. 그래서 우리가 sign 했어요.” (Mom, Tim is a 3\textsuperscript{rd} grader and he was wearing a cast. So we signed on it.)

Yesul: “Jessica said that. She broke it…um…while snowboarding.”

Mrs. Che: [Looking at Yesul] “너는 왜 한국말 안쓰니?” (Why aren’t you speaking Korean?)

Jinhwa: “그래! 우리는 한국말 쓰는데!” (Yeah! We are speaking Korean!)
While the children were eating and talking during the dinner, Mrs. Che looked at the researcher at one point and said, “어린 다니가, 눈치 못 챈지?” *This is what happens. You didn’t notice, did you?* She was pointing out the children’s exclusive English use at the dinner table, even though the dinnertime was supposed to be Korean-speaking time. After she said that, the atmosphere remained fairly pleasant. Her children kept small, apologetic smiles on their faces. It seemed that the parents’ request to follow a Korean-only rule at the dinner table is often unheeded and that the children are accustomed to the pattern. As the dinner continued, the children started to engage more, talking to each other in English. About three different times, Mrs. Che interrupted the children’s conversations, urging them to pay attention to their dinner. One of these moments is captured as follows:

Jinhwa: “She is old. I am young.”

Heeju: “I am young. I am happy.”

Yesul: “We are talking about differences.”

Heeju: “Okay then. You both are old.”

Jinhwa: “Stop playing around.”

Mrs. Che: “밥먹어빨리.” *Eat your dinner.*

**Summary**

The study collected data from interviews and observations in order to answer the research questions. The interview and observation findings revealed that all participants spoke only Korean to their children at home since it was their first language and they spoke it the best. Although two parents used English words in their speech, they always spoke Korean. The children’s language spoken at home was in accordance with their
parents’ prediction, which had been shared during the interview. While some children spoke only Korean at home to their parents and siblings, others spoke both languages: when they talked to their parents, they used more Korean, and when they talked to their siblings, they exclusively spoke English. In fact, the parents of these children answered during the interview that the children’s first language switched to English after they completed Kindergarten, “wiping out” the Korean.

The study also revealed that parents’ attitudes towards their children’s Korean language maintenance are very positive. All parents answered that Korean maintenance is “very important.” With the exception of one parent, all of them thought that maintaining Korean is the way to form and preserve cultural identity. For that parent, Korean maintenance received higher value for multilingualism: she believed Korean maintenance would help her children develop second and third acquisition better. The second most important reason for heritage language maintenance was for family communication. All parents wished their children to be able to communicate not only with their immediate family members but also other family members, such as grandparents and cousins. Lastly, parents answered that Korean maintenance would provide more future opportunities to their children when they are adults.

In regards to the role that heritage language played in second language acquisition, participants’ opinions were divided equally: three parents believed that first language helps second language acquisition, while the other three did not perceive it that way. Of the total six parents, only one parent answered that she believed first language can help English learners do better at school when subjects are taught in their first language. More than half of the participants had difficulty understanding and answering
the questions because they were unfamiliar with Koran heritage language being taught at schools in the United States.

Participants also revealed their efforts to help their children maintain heritage language. All participants had talked to their children in Korean since birth, taught them Hangul at home, read Korean children stories, kept close family communication with grandparents, and sent their children to a heritage language school when available. While some of the children received extra heritage language support from their other families and even their schools, while others did not. Furthermore, some parents felt confident in their children’s future heritage language maintenance; however, others were discouraged because they witnessed language shift (Korean to English) when their children started Kindergarten, with English eventually becoming dominant. Although most participants believed that the responsibility of teaching heritage language lies with the parents, all of them wished for more outside-the-home heritage language speaking opportunities as well as a larger Korean population in their community in order for their children to succeed maintaining the language. Overall, all participants valued heritage language maintenance very highly and wished their children to reach fair to native-like competency. The conclusion drawn from the findings is contained in Chapter 5, including recommendations for future research.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

Summary

The issue of heritage language maintenance has become a concern among immigrant families in the United States because children do not maintain their heritage language as the English language takes over (Guardado, 2002; Kim 2011; Lai Yu-Tung, 2009; Wong Fillmore, 1991, 2000). Korean immigrant families also encounter challenging situations where the use of their home language fades as their children begin schooling (Shin, 2005). With an increasing Korean-American population in the United States (Jeon, 2008), heritage language maintenance has become a significant matter to Korean immigrant families throughout the nation.

