

Maintaining Heritage Language

Perspectives of Korean Parents

Clara Lee Brown

Introduction

There is a clear and explicit expectation for immigrants in the United States to learn the English language as part of their schooling, and there is too often a tacit understanding that immigrants are to lose their heritage language (HL) at the same time. This has been quite apparent through Proposition 227 of 1998 in California and Proposition 203 of 2003 in Arizona. Such legislation has specifically banned all bilingual programs in the public schools of those states.

The persistent loss of HL has been an historical phenomenon in the U.S., something both expected and accepted under the notion of a “melting pot” of many cultures, with all fading away to become “American.” To many the loss of HL is something particularly to be desired for the greater good within this symbolic melting of diverse cultures (Krashen, 1998).

Immigrant parents are, thus, keenly aware that if their children are unable to speak English, those children cannot climb the American social ladder. Since it is likely that they immigrated to the U.S. in part to better their children’s future, these parents in most cases will value English over their native language at home (Oh & Fuligini, 2007; Suarez, 2002). Krashen (1998) succinctly sums up the pressure and the need that parents feel: “The drive to acquire English is powerful and many immigrant parents acquire English” (p. 38).

The parents who take this societal message wholeheartedly will contribute directly to their children’s loss of HL by themselves abandoning HL at home, while other parents may do little if anything to preserve HL at home, thus sanctioning

their children’s exclusive English use. Many will deliberately choose to speak English with their children.

Suarez (2002) reports from a Spanish HL study that some parents spoke English with their children 90% of time, using their HL a mere 10% of the time. Immigrant parents frequently tell their children that learning English is the most important task for their academic and career success (Jeon, 2008). Many immigrant parents think that speaking English at home will help their children learn English faster (Hinton, 1999; Kouritzin, 2000; Suarez, 2002). Immigrant parents’ self-imposed hegemony of English over HL thus reinforces the implicit societal message for their children. In this sense, immigrant parents function as agents who suppress HL use and promote English. Ultimately, HL loses ground even in the home (Jeon, 2008).

In an absence of any strong parental commitment to maintain HL, children of immigrant parents are faced with great pressure to learn English (Ro & Cheatham, 2009). The power that English holds over the second generation immigrant is at work full force in the public schools where bilingual education is more and more rare and HL is clearly discouraged. At school, immigrant children receive an unmistakable message that only English is acceptable.

These children inevitably come to know that their native language is not desired and is something from which they must detach themselves (Moses, 2000). Being able to speak English at school is more than a matter of survival. For the second generation immigrant children, a feeling of belonging at school will only come with learning English and simultaneously losing their HL.

If immigrant parents do not rise up to protect their children from this total English dominance, if they give in to the tacit societal message against their HL, maintaining HL will be a lost cause, and

their HL will be lost totally and swallowed up by an English-only U.S. (Cavallaro, 2005; Fishman, 1991).

Practices of HL Parents

Although it is a combination of many factors that impacts the maintenance or loss of HL, such as personal motivation and determination (Krashen, 1998), ethnic pride (Brown, 2003, 2009), availability of heritage language schools in communities (Shibata, 2000), and availability of HL at school (Cho & Krashen, 1998), studies have identified parental support and involvement as perhaps the most important factor related to successful maintenance of HL (Arriagada, 2005; Oh & Fuligini, 2007; Suarez, 2002, 2007). This is in large part because HL starts at home.

Parents are the first HL contact for second generation immigrant children and the main source of HL for those children. Studies have reported that the communication at home between children and parents in these families is frequently if not usually conducted in the HL (Han, 2003). Children almost exclusively communicate in HL with their parents, while in contrast mostly speaking English with their friends. Thus parents alone seem to greatly influence maintenance of HL (Oh & Fuligini, 2007; Park & Sarkar, 2007).

