

## Korea's "Model Minority": A Case Study of an American-Korean Bilingual Student's Challenges Learning English in South Korea

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In contemporary South Korean society, there is a strong emphasis on cultural homogeneity and, simultaneously, the development of English proficiency as a human resource. Since language is inextricably linked to identity, bilingual learners from English speaking countries may feel pressure to conform to Korean cultural and linguistic norms, leading to negative identity practices that discourage the use of English. Like the "model minority" stereotype which has been assigned to Asian learners in the United States, the pervasive belief that learners from English speaking countries are highly proficient in English may have adverse effects on students who do not meet the conceptualized standard. To explore educational problems associated with the English-Korean bilingual learner, a case study was conducted on an American-Korean elementary school student. Results revealed that the learner avoided speaking English in public, learning English in formal contexts, and talking about American ethnic traditions, which has resulted in significant deficiencies in English pronunciation and literacy. The avoidance of explicit instruction appears to have precluded the development of cognitive and metacognitive strategies useful in overcoming language deficiencies in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Recommendations for educational reform have been suggested.

*Keywords:* diversity, Korea, English education, multicultural education, EFL, educational policy

### **Introduction**

While there has been a longstanding view that South Korea is a culturally homogenous nation, modern trends of immigration have forced Korean citizens to rethink such claims (Choi, 2010; Kim, 2009; Kong, Yoon, & Yu, 2010; Moon, 2010; Lee, 2003; Lee, 2008). Beginning in the late 1970's and early 1980's, rapid economic expansion, coupled with a decline in birth rate, brought about a labor shortage that prompted large-scale immigration for the "difficult, dirty, and dangerous" jobs (Kong, Yoon, & Yu, 2010). Within this same period, difficulty finding wives for South

Korean men in rural areas stimulated the growth of "marriage brokers" who further fueled the rise of immigration. In 1990, only 1.2% of all marriages included a foreign partner. By 2004, such marriage had increased to 11.4%. Since that period, marriage to foreign immigrants has lingered steadily around 10%, greatly increasing the diversity of modern day Korean society (Kim, Yang, & Torneo, 2012).

Due to the emergent economic and social conditions of the last few decades, South Korea has rapidly become a very diverse nation. Schools, being a microcosm of society, also reflect this diversity. In 2008, the number of diverse learners in Korean public schools

reached 18, 778, which was triple that reported three years earlier (Kim & Kim, 2012; MEST, 2007). In response to the growing diversity, the Korean Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development introduced “a comprehensive set of measures to help children of interracial marriages and migrant parents residing in Korea receive better education” (MEST, 2006). While this new policy outlined several positive measures for the education of multicultural learners, such as teacher training in multicultural education and the removal of culturally exclusionist ideas from Korean textbooks, its emphasis on assimilating multicultural groups was clearly identifiable. Concerning this multicultural policy, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEST) declared (MEST, 2006, p. 1):

The initiative comes as an effort to make an accurate assessment of a newly emerging “educationally isolated group” of mixed-blood children, and to help incorporate them into the mainstream of Korean society by means of various educational aids based on multi-cultural appreciation.

As this statement suggests, the policy toward diverse learners is an assimilationist one, focused upon “incorporating” multicultural learners, rather than transforming the fabric of society to appreciate multicultural and linguistic differences. Underlying ethnocentric views are also exposed by references to “mixed-blood children”, which serve to stigmatize diverse learners by labeling them as impure and different. As cited by Kim & Kim (2012), the sense of pride placed on being “pure-blooded” in Korean society has often been used to promote ethnocentrism and discrimination. Discrimination has also been promulgated through the implementation of policy, which further stigmatizes diverse learners through the application of stereotypical categorizations and compulsory separation from Korean peers in after-school programs (Grant & Ham, 2013).

### **Diversity, Language Learning, and Governmental Policies**

According to major policy initiatives enacted for multicultural learners in 2005, educational resources are allocated to support both diversity and the cultivation of diverse languages (MEST, 2006, p. 3). While these initiatives appear to support the enhancement of cultural and linguistic diversity, actual educational reforms reveal an underlying desire to lessen cultural disparity through assimilation and compartmentalization of diverse groups. This desire is exemplified by the segregation of multicultural learners from their peers in after-school programs, where they are taught to leave behind their native culture through study of Korean language and customs (Grant & Ham, 2013). The desire is further exemplified by school curricula which continue to assimilate and alienate through the perpetuation of an ethnocentric paradigm (Cho & Yoon, 2010; Hong, 2010; Kang, 2010; Kim & Kim, 2012; Nam, 2008).

In essence, the failure to embrace diversity in South Korean schools is a manifestation of the predominant view that South Koreans are one people with a common history and culture (Choi, 2010; Moon, 2010). While there are official changes in policy toward diverse learners and language learning, pervasive attitudes concerning the singularity of Korean culture preclude their implementation. As pointed out by Watson (2010), “state-led multiculturalism is driven by a sense of ‘having to be’ rather than ‘wanting to be’ multicultural” (p. 338). The policies and their implementation are a reactionary effort designed to deal with widespread immigration, rather than a sincere effort to cultivate multicultural pluralism. This view is supported by Kim (2011), who found that governmental efforts to support diversity serve to replicate, rather than eliminate, hierarchical relationships that subjugate diverse people. The examination of recent government allocations for the support of multicultural families also confirms this view. Under the “Educational Welfare Promotion Plan” of 2008, for example, 49.48 billion won was devoted to supporting assimilation through promoting Korean language and communication skills of diverse learners and their parents. Only 26.42 billion won, in contrast, was devoted to the expansion of multicultural education and the

development of an understanding of multiculturalism (MEST, 2008).