Although several studies have explored heritage language issues among Korean immigrant parents, such studies have been conducted predominantly on families living in large metropolitan areas (Jeon 2010; Kim 2011; Ro & Cheatham 2009; Sohn & Wang, 2006). Korean populations living in mid-sized or smaller U.S. cities and towns have received little attention. To this point, there is a dearth of literature related to Korean language maintenance in these areas. Therefore, the study aimed to explore Korean immigrants residing in mid-sized cities in West Michigan. The study explored this issue by examining the following research questions:

1. What are Korean immigrant parents’ attitudes towards heritage language maintenance for their children in West Michigan?
2. What efforts do Korean immigrant parents make in order to maintain their heritage language in West Michigan?
3. What issues and difficulties do Korean parents encounter in attempting to
maintain their heritage language in West Michigan?

To answer these questions, the study took a case study approach, utilizing qualitative research methods. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and observations were utilized to reach triangulation, which enhanced trustworthiness (Fraenkel et al., 2011; McKay, 2005). A total of three families were identified using the reputational sampling method. To ensure complete collection of data, the interviews and observations were video-recorded using a laptop computer and a small camcorder, respectively. Each recording session was coded in numbers. The data collected from video-recorded interviews, observations, and field notes were analyzed through deductive and inductive coding methods. Interview answers were placed into deductive categories: home language use, parental attitudes towards Korean language maintenance, parents’ efforts, and difficulties in Korean maintenance.

The recorded interview and observation data were read over several times in order to identify key ideas, topics, patterns, or themes within the research questions. Emerging categories were created from the collected data. The researcher also triangulated the findings to find common and divergent elements. Several tables were created to identify the most important information. Representative examples from the interview and observation data were transcribed and translated into English by the researcher to support major findings. Direct quotes from participants were extracted from the collected data to illustrate findings as well.

Finding from the study suggest that all participants felt very positive towards heritage language maintenance for their children. They stated that maintaining Korean is very important to them for multiple reasons. Almost all participants voiced the opinion
that heritage language must be maintained because it is the way to form and preserve cultural identity. The second most important reason for heritage language maintenance was to sustain meaningful family communication. All parents expressed hope for their children to be able to communicate with their immediate family members as well as extended family, such as grandparents and cousins. Lastly, parents answered that Korean maintenance would provide greater future opportunities as their children become adults. While parents’ emphasis on cultural identity preservation repeated, one parent placed a high value on Korean maintenance for her children to establish multilingualism.

All participants spoke only Korean to their children at home. However, two of the six parents used English words in their speech because their children understood them better when they code-switched. The participants’ children’s language use at home was in accordance with their parents’ predictions, which had been shared during the interview. While some children spoke only Korean at home to their parents and siblings, others spoke both languages: when they talked to their parents, they used more Korean, and when they talked to their siblings, they exclusively spoke English. In fact, during the interviews, parents of these children answered that their children’s first language switched to English after they completed Kindergarten, “wiping out” the Korean.

The study also revealed that participants put great efforts into helping their children maintain heritage language. All participants had talked to their children in Korean since birth, taught them Hangul at home, read Korean children stories, kept close family communication with grandparents, and sent their children to heritage language school when available. While some of the children received extra heritage language support from their extended families and even their schools, others did not. In addition,
some parents were confident and guaranteed that their children would continue maintaining heritage language. Others, however, were discouraged and faced potential heritage language loss because they witnessed the language shift (Korean to English) when their children started Kindergarten, which was trending towards becoming English dominant.

Although most participants believed that the responsibility of teaching heritage language lies with the parents, all of them wished that outside-the-home heritage language speaking opportunities were present. They also hoped for the Korean population to increase in their community in order for their children to have more exposure to Korean and opportunities to utilize it more outside of the home. Overall, all participants placed great value on heritage language maintenance and wished for their children to reach fair to native-like competency.