The literature also has identified ways in which parents involve themselves in maintaining HL (Arriagada, 2005; Kouritzin, 2000). For instance, parents regulate their children’s speech by declaring a “only mother tongue at home” rule, or by not responding to their children when they use English (Krashen, 1998). These parents also often send their children to Sunday HL school (Shibata, 2000; Shin, 2010). Shibata’s (2000) study shows that when there was a low visibility of a HL community in a small town, parents’ first choice in helping their children maintain HL was to establish a weekend school. Shi-

Clara Lee Brown is an associate professor in the Department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education of the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences, at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

bata concluded that such weekend schools were the “best way” to support HL because “there is a limit to parents’ efforts regarding ability, patience, time, and resources in the long term” in personally helping their children maintain HL (p. 339).

In a different study, Jeon (2008) reports that some children do not develop HL because their parents are busy working and are never home to speak with the children. It also has been observed that some parents send their children to the HL country to visit as a way to assure that the children do not lose HL (Krashen, 1998).

It has also been found that the specific way parents reinforce their views about HL seems to play an important role in maintaining HL. Han (2003), discussing Korean parents, notes that children whose parents imparted pride about the HL had maintained it as a result. Another question raised is if parents are regarded as one of the most critical agents for helping their children maintain HL, why is it that HL is usually maintained by only the first child of the family? It is a well documented phenomenon that most older siblings who communicate in HL have younger siblings who do not know how to speak it well (Portes & Hao, 1998, 2004). This suggests that parental involvement in HL maintenance is not as straightforward as it might seem.

One study shows that Chinese bilingual parents who emphasized bilingual proficiency and acknowledged the importance of using and maintaining HL during interviews then contradicted themselves by speaking to their children in English at home (Lao, 2004). Thus, their choice of language at home was not exclusively Chinese. The study findings indicated that, while insisting on the importance of maintaining HL, some parents do not necessarily act upon their belief by diligently monitoring the heritage language use at home (Krashen, 1998).

Challenges Faced by Parents

Most second-generation immigrant children remain monolingual in their HL until they enter kindergarten (Portes & Hao, 1998, 2004). Once they start school, a language shift takes place (Draper & Hicks, 2000). Since in school they are immersed in an English-only environment, these children start losing HL rapidly (Cho & Krashen, 1998). At this point immigrant parents face an uphill battle to maintain the use of HL by their children (Jeon, 2008).

If the HL is one of the low-incidence languages, it is even more difficult to maintain (Ro & Cheatham, 2009; Shibata, 2000) because there are few if any opportunities for the immigrant children from these HL groups to receive comprehensible language input outside of their home environment (Tse, 2001). With so many factors working against bilingual parents, it is certain that these immigrant parents must wage an enduring fight to maintain the HL for their children.

As the literature suggests, parental involvement has been identified as one of the critical factors in maintaining HL, yet the issue is not all that clear cut. Despite strong consensus about parents’ critical role, the degree or intensity of their involvement in maintaining HL has not been well understood and findings related to it have been rather one-dimensional, simply reaffirming that parental efforts and involvement are essential in maintaining HL.

The study reported here, therefore, set out to explore some broader aspects of parent involvement in HL, addressing the questions:

1. What do parents believe about their HL?
2. How do they carry out these beliefs considering the clearly identified HL loss pattern among the second and third children in HL families?

Methodology

Participants

This study is part of a larger research project that has investigated HL use among Korean college-age students who successfully maintained their HL. Since this study sought to focus on how parental perspective and its reinforcement impact HL maintenance, college students who had successfully maintained their HL were identified and selected. Once the selection of the students was finalized, their parents were contacted to find out whether they were willing to participate in the study.

Recruitment was conducted through Korean churches, which are considered to be the epicenter of the Korean community (You, 2005). The selection criteria for the students was that both of their parents were Korean, that the students were either born in the U.S. or arrived here before the age of three, and that the students were fluent in Korean orally.

With the help of Korean churches, three female and four male college students who met the first two criteria were

contacted. As a native speaker of Korean, I then conducted a screening interview in Korean to determine the participants’ proficiency level in that language. Two female and two male participants were ultimately selected for the study based on their fluency in Korean. All four had excellent Korean proficiency regarding tone, vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatics. In addition, their oral Korean did not have an American accent. Table 1 presents the student participants’ demographics (pseudonyms are used in all cases).