While there is a strong ethos in Korean society discouraging the integration of diverse languages and cultural viewpoints, there is also a strong drive to promote the learning of English as a human resource (Park, 2009). Referred to as “English Fever”, the drive to learn English in South Korea has stimulated an English-only movement in both EFL and content courses, compelling the utilization of English without L1 support in both public school and higher educational settings (Joe & Lee, 2013; Shin, 2007). According to the “Educational Welfare Promotion Plan” set forth by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology on December 17, 2008, public school English instruction was to be enhanced through providing native speaking English instructors for classes, intensive camps, and virtual lectures (MEST, 2008). As suggested by Shin (2007), such emphasis on instruction reveals a predominant South Korean view that native English speakers are superior teachers, rather than a desire to provide multicultural experiences or diverse perspectives in the classroom.

Although diverse learners from non-native English speaking contexts may not perceive a clash between the ideals of cultural homogeneity and the development of English as a human resource, those who come from native English speaking contexts may encounter conceptual conflicts. Since language is inextricably linked to identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Gibson, 2004; Lee, 2002), bilingual learners from English speaking countries may feel pressure to conform to Korean cultural and linguistic norms, leading to negative identity practices that discourage the use of English. Like the “model minority” stereotype which has been assigned to Asian learners in the United States (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Chou & Feagin, 2008; Crystal, 1989; Lee, 1994; Osajima, 2005; Suzuki, 2002), the pervasive belief that learners from English speaking countries are highly proficient in English can have adverse effects on students who do not meet the conceptualized standard. Negative identity practices, coupled with inadequate exposure to input, may heavily influence the English language proficiency of

English-Korean bilingual students in a South Korean context. Few studies, however, have been conducted to investigate the attitudes, experiences, and English proficiency of the “model minority”. Thus, more research is needed to identify the challenges of learning English for diverse learners from native English speaking contexts, as well as the special needs of these learners for the development of both cultural identity and English proficiency.

### Research Questions

A qualitative case study was conducted so that potential issues concerning multicultural and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education for American-Korean learners, as well as other bilingual learners from native English contexts, could be identified. This study aimed to examine not only potential problems related to various aspects of English proficiency, but the cultural, linguistic, and cognitive factors that holistically influence the manifestation of these problems. The following questions were proposed:

1. How have cultural values and policies of the dominant culture in South Korea influenced an American-Korean bilingual learner’s attitudes and behaviors toward learning English?
  - A. How does the child feel about learning English? Have these attitudes been shaped by interactions with teachers or peers?
  - B. Does the child exhibit negative/positive identity practices that influence English education? What are they?
2. How have cultural values and policies impacted English education of the learner?
  - A. What are some of the language learning difficulties exhibited by the learner?
  - B. How do these language learning difficulties compare to those of a native Korean peer? How can differences between these two learners be explained?
3. What steps should be taken to help the American-Korean bilingual child socially adjust and academically excel in South Korean schools?

## Method

### Participants

One American-Korean bilingual child was purposively selected for this case study. Both parents and teachers indicated that the learner was reluctant to learn or use English, but was highly proficient and literate in the Korean language. The learner had traveled to the United States from South Korea when he was two and 1/2 years old and had stayed there until the age of 5. At that time, he moved with his parents back to South Korea. He attended elementary school in Korea and was in the fifth grade at the time of this study (11 years and 2 months old). He has learned English in Korean elementary school classes only, from the second grade until the fifth grade. His father, the author of this study, is an American citizen and a native speaker of English. His mother is a Korean citizen and a native speaker of Korean. The father speaks primarily English at home, while the mother speaks primarily Korean.

A native Korean participant was also selected to provide means of comparison for the bilingual learner's language proficiency. Like the American-Korean learner, this child was in the fifth grade at the time of this study (11 years and 5 months old). He had also learned English in public school elementary classes from the second to the fifth grade. The child was purposively chosen because of his prototypical upbringing in South Korea. Both of his parents are native Korean and, according to interviews, no one in the family regularly speaks English in the home. Moreover, the learner has never traveled abroad. Like other peers his age, he has learned English through attending private academies. From the ages of 8 to 10, he attended a private English academy every day for one hour. Following this experience, he has had one hour of private tutoring in English each week with a native English instructor.

### Instruments

Three instruments were needed to assess research question two, which aimed to evaluate English language proficiency of the participants. To assess listening and writing, *Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words* (Form A) was used

(Clay, 2013). According to this assessment, the student hears a small story consisting of one or two sentences. The child is then prompted to write down the story word-by-word, which examines the child's ability to hear, understand, and phonetically represent sounds in writing.