Conclusions

The goal of the study was to explore Korean immigrant parents’ attitudes towards heritage language maintenance in West Michigan cities. The first research question was answered with participants’ overwhelming preference for heritage language maintenance. They all answered that they want their children to maintain Korean. The second question was answered, revealing the different strategies that participants had utilized in order to help their children learn and maintain their heritage language. All participants talked to their children since birth and taught Korean while the children were at home before they started school. However, while some parents succeeded in keeping up with their strategies, others did not after their children started Kindergarten because the children’s English use increased at home, especially with their siblings. Lastly, all participants
voiced the opinion that heritage language speaking and learning opportunities outside the home are scarce in their communities. The third question was answered, but participants’ opinions were divided. While some participants stated that there are no particular difficulties in their children’s heritage language maintenance, others stated that it is extremely challenging. The latter parents reported that, although they speak Korean to their children at home, their children speak English more as they get older. As there are no heritage language opportunities in the community, including their children’s schools, the parents observed that their children are not required to study and maintain Korean outside the home. The two parents who reported no difficulties also added that their community setting should improve if more Korean immigrant children are to maintain Korean successfully. The examples of improvement included higher heritage language awareness at school by the teachers and school administrators as well as more supportive immigrant language policies at the local, state, and federal levels.

Discussion

Results of this study reflect both Krashen (1999) and Wong Fillmore’s (1991) findings: Immigrants consider heritage language very important for their children. About half of the participants agreed with Krashen’s (1999) notion that heritage language knowledge and usage can help English language learners acquire a second language better and excel in school when subjects are taught in their first language. Moreover, this study also supported Wong Fillmore’s (1991, 2000) argument, overwhelmingly indicating that strong support of heritage language maintenance is a major contributor in the development and preservation of cultural identity, family ties, and intra-cultural communication. These results are in accordance with the findings of other studies.

While negative attitudes towards heritage language maintenance were detected among the first-generation Korean immigrant parents in Jeon’s (2008) study, this study found only positive attitudes held by the first-generation Korean immigrant parents who live in Anderson, Burto, and Coast City, Michigan. It is important to note that the parents in Jeon’s study were elderly Korean immigrants, while parents in this study were younger, with ages ranging from the mid-30s to mid-40s. Future studies should be done to find out if there is any generational shift in parental perceptions between older and younger Korean immigrant parents. Furthermore, this study found that the parents held expanded views on heritage language for multilingualism, as was also seen in Guardado’s (2010) and Oriyama’s (2010) study. According to Oriyama, the purpose of heritage language was not only for keeping cultural identity but also for promoting multilingualism in order to raise each child as a “global citizen” (p. 87).

In regard to the efforts of parents in heritage language maintenance, this study revealed characteristics similar to those reported in Hashimoto and Lee (2011): all parents taught heritage language at home when their children were young. However, some participants in this study had given up teaching Korean literacy as their children started schooling because their children’s interest in heritage language decreased and their time at home was increasingly taken up doing school work. These parents wished that their children’s schools included heritage language in school activities, events, and/or curriculum so that their children would feel a stronger need to study heritage language at
home. Guardado (2002) supported this notion that the school environment can play an important role in minority language children’s language use and patterns (p. 344).

This study also investigated community support. In Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) as well as Ro and Cheatham’s (2009) studies, heritage language speaking and learning opportunities seemed abundant, as their research sites were large metropolitan cities where ethnic populations were high. There were multiple heritage resources available to parents, such as heritage language schools (including church-run programs), private tutors, cultural venues (ethnic community centers, shops, etc.), and local events.

This study, however, identified only a limited number of community opportunities available for the families: a small church-operated heritage language class and a Korean grocery store with Korean signage. The study also revealed a parent-perceived lack of heritage language awareness or support from their children’s schools. Several researchers have argued in the past that immigrant families in the United States are yet to receive positive heritage language support or awareness from mainstream schools and teachers (Kouritzin, 2000; McKay & Hornberger, 2006; Shibata, 2000). This study showed parents’ strong wishes for heritage language to be introduced, talked about, and taught at schools.

Although the majority of the participants in this study stated that they had experienced no difficulties in their children’s heritage language maintenance, their success stories must be examined in-depth by scrutinizing their situations and language contexts. There is no doubt that these parents made great efforts to speak their heritage language and teach it to their children at home. However, it was concluded that parental efforts were not the sole factor in their children’s success; a linguistic community played
an important role as well. It is important to remember that the oldest child among the participants’ children, who successfully maintained Korean, was given her own heritage language community comprised of extended family members, such as her native Korean grandmother and cousins, during her childhood and adolescence. Although community-level opportunities were scarce, she was able to speak and interact with native Koreans (both adults and peers) every day. The two children from the family that moved to West Michigan from the East Coast 2 years ago were also provided with a rich Korean speaking and learning environment in their first 3 years of life; that environment had a Korean population of more than 45,000.