Finally, the selected students were requested to ask their parents whether they were willing to participate in the study prior to my telephone contact with them. At least one parent of each selected student agreed to be interviewed. The parents were interviewed only once, while the students were interviewed twice, once before and once after my interviews with their parents. Each interview lasted for about an hour. The parent interviews were conducted in Korean.

Procedures

A total of 12 semi-structured interviews of the parents and students were recorded and transcribed, and interview data from the parents were transcribed in Korean first, and then translated into English. The translation was examined for its accuracy by a colleague who is bilingual in Korean and English.

Data from parent interviews were examined first to identify categories for coding. The finalized categories were “beliefs/perspectives on HL” and “child rearing practices.” Once these categories were set, the data were read several times through an iterative process that moved back and forth to determine emerging themes regarding the participating parents’ thoughts on maintaining HL.

Four initial themes were identified: (1) the parents seemed to equate HL with an ethnic identity; (2) the parents were fully aware of the benefits of maintaining the HL, thus supporting HL maintenance; (3) sending their children to Korean HL school had been the parents’ primary strategy to maintain the HL because they acknowledged as parents their limited role as a HL reinforcer at home; and (4) what the parents said they did at home to help their children maintain HL was different from what the students reported had happened at home when they were children.

Based on the themes that emerged from data analyses of the parent interviews, the students’ interview data were

analyzed against the identified codes to capture consistency and/or discrepancy from what the parent participants had said they believed and practiced at home regarding HL use and what the students reported had happened in the home.

Findings

The participating parents articulated a strong desire for their children to develop and maintain HL, and the collective views of the parents were definitely echoed in their children's beliefs about keeping HL. However, the interviews with the students revealed that the parents did not always seem to put their beliefs into practice. The discrepancies were evident between an expressed desire by the parents to preserve the HL and their actual child-rearing practices at home.

As the research proceeded, the four themes evolved further. They are reported and described below in this form:

- ◆ HL is the essence of who we are;
- ◆ Changing attitudes based on pragmatics of HL;
- ◆ Personal strategies: Sending children to Korean HL schools;
- ◆ Discrepancies in parents' words and actions.

These themes, based on the study findings, reveal the key discrepancies between the words and actions of the parents and their children. To demonstrate these discrepancies, several verbatim statements from the interviews with parents and students will be contrasted.

HL is the Essence of Who We Are

The most prevalent rationale for keeping HL expressed by the participating parents was consistent with the research literature, since the parents affirmed the belief that HL is the essence of who they are, given the context that they are immigrants living in the U.S. Being able to speak Korean helps defines who they are as individuals, yet these parents provided further dimensions to the relationship between HL and identity. They equated HL with maintaining culture. That is, it is the HL that connects immigrant identity and cultural heritage. It is the HL that provides a sense of identity to immigrants and their children, even though that ethnic identity may not be complete with language alone. It must be accompanied by other aspects of the cultural heritage.

As shown in the excerpt below, to Nina's father maintaining HL means keeping one's heritage as expressed in "keeping roots" and this means knowing one's culture, especially as a guide to appropriate behavior. Nina's father stated that children should not speak to elders in English because they know that the adults' English is not as good as theirs. Disrespecting elders is considered to be most offensive act possible in Korean culture. Thus, it is essential for children to respect older people and the elderly. Nina's father thus reasoned that one's identity, which is defined by HL, cannot be legitimized without maintaining cultural heritage.

NINA'S FATHER: We need to talk about our roots as immigrants. Keeping Korean means keeping our roots. I was determined to raise my children to be Korean. I didn't want my children to be seen as Koreans who don't know how to speak

Korean or act appropriately as Korean... I've seen [Korean] kids speak English to elders on purpose. That is so disrespectful. It is not right. I will not allow my children to do that.

The same thread was found in an excerpt from Brinna's mother, which linked HL to heritage by illustrating the way children greet elders in Korean culture.