To assess speaking, the *Oral Language Assessment* (2008) was used. Via this assessment, three sets of statements which increase in difficulty (Set 1 – Statements 1-5; Set 2 – Statements 6-10; Set 3 – Statements 11-15), are spoken to the student. The student must then repeat these sentences verbatim to get a score. This assessment receptively measures the ability to understand and correctly articulate the vocabulary and grammatical features included within the sentences spoken by the rater.

To assess reading, *Qualitative Reading Inventory-5* (QRI-5) word lists were utilized (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). According to these lists, which range from preschool (Pre-Primer 1, 2, and 3) to high school, a learner's reading level can be determined through examining the ability to correctly read words of increasing difficulty. An accuracy percentage of 90-100% reveals that a learner can independently read at the level specified by a list, while scores of 70-85% reveal a need for instructional intervention. Scores below 70% expose frustration that may preclude reading at the specified level.

### Procedure

To assess question one, which was created to investigate the participant's culturally-based attitudes and behaviors about learning English, informal interviews were conducted with both the bilingual child and his mother (Table A1). An open-ended format was utilized so that various issues related to English education could be explored in detail. The mother and the bilingual learner were asked about the child's attitudes towards English, reasons for these attitudes, considerations of identity, and negative/positive identity practices regarding English learning. All effort was put forth by the researcher, the father of the participant, to maintain a non-judgmental, comfortable atmosphere so that all aspects of learner development could be discussed. The results of this inquiry were then transcribed and analyzed.

To assess research question two, which was designed to evaluate the child's English skills, three forms of evaluation were given to assess listening, speaking, reading and writing: the test of *Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words* (Form A) (Clay, 2013); the *Oral Language Assessment* (2008); and word lists from the *Qualitative Reading Inventory-5* (QRI-5) (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). For purposes of comparison, the same three assessments of English proficiency were given to the native Korean participant. After results were qualitatively compared, they were triangulated through quantitative methods such as Spearman's rank correlation. It was thought that disparate cultural, educational, and socioeconomic influences on English proficiency may be revealed through such comparison, yielding insight into fundamental differences between native Korean and American-Korean bilingual linguistic development.

Following all interviews and assessments, issues concerning English language learning of the American-Korean child were assessed and summarized. Appropriate pedagogical interventions were then developed according to the objective of research question three. It was hoped that such study could identify effective solutions to obstacles faced by bilingual learners from native English speaking contexts.

## Results and Discussion

### Learner Attitudes and Negative Identity Practices

Results of the study revealed several issues that may preclude the bilingual student's ability to learn English. One such issue is a reluctance to speak about ethnic background. The learner stated, for example, that he didn't like to talk about the United States in his classes, declaring that such conversation was "distracting". Concerning this lack of interest in talking about the United States, his father felt that it was caused by unwillingness to accept American identity. This may explain an incident in the first grade of elementary school in which the learner had refused to walk on the same side of the street as his American father, fearing ridicule from his native Korean peers.

While the bilingual participant had little to say about English classes or learning in Korea, he did say that he was reluctant to study English in the past. Concerning the child's reluctance to learn English or associate himself with American culture, his mother commented, "I think the problem is his mind. He has a different background in Korea. So he feel that is uncomfortable so that's why he doesn't wanna show differently. That's why he didn't want to talk English, you know? He doesn't want to study." As this statement suggests, the learner had a strong desire to fit in, leading to negative identity practices which discourage the use of English and acceptance of American heritage. Recently, this learner has also asked his mother to stop calling him by his English name, because his friends tend to ridicule him. To this learner, both English and characteristics of his American diversity appear to have become a source of shame and, therefore, have been avoided.

According to the mother, there were two main issues that have compelled the child to avoid English. The first problem was pressure from the teacher to speak English. The mother said, "Actually you know I heard his teacher ask him to speak some English in front of friends but he didn't. That happened several times." A second issue was that children were treating him differently at school. The mother said, for example, "He hate to hear, 'are you American or Korean?' 'Is your father American?' He hate that." She went on to say that "First and second grade when he was very young...actually the friends didn't mean to [do] that but they are curious to him and they asked about are you Korean or American? But he thought that was picking." Because of the consistent reminders of differences from teachers and native speaking Korean peers, it appears that the learner has refused to speak English or accept American culture. Both parents recognized that the learner has strongly asserted his Korean identity from the first year of elementary school onward. He has also refused to read English books or learn English with his native Korean friends.

While problems with avoidance of ethnic identity and the English language persist, the mother stated that the child is now beginning to accept his dual identity and citizenship. She said that, "Now he has changed a little bit but at first

he thought he was Korean. But these days he is grow up and he has got his identity for himself and he knows about both countries thing and now he start to accept his difference. He just open his mind to learn English and speak English.” As revealed in this statement, the mother now feels that the learner is becoming more comfortable with friends and, therefore, does not strongly perceive the stigma of being different.

### American-Korean Learner English Proficiency

Assessment of the bilingual learner’s English proficiency revealed several issues that may serve as challenges in the EFL classroom. One of the most significant concerns involved literacy. Examination using the QRI-5 word lists revealed reading frustration (incorrect reading of vocabulary over 30%) even at early preschool levels (Table 1). The learner has only a rudimentary understanding of the most basic written words of the English language.