While these two children are still young, and the younger child spends half of each day at home, it is unknown if they will continue to maintain Korean as they become older and the younger child begins all-day schooling. The non-maintaining family was the only one with multiple siblings in school, their ages close to each other, where the English exposure brought by each child was greater than that experienced by the other families. The lack of community-level heritage language opportunities mattered tremendously to this family, with the parents struggling to find cause and need for the children to continue learning Korean.

In this non-maintaining family, the middle child’s first language loss, which was reported by the mother, should be examined more closely as well. Whether a first language can be completely lost or re-gained is an important question in first language attrition research (Bardovi-Harlig & Stringer, 2010). Pallier et al. (2003) argued that first language can be “erased from the brain after long periods with no input” (as cited in Bardovi-Harlig & Stringer, 2010, p. 8). On the contrary, Footnick (2007) argued that re-
gaining lost language is possible although “the language is consciously inaccessible to the speaker” (as cited in Montrul, 2008, p. 205). Future longitudinal studies may provide in-depth details of the middle child’s first language attrition.

**Implications.** Hashimoto and Lee (2011) argued that there are insufficient heritage language studies of immigrant families who live in community settings with minimal ethnic populations. Taking place in this unique context, this study found that the home may be the only place where immigrant families can use their heritage language. This finding raises important implications for immigrant families, educators, and educational program/curriculum designers, who should recognize that heritage language maintenance is “not just an individual process, [but] it is a societal process that is influenced by multiple factors at the personal, educational, and societal levels” (Lee & Oxelson, 2006, p. 455). Nonetheless, the responsibility of heritage language maintenance continues to fall upon individuals and families (Wiley & Valdes, 2000), particularly for immigrant families residing in areas where heritage language resources or community support are insignificant or unavailable. As Wong Fillmore (2000) advised, educators should have an understanding of their immigrant students’ backgrounds as well as the challenges they face in an English-dominant environment. In addition, parents, educators, and community leaders should work together to create ways to raise heritage language awareness within the classroom and community.

**Recommendations**

Large ethnic communities are important for families who wish to maintain their heritage language because they possess resources and opportunities for learning and preserving the heritage language (Shin, 2005). In addition, heritage language classes are
more likely to be provided by community-based agencies. Thus, the availability of large ethnic communities has a great impact on immigrant families’ efforts and success in maintaining their heritage languages. As evidence, many studies conclude that a nurturing community, in addition to parental efforts, is always helpful in heritage language education (Guardado, 2002; Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Shibata, 2000; Valdes, 2005; Wang, 2009).

However, as the number of Asian immigrant families, including Korean, who reside in areas with limited access to heritage language opportunities (e.g., ethnic communities and networks) increases (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011), creative ways should be sought to overcome the dearth of community-level opportunities. Based on findings, this study provides recommendations for parents, educators, and community leaders. In addition, it offers recommendations for further research.

**Parents.** Immigrant parents should use their heritage language when speaking with their children at home and encourage them as much as they can. Parents can be discouraged when their children begin to use more English at home and, eventually, become dominant English users. However, it is important for parents to re-evaluate what matters for their children and what their expectations are for their children. If maintaining the heritage language is important, parents should try to promote both maintaining heritage language and developing English as an additional language. Parents should talk to each other and their children to express their thoughts and feelings towards heritage language maintenance. They should also learn ways to help and support their children. As seen in this study’s findings, when an immigrant child is supported at home with heritage language speaking family members, and at school with positive heritage language
learning opportunities, language maintenance stands a better chance of success. Thus, parents should consider expanding communication with their children’s teachers to seek ways of introducing and celebrating their heritage in class together.

**Educators.** Teachers should also try to learn about their students’ heritage and family and language situations. Efforts must be made to help students succeed in their new lives in the United States as well as at school, even though communication can be overwhelming for both immigrant parents and teachers due to language and cultural barriers. Immigrant parents’ English skills can vary: some may have stronger speaking skills, while others may read or write better. Educators must find ways to get to know and communicate with immigrant parents, even if they ultimately have to use an interpreter.