BRINNA'S MOTHER: Being able to speak Korean means you have to know Korean culture. For instance, when she doesn't greet the guests correctly, I don't necessarily scold her in front of the guests, but I would tell her to greet them and put my hand on her top of head and press her head down until she bows deeply. I make sure that she bows deeply to elders.

In addition to the belief that HL is the essence of ethnic identity and heritage, Brinna's mother spoke of HL functioning as a bond that that keeps the family intact. She based this on observations she made about other Korean families.

BRINNA'S MOTHER: It is very important for our family to speak Korean because a unified family, a harmonious family, should speak in one language. That language of our home is Korean. I have seen other families that couldn't communicate in Korean. I think that is terrible. Those parents did not teach their children why they have to learn Korean. They were like, why did they need to know Korean? They live in America. But look at them now. They end up not being able to talk to each other well in Korean.

As shown above, Brinna's mother seems to believe that, without the HL, family is fractured and disconnected. In order for a family to stay as one, there needs to be a shared language within the family. She indicates that HL functions as the medium of communication between parents and children. HL is, thus, a necessary conduit between parents and children in order to maintain meaningful family relationship in an adopted country (Mah, 2005; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009).

Brinna's mother also implied that a family breaks down when parents and children cannot communicate through the HL. It has been well documented in the literature that losing HL causes an emotional disconnection among intergenerational family members, not to mention the loss of cultural heritage (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). In addition, children coming from close family relationships are more likely to maintain HL (Park & Sarkar, 2007; Tannenbaum & Howei, 2002).

Table 1
Summary of the Student Participants

Name	Derek	Gene	Nina	Brinna
Age	20	19	19	19
Birth place	U.S.	Korea, moved when 1.5 months old	Korea, moved when 1.5 months old	U.S.
Younger siblings	1 younger sister and 1 younger brother	1 younger brother	1 younger brother	None
Siblings' Korean fluency	Non-communicative	No fluency	Minimal understanding	N/A
Korean language school attendance	Did not attend	Attended a month	2nd grade to 9th grade	2nd grade to 6th grade
Parent interview	Mother	Mother	Father	Mother
Length of parents' residence in U.S.	24 years	19 years	19 years	20 years

Changing Attitudes Based on Pragmatics of HL

With contemporary society and the modern economy being highly globalized when compared to several decades ago, perhaps more recent and younger immigrant parents have a better understanding of the advantages associated with HL. Pragmatic reasons for maintaining HL were mentioned by all four parents, as they clearly linked the benefits of keeping HL to broadened opportunities for employment, thus indicating that they were well informed about the role HL could play in employment and commerce. The following excerpts from the four parent indicate that how these parents expressed the benefits of maintaining HL in pragmatic terms.

DEREK'S MOTHER: If they know one more language, they can get a better job.

BRINNA'S MOTHER: She can get a better job because she is bilingual in Korean.

GENE'S MOTHER: It is more advantageous to speak Korean because it is an addition to speaking English.

NINA'S FATHER: I hope she has better job opportunities because she speaks both English and Korean.

The literature also indicates that HL parents in the contemporary era are believed to be savvy about the practicality of maintaining HL (Lao, 2004; Park & Sarkar, 2007). Below, Brinna's mother discusses a shift in views toward HL maintenance among parents who recently immigrated to the U.S. According to her, parents nowadays recognize the importance of maintaining HL and she demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the value of HL by pointing out erroneous views held by immigrant parents in earlier days.

BRINNA'S MOTHER: The second generation whose parents came to the U.S. more than 30 years ago does not speak Korean at all. I don't think that they understood anything about the importance of keeping Korean. They had thought learning English was the most important matter to them. But now these parents regret because they cannot talk to their own children. However, people who immigrated not too long ago understand that it is better for their children to speak Korean. We don't have to worry about our children not learning English, because it is impossible for them not to learn English because they live in America. But HL on the other hand, they will forget it if we don't teach.