Table 1

#### Results of the QRI-5 Word Lists for the American-Korean Learner

Word Lists	Words Read Automatically	Words Read Phonetically	Total Percentage of Words Read
Pre-Primer 1	13/17 = 76%	2/17 = 12%	15/17 = 88%
Pre-Primer 2/3	10/20 = 59%	3/20 = 15%	13/20 = 65% *
Primer	10/20 = 59%	0/20 = 0%	10/20 = 59% *
First	3/20 = 15%	1/20 = 5%	4/20 = 20% *

\*Denotes a level of frustration in reading (less than 70% correct)

As revealed in Table 1, the learner has a very limited ability to read lexically (which is signified by the low automatic reading percentages) in English. Literacy is restricted to the most basic words in English which are included in the Pre-Primer word list, such as *can*, *me*, *the*, *do*, and *she*. The learner even had problems reading the word *was*, which was phonetically interpreted by the learner to be *wæs*. The inability to automatically read 85% of the vocabulary at a first grade level further exemplified the learner’s weak lexical understanding of words.

In addition to a weak lexical understanding of words, the learner appears to lack a firm understanding of phonics. This failure to understand the “alphabet principle” is exemplified by the limited ability to sound out words included in the QRI-5 word lists (Table 1). Phonetically read words (determined by a one second pause in reading) ranged from 0 to 50%, not high enough to suggest the learner has a firm understanding of word-sound relationships. The problem with phonetic understanding of words is further exemplified through examination of Form A from *Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words* (Clay, 2013).

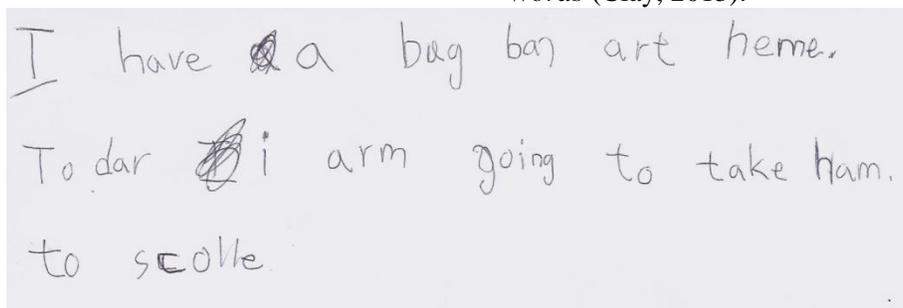


Figure 1. Results of *Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words* for the American-Korean bilingual participant (“I have a big dog at home. Today, I am going to take him to school.”).

As in the QRI-5 word lists, the learner appears to recognize and spell some highly frequent words such as *I*, *have*, *going*, *a*, and *to* (Figure 1). The learner, however, has several difficulties phonetically representing the words and sounds heard in Form A. Most of the consonants are used correctly, with the exception of *b* and *r*. The learner incorrectly uses an inverted *b*, instead of *d* for the word *dog*. The learner also incorrectly inserts the *r* sound after the short vowel *æ* in *at* and *am*. Overall, the assessment reveals tremendous confusion with the phonetic representation of vowels. The words *big*, *dog*, *home*, *school*, and *him* are all represented by incorrect phonetic transcriptions, despite an ability to correctly articulate these sounds in oral discourse (Figure 1). Review of the assessment reveals significant problems understanding not only phonetic transcriptions of individual sounds, but the phonetic transcription of groups of sounds (e.g., *-ay*, *-ool*, *am*).

Oral language assessment also revealed weaknesses for the bilingual learner. Only three of the fifteen statements spoken by the rater were correctly repeated by the learner, indicating a pre-emergent reader level. According to the *Oral Language Assessment*, this means that activities to develop speaking skills should be the focal point of instruction. The learner should be encouraged to draw on background knowledge and converse with fluent language users (Crevola & Vineis, 2004).

The bird            built a nest            high in the tree  
 Də b...bɜːd    bɪld a nɛ... nes ... ovə ðə tri

As illustrated by this example, the learner has difficulty correctly pronouncing *ð* and consonant clusters such as *rd*, *lt*, and *st*. The pauses preceding the consonant clusters *rd* and *st* suggest that these sounds influence articulation rate. Interestingly, pronunciation errors closely parallel problems reported late in the process of English L1 development

In sum, results of the multiple English assessments used within this study reveal several weaknesses which should be addressed within EFL instruction to help the learner. Contrary to the prevalent stereotype that all American-Korean learners are highly proficient in English, many English-Korean bilingual learners may lack fundamental language skills, necessitating the implementation of pedagogical support strategies.