Educators should also understand that immigrant children could experience psychological embarrassment towards their heritage language and avoid using it because they do not want to be perceived as “different” from the mainstream society (Jeon, 2010; Oriyama, 2010; Wong Fillmore, 1991, 2003). Educators should help immigrant children be positive towards speaking and learning heritage language by showing interest in their heritage and encouraging them to speak their heritage language.

Furthermore, educators should learn students’ backgrounds and cultures in order to help them succeed in linguistic and academic learning (Giambo & Szecsi, 2005; Pang, 2010, Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Pang (2010) explained that cultural differences can present difficulties in the classroom for English Language Learners (ELLs). By respecting home languages and cultures, teachers can help ELLs feel at ease in their English-dominant classrooms. Giambo and Szecsi (2005) also supported this notion that “a solid understanding of the interconnectedness of language and culture is fundamental
for teachers of ELLs” (p. 108). While learning immigrant children’s cultures, educators should consider viewing the idea of cultures as “icebergs” (Helmer & Eddy, 2003, p. 26). According to Helmer and Eddy (2003), the idea of culture resembles an iceberg in that people only focus on the visible tip of iceberg while so much more is hidden under water. The visible aspects of culture are food, music, holiday customs, and so on. In fact, many cultural events and programs, which are typically offered outside the home, focus on cultural aspects at surface-level (e.g., International Food Festival).

Sharing surface-level cultural aspects may not be enough to reach a deep understanding of a culture (Helmer & Eddy, 2003). Efforts should go beyond the visible tip of the cultural iceberg. Educators will find increased success when they reach sub-surface cultural aspects of their students’ lives. These include eye behavior, contextual conversation patterns, facial expressions, approaches to problem-solving, status designations based on age, sex, class, occupation, and kinship, ideals of childrearing, conception of justice, and patterns of handing emotions (Hamayan, 2006, as cited in Hamayan, et al., 2007). Celebrating heritage in regular classroom activities may enable immigrant children to feel proud of their heritage. In addition, it may provide an opportunity for LOTE speakers to share their native culture with their peers in English dominant classrooms. Teacher-parent communication that was mentioned earlier may come in handy in this task because parents can provide meaningful information regarding their heritage and culture to teachers. Lastly, Pang (2010) suggests utilizing lessons immigrant children can relate to and that recognize their native cultures. Such lessons can result in increased self-confident and self-esteem as well as provide classmates with a greater understanding of their peers’ lives and backgrounds.
**Community leaders.**

Immigrants’ heritage is an important asset to the community, the society, and the nation. Community leaders should also consider including various heritage celebration opportunities or events by closely working with community members. The findings of this study suggest that the Korean immigrant parents responded very positively towards community-level opportunities to share their heritage language, culture, and food if opportunities are offered. As the immigrant children and descendants become future community leaders and members, it is important that they experience positive heritage participation in their community while in their formative years.

**Recommendations for further research.** This study possesses several limitations. First, the small number of participants limits the findings of the study in that it cannot be generalized to the larger population. In addition, the data collection was conducted over a month, which may be problematic because the limited number of observations may not have fully detected the families’ normal behaviors or interactions. Future studies should include larger participant sampling and utilize a longitudinal design that would allow the researcher to observe variables and detect changes over time. Future studies should also include various types of Korean families (first- and second-generation Korean immigrants, multi-racial Korean descendants, and adopted Koreans) to understand their unique heritage language experiences. Children’s perceptions should also be studied to provide a wider angle on the understanding of immigrant families’ heritage language situations. Lastly, while this study claims its significance from its context, which is that these families live in an area where the Korean population and community support are low, the study did not account for an in-depth investigation of outside-the-home heritage
language situations to verify the level and quality of heritage language support within the participants’ communities. Future studies should include an investigation of community-level heritage language opportunities.
References


considerations for English language learners: Delivering a continuum of services.

Philadelphia, PA: Caslon.