As discussed under the first theme, these parents clearly stated that maintaining HL is the right thing to do, but being

informed of the benefits of keeping HL through its tangible rewards might well have been the incentive behind their children maintaining HL. Had these parents not been savvy about the potential benefits related to HL, they might have done the same that the earlier immigrant parents did, and emphasize English only. Perhaps the reason why older Korean immigrants raised their children to be English monolingual was because they were uninformed about the pragmatic benefits of HL.

It appears from these interviews that parents who are well-informed about bilingualism are more likely to emphasize the importance of HL and in these cases encourage their children to maintain the Korean language. However, are they the kinds of parents that they claimed to be? What they stated they believe during the interview might not necessarily be reflected in their actions.

Parental Strategies: Sending Children to Korean HL Schools

During the parent interviews, it was obvious that the participating parents firmly believed in the usefulness of Korean HL schools as a means of helping their children maintain the Korean language. It was also indicated that this belief was based on the fact that their children were resisting HL. The participating parents also reported that once their children started K-12 schooling, the children would no longer use the HL, and from that point forward maintenance of HL was an uphill battle for the parents.

BRINNA'S MOTHER: Once she [Brinna] started kindergarten, she started forgetting Korean very quickly. And there were times she refused to speak in Korean.

DEREK'S MOTHER: Once they went to school, the English use was dramatically increased. They used more and more of English. So that was a challenge.

It is obvious that Korean HL schools served as an important community resource to the parents, especially since they were having difficulty regulating the language of communication at home. To make matters worse, the children's schooling caused a decrease of HL use at home. They therefore sent their children to Korean HL schools in hopes that such schools could do what they could not do at home. Knowing that they were not being effective in reinforcing HL use at home, Korean HL schools became the practical solution for these parents.

Brinna, Nina, and Gene, who all

attended Korean HL schools, reported that they protested and resisted going. According to Brinna's mother, it was a tug of war every weekend, and she had to force Brinna to attend. Brinna's statement reflects her mother's accounts.

BRINNA: They sent me to Korean HL school every Saturday morning. I wasn't allowed to miss. But I hated it because attending Korean school meant more work and less play time. I had to do pages of homework every week for Korean school. you know, it's just twice the homework, cause they give you homework in Korean school, another day of school, and it just sucked.

NINA: When I was learning Korean, I kind of didn't want to, because it was aggravating. It's like learning Spanish [at this moment], of course it was really hard and I was like, well, I'm in America, why do I need to learn Korean?

GENE: I thought it was the most waste of my time although for a month [sic]. She (the teacher) would always make me write things, and if I'd get it wrong, she would make me write it like 50 times. I hated it.

Perhaps more importantly, none of the students felt that Korean HL schools had made a difference in their HL maintenance. Based on what both the parents and students stated, it is fair to say that parents could not do the job of policing HL with their children, since the children were increasingly resistant to speaking and learning Korean.

Korean HL schools were therefore an easy alternative that the parents could count on in spite of the fact that their children hated those schools. While the parents might have agreed that the Korean HL schools were not effective, to stop sending their children would have been an admission of failure in HL maintenance. For these parents, the HL schools were a solution to the dilemma they faced, and the burden of teaching and monitoring Korean was turned over to those institutions.

Discrepancies in Parents' Words and Actions

During the interviews, all of the parents stated that they spoke to their children in Korean at home. The student participants also indicated that Korean was spoken at home. Perhaps, however, what they meant was that Korean was available at home, while this availability of the HL did not specify the degree of frequency nor the quality of the talk that occurred in Korean between the parents and children.

The interviews with the students revealed that daily verbal interactions between parents and children conducted in Korean were quite minimal in frequency and, contrary to what the parents reported, the students stated that English was used in the home more often than not:

GENE: Growing up, I spoke English at home. I'd use English to my mom and my brother and Korean to my dad. But I would not see my dad that much. I just don't talk to my parents that much. I don't know why, I don't have much to say to them. But when I fight with my mom, I definitely use English. That way, I get back to her.

GENE: When I'm hungry or something, I might say something in Korean to my mom.

NINA: Korean was used for some casual conversation at home.