### **Differences between the American-Korean Bilingual Learner and a Native Korean Peer**

Comparison of the native Korean EFL learner's assessments to those of the American-Korean participant yielded further insight into the language learning process of the bilingual learner. Overall, scores and performance on the *Oral Language Assessment* were very similar. The bilingual learner correctly repeated three statements, while the native Korean learner repeated two statements correctly. Both learners exhibited errors with grammatical features such as expletives, prepositions, relative clauses and the past tense. While oral performance was similar in many ways, differences in pronunciation and fluency were evident from qualitative analysis. Articulation of the English-Korean bilingual learner was labored and appeared to be constrained by some consonants (e.g., *ð*, *θ*, *r*, *l*) and consonant clusters (e.g., *br*, *cl*, *pl*, *st*, *nd*, *dr*) as in the following example:

(Bauman-Waengler, 2009). Although the native Korean learner had problems correctly pronouncing a wider variety of consonants, consonant clusters, and vowels, he quickly used Korean phonological "equivalents" to maintain fluency. The articulation of the native Korean learner appeared to be more highly constrained by the length and grammatical complexity of the utterance (Figure 2).

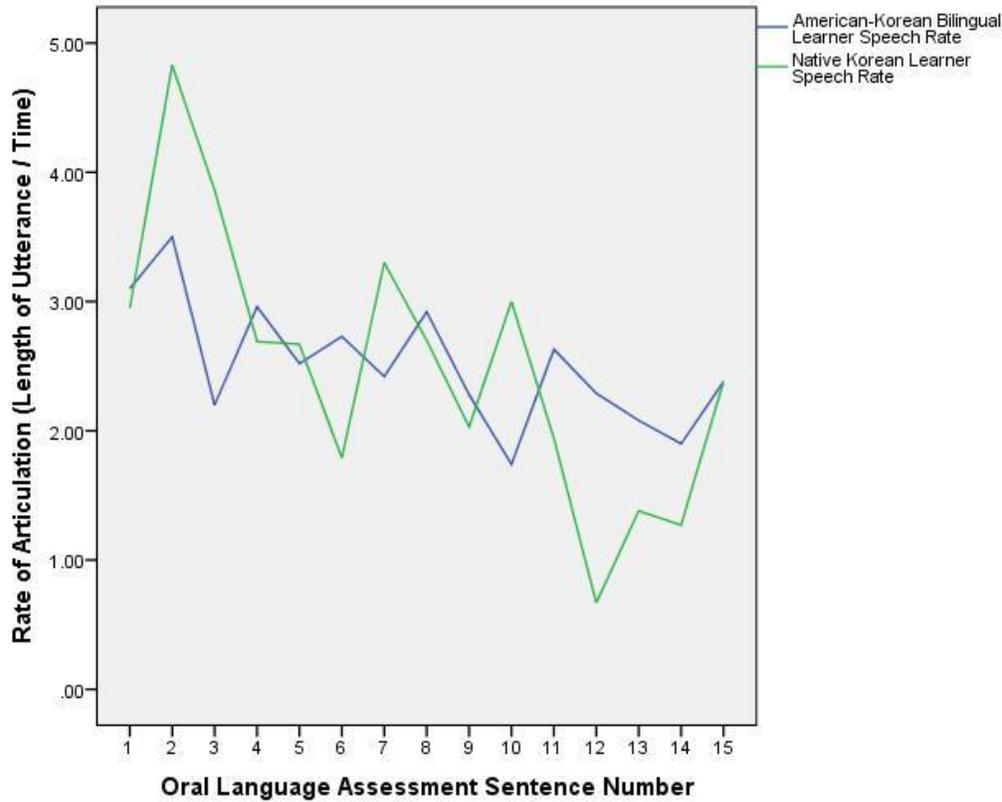


Figure 2. Rate of articulation for each statement in the *Oral Language Assessment*.

As revealed in Figure 2, the articulation rate of the native Korean learner (number of syllables divided by time) was rapid for the shorter, more simplistic statements in Set 1 (numbers 1 through 5), but decreased as the length of statements increased. The bilingual learner, in contrast, showed more consistent problems with articulation throughout the assessment that appear to have been caused by problems with the pronunciation of consonant clusters. The causes of articulation problems are further supported by Spearman rank correlations, which indicate that the number of consonant clusters in an utterance was the most highly significant predictor of decreased articulation rate for the American-Korean learner ( $r_s = -.82$ ;  $p = .000$ ), while statement length (in syllables) was the best predictor of slower articulation

rates of the native Korean learner ( $r_s = -.69$ ;  $p = .004$ ) (Table A2).

Although articulation of the American-Korean learner was consistently slow throughout the oral assessment, he was able to maintain utterance lengths much more similar to those of the rater. In fact, Spearman correlations suggest a highly significant link between length of the rater's utterances and those of the American-Korean learner ( $r_s = .96$ ;  $p = .000$ ), while the rater's link to the utterances of the native Korean learner was very low ( $r_s = .23$ ;  $p = .39$ ). The similarity of the bilingual learner's utterance length to that of the rater may suggest a greater sensitivity to prosodic features that facilitate top-down processes of oral language production. This view is supported through analysis of the intonation of the two participants, shown in Figures 3 and 4.