Appendix A. HRRC Approved Letter

DATE: February 7, 2013

TO: Duckyoung Booker, Med TESOL
FROM: Grand Valley State University Human Research Review Committee
STUDY TITLE: [378541-3] Parents’ Attitude Toward their Children’s Heritage Language maintenance: The Korean Immigrants’ Case in the Midwest,
REFERENCE #: 13-050-H
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
EFFECTIVE DATE: February 7, 2013
REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of materials for this research study. The Human Research Review Committee has reviewed your submission and approved your research plan application under Exempt review, category 1-2. This exemption status does not require the use of a signed consent form but you have elected to use one anyway and that is your discretion. Approval is based on no greater than minimal risk to research participants and in this study that can be minimized by allowing any respondent to refuse to answer any questions, and to agree to suspend or terminate videotaping if requested by the participants. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please insert the following sentence into your information/consent documents as appropriate. All project materials produced for participants or the public must contain this information.

This EXEMPT research protocol has been approved by the Human Research Review Committee at Grand Valley State University. File No. 13-050-H.

Exempt protocols do not require formal renewal. However, we do confirm on an annual basis that the research continues to meet the criteria for exemption and that there have been no significant changes in activity or key personnel. By February 7, 2014, please complete the brief Continuing Review Application Form, available in your IRBNet Project Designer, or from our website, www.gvsu.edu/hrcc, and submit this form via IRBNet.

Once study enrollment and data analysis have been concluded, please complete the Closed Protocol Reporting Form on our website. and upload a saved copy to IRBNet.

This project remains subject to the research ethics standards of HRRC policies and procedures pertaining to exempt studies.

Please note the following in order to comply with federal regulations and HRRC policy:

1. Any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the Change in Protocol forms for this procedure. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in key personnel, study location, participant selection process, etc.
2. All UNEXPECTED PROBLEMS and SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS to participants or other parties affected by the research must be reported to this office within two days of the event occurrence. Please use the UP/SAE Report form.

3. All instances of non-compliance or complaints regarding this study must be reported to this office in a timely manner. There are no specific forms for this report type.

If you have any questions, please contact the HRRC Office, Monday through Thursday, at (616) 331-3197 or hrcc@gvsu.edu. The office observes all university holidays, and does not process applications during exam week or between academic terms. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

cc:
Appendix B. Informed Consent

STUDY TITLE: Parents’ Attitudes toward Their Children’s Heritage Language Maintenance: The Case of Korean Immigrant Parents in West Michigan

Researcher: Duckyoung Becker

Research Chairman: Dr. Nagnon Diarrassouba

Purpose of this Study: You and your immediate family (including your spouse, children, and any other family members who live in your house) are invited to participate in a research study by a graduate student at Grand Valley State University TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) for her Master Thesis. The purpose of this research is to learn about Korean parents’ attitude towards their children’s heritage language maintenance. In detail, the researcher will investigate the following questions:

1. How parents feel about their children maintaining Korean language
2. What difficulties or issues parents may have in their efforts to maintain Korean language for their children.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated and provide insight into the heritage language situation of Korean immigrant families in West Michigan.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate, you will have an interview with the researcher and allow the researcher to visit your home for home observation twice after the interview is completed.

Interview: Upon your sign off on the consent form, the researcher will contact you to schedule an interview. The interview questions are focused on your views about Korean language maintenance for your children. For example, the researcher will ask you how you think about your children maintaining Korean as their heritage language. You can choose a place and time for the interview. The interview will take about an hour or longer. The interview questions will be provided in English and Korean. Parents cannot participate in an interview together.

Observation: After the interview is completed, the researcher will contact you to schedule a visit to your home for home observation. The purpose of the observation is for the researcher to observe you and your family’s language interaction. The observation schedule can be negotiated with the researcher; however, it must be scheduled within two weeks after the interview. In addition, it must be at a time when at least one parent is home with the child(ren). During the home visit, the researcher will participate in your family interactions and events.

* The researcher may request an informative follow-up interview with you after the home observation if there is a need for clarification.

All interviews and observations will be video-recorded. The researcher may take notes during the interview and observation.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: This study will be conducted for two months.
**BENEFITS:** We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study.