DEREK: I talk to my parents if I need to. I do speak to my mom more than I do to my dad, but nothing serious. I talk to my friends more.

When a conversation took place in Korean, the students felt it did not seem very meaningful. They indicated, as shown in the excerpts above, that they did not talk to their parents beyond basic communication. The common use of Korean at home seemed limited to daily routines involving only short, insignificant verbal exchanges that resulted in somewhat mundane language varieties. This is echoed by Brinna's accounts about Korean use at home:

BRINNA: Like 'go eat', 'go wash your hands', 'take out the trash', things like that were all said in Korean.

Implied in the students' interviews is that most of the communication at home was carried out in English. However, according to Brinna's mother, she did not allow her children to speak English at all at home and added, "When Brinna spoke to me in English, I didn't respond to her, so she had to speak Korean with me." This is a clear discrepancy between what the parents said they did to maintain HL and what the children described happening in their homes.

This reveals a complex question for the parents. Believing in something does not necessarily mean that they followed through on what they believed. Or they might have tried in the beginning but were not able to sustain their efforts to diligently provide HL at home. Nina mentioned during the interviews that her parents increased the use of English as they grew

older, "When I was little, 80-to-90% of the conversation at home was in Korean, but it became more like 50% Korean and 50% English as I grew older."

This remark strongly suggests that the parents themselves gradually reduced the use of HL and switched to English, perhaps because they felt that they were in fact capable of speaking in English. This might be the key reason why the student participants' younger siblings' seldom spoke Korean. The interviews revealed that in the cases of Derek, Gene, and Nina's younger siblings, the use of Korean ranged from dismal to none.

It can be argued that the student participants in this study maintained HL not because of their parents' determination or choice, but because of a lack of English proficiency at the beginning of their immigrated life. Of interest in Nina's statement above is that there was not a time when Korean was used 100% of the time at home. This may be the reason why HL parents chose to send their children to Sunday HL schools, since they might well have felt that they could not maintain the HL at home, definitely feeling that they needed outside help. For these reasons Korean HL schools remain as one of the most popular choices for HL parents.

Discussion

As reported in the literature, parental involvement has been regarded as one of the most important factors influencing maintenance of HL. However, that supposition has rarely been scrutinized. From this study, it can be concluded that parental involvement in HL does not seem as straightforward as has been previously reported. A comparison of the parent interviews with those of their children revealed that what the parents said they did for their children's HL and what their children said actually happened at home were often quite different.

Consequently, the discrepancy between the parents' expressed beliefs about their efforts to maintain HL and their actual behavior in the home merits close examination. All of the student participants reported that none of their younger siblings spoke Korean well, with the exception of Brinna who does not have younger siblings. If the parents were consistently monitoring their children's HL use, or if the parents had steadfastly maintained their efforts to ensure HL proficiency, as they believed they did, then why is it that HL is on the brink of being lost among the younger children in these families?

Several interpretations are possible. First, as the parents' English improved, they might well have increased their own English usage at home. At the earlier stages of immigration, parents are not typically proficient in English. The home environment at that point is also typically devoid of any substantial English usage, and thus would instead be characterized by the heavy use of the HL. However, by the time the younger children had started school, these parents' English would likely have been greatly improved, so that they may have felt more comfortable communicating with their children in English. This phenomena would definitely result in fewer opportunities for the younger children to hear and use Korean at home.

A second possibility is that as the home language environment became more English dominant, these parents might not have felt that their intention or efforts alone were sufficient to offset this English usage trend. Given the difficult circumstances regarding HL maintenance reported in the interviews, the parents might have given up battling with their children about using or not using the HL. Either way, the evidence is that these parents changed their behavior, contrary to what they stated in the interviews.

Based on the findings of this study, a further conjecture can be made: Consider that the earlier patterns of HL maintenance at home may have been the result of the parents' limited English, and not necessarily the result of their strong commitment to HL maintenance. While the diminishing use of HL at home points to the challenging nature of the HL environment, the increasingly infrequent interaction in HL among parents and children illustrates the minimal influence that parents have on HL maintenance.