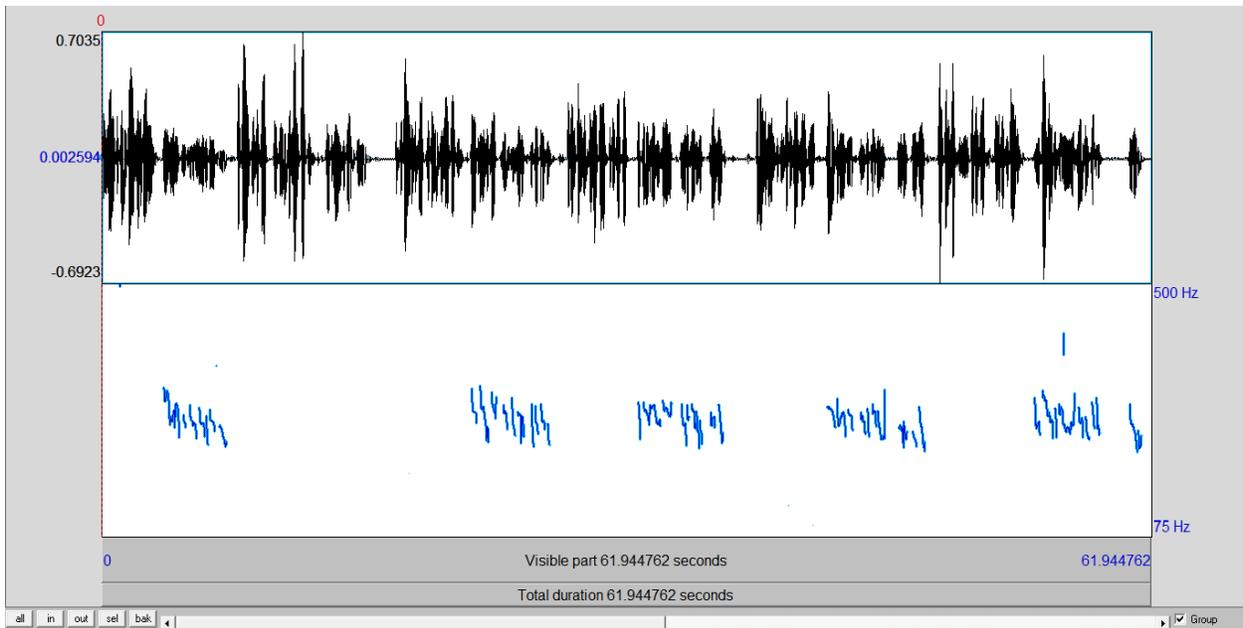


Figure 3. American-Korean bilingual learner's intonation for Set 3 of the *Oral Language Assessment* (Interviewer intonation removed).

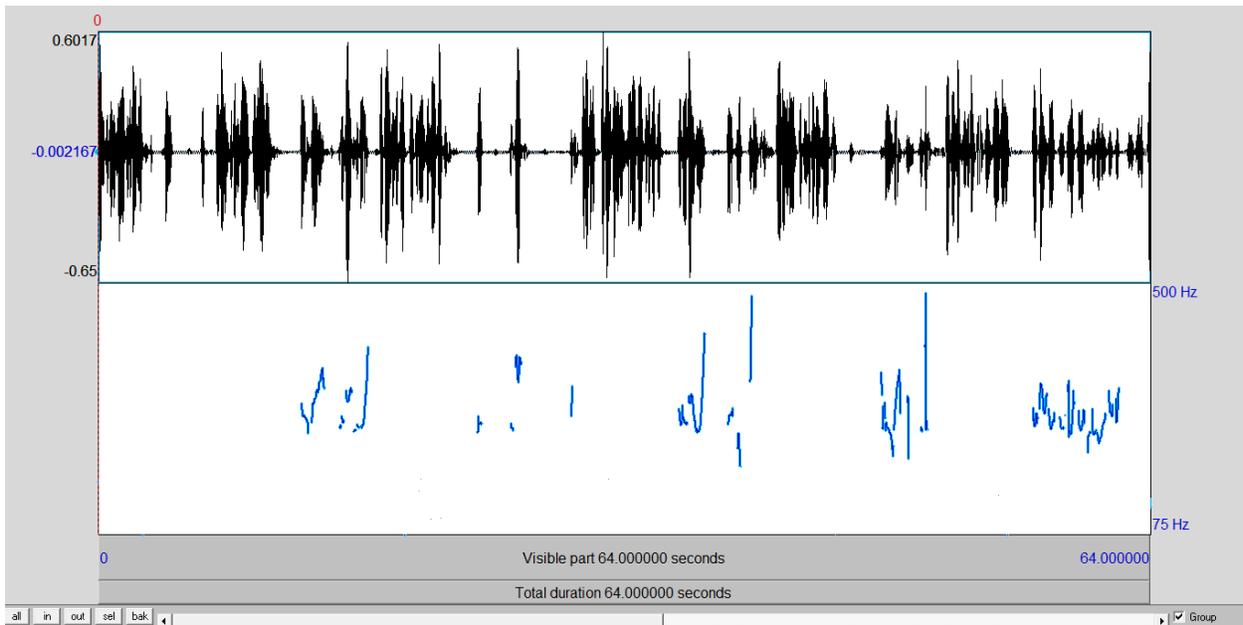


Figure 4. Native Korean learner's intonation for Set 3 of the *Oral Language Assessment* (Interviewer intonation removed).