**RISK:** The risks and discomfort associated with participation in this study are no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. You have the right to refusing to answer particular questions.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your names, address, contact information and other direct personal identifiers in your consent form will not be mentioned in any publication or dissemination of the research data and/or results by the researcher. The recorded interview and observation, as well as, field notes will be kept confidential and used for the given research and may be used for other academic conferences for educational purpose only upon your consent (provided as an option below). Your consent form and the recorded interview and observation will be stored in a locked location in the researcher’s home and will not be disclosed to third parties. Each participant will be assigned a made-up name. The researcher will keep participants’ information as confidential as possible. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

**SUBJECT’S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Questions:** If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Research Chair, Dr. Nagnon Diarrassouba, at Grand Valley State University. His number is (616) 331-6611.

**Independent Contact:** If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the Grand Valley State University Human Research Review Committee to speak to someone at (616)-331-5000. You can also write to the Grand Valley State University Human Research Review. The address is 301C Devos Center, 401 Fulton Street, Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

**Appointment Contact:** If you need to change your appointment, please contact Duckyoung Becker at (616)-283-6223.

I give consent to meet for a follow-up interview if the researcher requests it for clarification.

Please initial: ___Yes ___No

I give consent for my children to be observed and video-recorded by the researcher at my home during home observations.

Please initial: ___Yes ___No

(Optional)

I give consent for all recorded interview and observation data resulting from this study to be used for other academic conferences.

Please initial: ___Yes ___No
SIGNATURE: I confirm that the purpose of the research, the study procedures, the possible risks and discomforts, and benefits have been explained to me. All questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the study.

_________________________________  _______________________
Signature of Person Giving Consent  Date
Appendix C. Interview Questions

PARTICIPANT CODE: A-1* (*Interview will be coded).

Demographic Information

1. What is your age?
   a. 18 – 24 years old  b. 25-34 years old  c. 35-44 years old
   d. 45-54 years old  e. 55-64 years old  f. 65-74 years old
   g. 75 years or older

2. What is your marital status?

3. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

4. What do you do? (employment status)

5. Where were you born?

6. When did you come to the United States?

7. What are the areas/cities that you have lived in the US?
   (Location, Residence Period, Age)

8. How many child(ren) do you have?

9. Where were your child(ren) born?

10. Please tell me the areas/cities that your child(ren) have lived in the US including resident period.

11. What schools do your child(ren) attend?

12. What grade are your child(ren)?

13. Tell me about your town.

14. How long are you planning to live in West Michigan?

Language Information

15. What is your first language?

16. What is your proficiency in your first language (in reading, writing, speaking, and listening)?

17. Do you speak any other languages? If yes, please explain in detail including your proficiency in each language. (Nativelike-Very well-Well-Fair-Poor)

18. What language(s) do you normally speak at home? (Ask for example)
   - to your spouse:
   - to your child(ren):
   - and to other family members:

19. What are your child(ren)’s first language?
20. Do they speak any other languages? If yes, please explain in detail including their proficiency in each language.

21. What language(s) do your child(ren) normally speak at home?
   - to you:
   - to your spouse:
   - and to other family members:

22. Was there any change in their first language use after they started schooling?

Parental Attitudes

23. Do you encourage your child(ren) to speak Korean at home?

24. How is your child(ren) maintaining home language important to you? Please rate in the following manner: Extremely important-important-somewhat important-not important at all.
   Please tell me why you think so.

25. What benefits do you see for your child in maintaining Korean?

26. What proficiency do you wish for your child(ren) to achieve in Korean?

27. Do you think if first language can help second language learning?

28. Let’s say your child is an English language learner attending American school. At this school, subjects are taught also in your child’s first language. In this case, do you think your child can academically benefit (do better) from the class taught in his/her first/home language?

29. How do you think your child(ren) feel about maintaining Korean?

Endeavors to maintain Korean Wishes/Opportunities to learn Korean

30. (If participant say their child(ren) speak Korean) How did your child(ren) learn Korean?

31. How are your child(ren) maintaining Korean (in speaking, listening, reading, writing)?

32. What are other Korean maintaining activities that your children do at home to maintain Korean?

33. Are there any opportunities available in the community for maintaining Korean?

34. Which ones do your family or child(ren) participate?

Difficulties associated with Korean maintenance

35. Has your child(ren)’s school provided any heritage language related experiences?

36. Do you feel that it is difficult for your children to maintain Korean? Please explain.

37. Are there anything else you want to share about Korean language maintenance in West Michigan?