This analysis is well supported by the fact that almost all of the younger siblings become monolingual in English. This brings up the point that the home cannot be considered as a shelter where HL automatically flourishes. This could explain why the participating parents relied heavily on external assistance, such as the Korean HL schools, as a primary means to ensure that their children learn and maintain the HL. The efficacy of HL schools are, however, still inconclusive (Fishman, 1991), although some studies report successful cases of weekend HL schools (Shibata, 2000).

Conclusion

Findings from this study highlight the complexities of the parental role and their involvement in seeking to help their children maintain HL at home, and therefore suggest that the contributions parents make to HL maintenance may be far more limited than previously believed. It is apparent that their role encompasses a great deal more than the common sense statement, "Don't speak English at home." Maintaining HL seems to be a complicated phenomenon within which the parents' efforts alone cannot determine the final outcomes.

These findings suggest that it would take serious, disciplined efforts by parents in order for them to be a major force in providing and maintaining the HL. Parent participants in this study were not particularly successful at reinforcing HL use at home, yet all of their eldest children were able to retain their HL anyway. This study, therefore, suggests a need for more research that can detail and refine the knowledge about parental roles in HL maintenance. Parents' beliefs do indeed influence their children's attitude toward HL, but they are apparently not sufficient in helping the children effectively maintain their HL.

This study was designed to investigate parental factors related to helping their children maintain HL. It drew data from a small pool of participants—four parents and four children—and its findings reflect only the experiences and views of this limited sample. Nevertheless, the study does reveal that parental roles in family maintenance of HL is not as simplistic as previously believed.

Rather, this research has shed light on multi-dimensional aspects of the parental role in HL maintenance. The findings suggest that parental involvement goes beyond sending children to HL schools or randomly reminding them of the importance of the HL. In addition, the study suggests that immigrant parents should perhaps resist any inclination to communicate in English with their children just because they can.

Even with unflagging efforts, the task of raising bilingual children is a huge challenge given that the hegemony of English is so strong. Without concerted efforts on the parents' part, the likelihood of survival of HL gets slimmer and slimmer, especially with the apparent pattern that the oldest child in each family may emerge as the only bilingual child in the family. Since English is such a dominant language, once

immigrant children attend schools, without parents' unwavering efforts sooner or later English takes over and the HL is lost.

In addition, however, this study demonstrates that raising second generation immigrant children is indeed a long, arduous process that tests parents' will power in sustaining their commitment to their HL and its related culture. More educational strategies are needed for HL parents. A multi-level support mechanism should be developed for immigrant parents within the HL community, so that when they struggle with the task of keeping HL alive at home they can seek community assistance. Improving the quality of HL classes might be just as important as making HL available in the community, where workshops and classes for immigrant parents can be available to inform them of the challenging nature of maintaining HL.

As Fishman (2001) warns, in order for HL to survive and thrive, the societal commitment must parallel and support the individual efforts of parents. The very first step our broader society must take is to become open-minded about each and every HL. Such broad support is a prerequisite to bilingualism. If bilingualism is valued and appreciated, young children will be much less likely to shun communication in their mother tongue.

If all teachers at school would encourage second generation immigrant students to speak and use their HL, those students would feel they are truly accepted. A diverse society like the U.S. should aim for bilingualism and multilingualism in order to allow and encourage people with different ethnic and language backgrounds to be who they are. At the same time, bilingualism and multilingualism enriches the society with multiculturalism. This approach to diversity is only just.

In conclusion, documenting conversations between immigrant parents and children would be an important step toward understanding more about various HL communities and the influence of both parents and communities on HL maintenance. Longitudinal studies that chart the evolution of HL and English usage by parents at home would greatly advance HL studies in identifying more potent factors that influence the maintenance of an HL.

References

- Arriagada, P. A. (2005). Family context and Spanish-language use: A study of Latino children in the United States. *Social Science Quarterly*, 86(3), 599-619.
- Brown, C. L. (2003). The making of a bilin-

gual/bicultural identity: A case study of a Japanese-American child. *Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism*, 9(1), 52-68.