The depictions of intonation in Figures 3 and 4 reveal suprasegmental differences between the two learners. Intonation of the American-Korean bilingual learner is more clearly defined and less variable, ranging from 230 to 300 Hz. The native Korean learner, in contrast, has intonation that is less clearly defined and more

exaggerated, ranging more dramatically from 230 to 470 Hz. This data suggests that the native Korean learner lacks cognitive control of top-down, suprasegmental processes such as prosody.

Although evaluation of oral discourse suggests the English-Korean bilingual learner

may have some advantages on a suprasegmental level, comparison of performance on literacy tasks reveals the opposite case. Analysis of the QRI-5 and *Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words* (Form A) suggested that the native Korean learner, unlike his American-Korean counterpart, was highly proficient in identifying words through utilizing both lexical and phonetic knowledge (Table A3). The high percentages of correctly read words in these lists (all at or above 90%) would suggest that this learner is an independent and highly functional reader from the Pre-Primer 1 to the First grade levels. The native Korean learner also perfectly dictated the statements included in Form A of *Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words*, revealing the ability to write and understand the relationships between sounds, individual letters, and groups of letters.

Comparison of literacy levels suggests that the American-Korean learner lacks some bottom-up cognitive capabilities, such as awareness of basic phonics and lexical elements, which appear to inhibit reading, writing, and the identification of rudimentary sound-letter relationships. While this learner may have a slight oral advantage at a suprasegmental level, he also exhibits problems with bottom-up aspects of oral development, such as the pronunciation of consonants and consonant clusters. The inability to effectively process language via bottom-up cognitive strategies may be a reflection of the negative identity practices employed by this learner. Such practices have led to the avoidance of EFL environments where both explicit, bottom-up learning strategies and metacognitive awareness may be cultivated to overcome problems with pronunciation and literacy. Negative identity practices appear to have severely inhibited the learner's oral and written language development.

### **Assisting the American-Korean Learner**

Results of this study suggest that sociological pressures to conform have precluded an American-Korean learner's ability to develop English proficiency in South Korea. Research of this learner also reveals several potential educational issues that may influence

bilingual learners from native English contexts. These issues include:

1. Social pressures to conform.
2. The development of negative identity practices which distance the learner from his/her ethnic culture and the English language.
3. Ridicule from peers concerning cultural, linguistic, and/or physical differences.
4. Pressure from teachers to demonstrate English proficiency, which may be perceived as a validation of difference by the bilingual learner.
5. An assumption by the teacher that bilingual learners from English contexts are already highly proficient in English and do not need assistance, preventing the provision of appropriate instructional support.
6. Poor English literacy skills, due to avoidance of EFL instruction.
7. Problems with articulation and pronunciation, which is based on limited exposure to native English input and the avoidance of EFL instruction.
8. A lack of cognitive or metacognitive strategies which can be utilized to overcome English language learning difficulties. As with other issues of language proficiency, this may be caused by the avoidance of formal EFL instructional contexts, where such strategies may be explicitly taught.

To help bilingual learners with such issues, an all-encompassing approach of reform leading from policy to practice must be implemented. At the level of policy, the profusion of ethnocentric ideals, assimilationist strategies, and stereotypical language such as, "mixed-blood" must be removed. Such policies do not provide the flexibility or foresight necessary to promote

the education of learners with various cultural, socioeconomic, and cognitive differences. As exemplified by the American-Korean participant of this study, discouraging diverse views or behaviors can lead to negative identity practices that hinder the educational process. Following the establishment of new policies that encourage, rather than discourage, multicultural pluralism, effective reform may occur at the school level.

After the implementation of new policies which provide support for diversity, it is crucial that educators learn about their own biases, and

the negative impact that their stereotypes may have on the bilingual learner. One means of encouraging reflection and discussion of stereotypical views is through the examination of case studies. Case studies explore relevant issues of multicultural education, but do not directly confront the teachers themselves, reducing the risk they will feel attacked and refuse to participate. To cultivate awareness of English-Korean bilingual learners, the following case studies in Table 2 may be used.

Table 2  
*Teacher Case Studies for Reflection and Discussion*

Case Studies for Teachers	
Situation 1	One student is from a diverse family. His father is from Australia and his mother is from Korea. The teacher knows the learner must be really good at English, but every time he asks the learner to speak in English he refuses and looks upset. Why do you think the learner behaves this way? Could English proficiency be influencing this problem? Could the learner feel uncomfortable for some reason? Why?
Situation 2	An American-Korean learner comes into a teacher's classroom. The other students keep calling him American but he doesn't seem to like that. The teacher understands that he isn't really Korean, since Korea has only one real culture. He feels bad for the student but doesn't know what to do. Why is the learner getting upset? What could be done to help this learner? Do you agree with the teacher's opinion about the learner? Does Korea really have only one culture?
Situation 3	An English-Korean bilingual learner seems to be having trouble reading. His teacher just thinks he is pretending to get attention. He thinks a student who gets that much exposure to English at home cannot possibly have reading problems. Do you agree with the teacher's opinions? What actions may be taken to help the learner?
Situation 4	A Canadian-Korean bilingual learner seems reluctant to discuss Canada or talk about his Canadian mother. Why might this be the case? What could be done to make this learner more comfortable talking about his ethnic background?