- Brown, C. L. (2009). Heritage language and ethnic identity: A case study of Korean-American college students. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 11(1), 1-16.
- Cavallaro, F. (2005). Language maintenance revisited: An Australian perspective. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(3), 561-582.
- Cho, G., & Krashen, S. (1998). The negative consequences of heritage language loss and what we should care. In S. Krashen, L. Tse & J. McQuillan (Eds.), *Heritage language development* (pp. 31-39). Culver City, CA: Language Education Associates.
- Draper, J., & Hicks, J. (2000). Teaching heritage languages: The road traveled. In J. B. Webb & B. L. Miller (Eds.), *Teaching heritage language learners: Voices from the classroom* (pp. 14-38). New York: American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Revising language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Fishman, J. A. (2001). If threatened languages can be saved, then can dead languages be revived? *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 2(2&3), 222-230.
- Han, S. (2003). Culture or capital: What motivates heritage language achievement among Korean-American youth? Unpublished Monograph, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.
- Hinton, L. (1999). *Involuntary language loss among immigrants: Asian-American linguistic autobiographies*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Jeon, M. (2008). Korean heritage language maintenance and language ideology. *Heritage Languages Journal* 6(2), 1-10.
- Kouritzin, S. (2000). A mother's tongue. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 311-324.
- Krashen, S. (1998). Heritage language development: Some practical arguments. In S. Krashen, L. Tse & J. McQuillan (Eds.), *Heritage language development* (pp. 3-13). Culver City, CA: Language Education Associates.
- Lao, C. (2004). Parents' attitudes toward Chinese-English bilingual education and Chinese-language use. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 28(1), 99-121.
- Mah, B. (2005). *Ethnic identity and heritage language ability in second generation Canadians in Toronto*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Ryerson University.
- Moses, M. S. (2000). Why bilingual education policy is needed: A philosophical response to the critics. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 24(4), 333-354.
- Oh, J. S., & Fuligini, A. (2007). *The role of heritage language development in the adjustment of adolescents from immigrant backgrounds*. Retrieved March 26, 2010, from <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/5ks759dc>
- Park, S. M., & Sarkar, M. (2007). Parents' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance

- nance of their children and their efforts to help their children maintain the heritage language: A case study of Korean-Canadian immigrants. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 20(3), 223-235.
- Portes, A., & Hao, L. (1998). E pluribus unum: Bilingualism and loss of language in the second generation. *Sociology of Education*, 71(4), 269-294.
- Portes, A., & Hao, L. (2004). The schooling of children of immigrants: Contextual effects on the educational attainment of the second generation. Paper presented at the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America.
- Ro, Y. E., & Cheatham, G. A. (2009). Bilingualism and bilingual development in a second-generation Korean child: A case study. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 23(3), 290-308.
- Shibata, S. (2000). Opening a Japanese Saturday school in a small town in the United States: Community collaboration to teach Japanese as a heritage language. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 24(4), 465-474.
- Shin, S.-Y. (2010). The functions of code-switching in a Korean Sunday school. *Heritage Language Journal*, 7(1), 91-116.
- Suarez, D. (2002). The paradox of linguistic hegemony and the maintenance of Spanish as a heritage language in the United States. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 23(6), 512-530.
- Suarez, D. (2007). Second and third generation heritage language speakers: HL scholarship's relevance to the research needs and future directions of TESOL. *Heritage Language Journal*, 5(1), 27-49.
- Tannenbaum, M., & Howei, P. (2002). The association between language maintenance and family relations: Chinese immigrant children in Australia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 23(5), 408-424.
- Tse, L. (2001). Resisting and reversing language shift: Heritage language resilience among U.S. native biliterates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(4), 676-708.
- You, B.-k. (2005). Children negotiating Korean American ethnic identity through their heritage language. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(3), 711-722.
- Zhang, D., & Slaughter-Defoe, D. T. (2009). Language attitudes and heritage language maintenance among Chinese immigrant families in the USA. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 22(2), 77-93.