The last, and final step, is for the teacher to reform the classroom. Educators in the class must help support diverse learners through social reforms targeting not only the diverse learner, but his peers. For the English-Korean bilingual learner in South Korea, the following objectives must be implemented to improve classroom education and cultivate the use of English:

#### **Tips for Helping the English-Korean Bilingual Learner**

1. Help the learner take pride in his/her ethnic identity through naturally infusing cultural elements in the curriculum and daily activities. Make it a regular part of daily activities, not just an "add on".
2. Help the learner adopt positive identity strategies that encourage the natural, not forced, use of the bilingual language. Encourage all learners, not just the bilingual learner, to learn the ethnic language.
3. Challenge stereotypes of native Korean learners that portray Korea as just one culture.

4. Help native Korean students understand that diversity (e.g., social, physical, cultural, gender-based) is a positive and ubiquitous part of Korean society.
5. Rather than eliciting “novel” utterances about English ability or aspects of their lifestyle that are different from others, the teacher should emphasize similarities between all learners.
6. Help students adopt a new view of what it means to be “Korean”.
7. Help native Korean learners understand the fallacy of the monocultural Korean stereotype in the contemporary age.
8. Assess learners’ English proficiency for language deficiencies that may be caused by avoiding formal English classes or learning experiences.
9. For bilingual students who have avoided English learning in formal classes, promote metacognitive awareness of explicit learning strategies that are crucial in an EFL context.
10. Emphasize bottom-up, explicit processes of literacy and language development. Help learners with pronunciation problems and ensure that they understand phonics. Use computer-assisted language learning to facilitate the correction of these issues.

For multicultural education to be truly effective in Korean society, crucial reforms must be enacted which holistically transform schools from the level of policy to that of practice. These reforms cannot target merely diverse learners. In order to be effective, they must also target the general population, which may adhere to beliefs that Korea is a monocultural society.

### **Conclusion**

Comprehensive analysis of the American-Korean learner reveals that several issues inhibit him from effectively learning English. The participant exhibits problems with pronunciation, fluency (due to problems with articulation), and literacy. While seemingly unrelated issues, they all appear to be the physical manifestation of a more significant sociological issue. In an effort to conform to the prevalent, ethnocentric view that Korea is only one culture, the child appears to have become “Hyper-Koreanized”, strongly

rejecting all characteristics that are different from the Korean cultural norm. The rejection of this participant’s American identity has led to negative identity practices such as the refusal to learn English in explicit classroom contexts, the refusal to speak English in public, and the refusal to read and write in English.

Fundamentally, the English-Korean participant has relied on implicit strategies to learn English based upon communication at home. As pointed out by Munoz (2010), such learning requires massive amounts of input over a long period of time to be successful, which is unrealistic in an EFL context. Although the learner was able to implicitly learn top-down, suprasegmental processes through limited exposure to natural English contexts, negative identity practices have prevented the learning of bottom-up language skills associated with pronunciation and literacy. To assist English-Korean bilingual learners with similar problems, EFL support with special emphasis on explicit learning strategies for pronunciation, literacy, and grammar should be provided.

The issues explored within this study reveal a broader problem with multicultural education in Korea. To effectively assist diverse learners with unique cultural, socioeconomic, and physical characteristics, Korean education must be reformed via a top-down, all-encompassing approach spanning policy to practice. First, ethnocentric policies with the primary aim to assimilate must be changed to provide both equity and flexibility for diverse learners. After the reform of policy, educators must then be trained to recognize their own biases and stereotypical views so that they can truly understand students’ needs. Finally, multicultural education must target not only diverse learners, but their Korean peers. While such reforms have the potential to significantly improve Korean education for diverse learners, the highly prevalent belief that Korea is a monocultural society must ultimately change before such education can be effective.

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## Appendix A

Table A1

*Survey of Attitudes, Identity Practices, and English Education*

Learner	Parents
1. What do you think about learning English? Is it fun?	1. What is your child's attitude towards learning English?
2. Do you have any problems learning English? What are they?	2. Does he have any problems learning English? What are they? What do you think is causing these problems?
3. Do you have any problems with your teachers or classmates? What are they?	3. Does your child have any problems with his teachers or Korean classmates?
4. Do you like learning English with your classmates? Why or why not?	4. What does he complain about at school?
5. Do you like talking about America with your friends?	5. What does your child do, or not do, to fit in with his peers?

Table A2

*Spearman Rank Correlations of Consonant Clusters and Number of Syllables (Length) to the Rate of Articulation.*

		Consonant Clusters	# of Syllables
English-Korean Bilingual Learner	Correlation Coefficient	-.820**	-.391
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.149
	N	15	15
Native Korean Learner	Correlation Coefficient	-.443	-.698**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.098	.004
	N	15	15

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table A3

*Results of the QRI-5 Word Lists for the Native Korean Learner*

Word Lists	Words Read Automatically	Words Read Phonetically	Total Percentage of Words Read
Pre-Primer 1	17/17 = 100%	0/0 = 0%	17/17 = 100%
Pre-Primer 2/3	19/20 = 95%	0/0 = 0%	19/20 = 95%
Primer	18/20 = 90%	2/20 = 10%	20/20 = 100%
First	15/20 = 75%	3/20 = 15%	18/20 = 90%