Korean Language as Socio-Educational Resources

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Editors
You-il Lee, University of South Australia
Seong-Chul Shin, University of New South Wales

University of South Australia
Adelaide, Australia
Editors' Notes

This volume is a collection of individual papers presented at the Australian Symposium on Korean Language Learning and Teaching 2017 held at the University of South Australia on 20th November 2017 under the theme of “Korean Language as Socio-Educational Resources”. Proposals submitted through the Call for Papers process were reviewed by the Organising Committee and only quality proposals were invited to submit complete versions of the papers, which were then reviewed or checked by the editors and, if necessary, revised by the author, before being included in this volume.

The topics of the fourteen papers range from a broad perspective of the Korean language as a heritage, migrant or second/foreign language to specific research topic areas in the field, such as challenges for Korean language globalisation, Korean language education for overseas Koreans, Korean heritage language and identity, change in language use, bilingual or multilingual Korean speakers, learner error analysis, teaching methods, acquisition and proficiency, curriculum and textbook development, and case studies of practices.

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You-il Lee and Seong-Chul Shin
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Late Modern Considerations on Language Education for Koreans Abroad

Nicola Fraschini
(University of Western Australia)

Abstract:
The present paper is based on the preliminary results of my recent research and aims to challenge from a post-modern perspective (Kramsch 2012) some views and practices given for granted in the field of “Korean as a heritage language”, with specific reference to the Australian context. I will first outline the main characteristics of the language use of the Korean community in Australia by using data from the last Australian census (2016) and I will then consider the Korean discourses of mother language and nationality through looking interconnections of language education and the content of the Overseas Koreans Act (1999). Then I will introduce the concepts of authenticity, native speakerism and identity in order to analyze from a post-modern perspective some issue surrounding Korean language education for Koreans abroad. I will show how multilingual speakers, and specifically how young Korean-Australians live one of the paradoxes of modernity, namely feeling an illegitimate speaker of one’s own mother language. I will also demonstrate how this sense of non-authenticity is fostered by a monolingual discourse alive in the Korean society and by the motherland’s view on overseas Korean. Finally under this light I will critically review two aspects of the broader field of Korean language education for Koreans abroad, the terminology itself and the figure of the teacher.

Keywords:
late modernity, multilingual speaker, authenticity, Korean-Australians, community language speakers

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10 Fraschini, PhD is a Lecturer in Korean Studies and Coordinator of the Korean Studies major at the University of Western Australia. He obtained his PhD in Korean language and culture education from Korea University and his research focuses on issues related to Korean teaching and learning.
Late Modern Considerations on Language Education for Koreans Abroad

Nicola Fraschini
(University of Western Australia)

Late modernity and its paradoxes

This paper wants to start a discussion on the shape of Korean language education for Koreans abroad that fits within the socio linguistics characteristics of the early 21C, an era which has been referred to by cultural sociologists (Giddens 1991), sociolinguists (Blackledge and Creese 2008) and experts of language and culture education (Kramsch 2012a, b) as the late modern period. What I call Korean language education for Koreans abroad is the field of Korean applied linguistics which is most commonly labeled as “Korean as a heritage language” (Kang 2013), but in this paper I will avoid to use this term for the reasons that I will illustrate below. In the following sections, firstly I will outline the main characteristics of the late modern period that have the greatest impact over the topic under discussion, then I will specifically show how Korean communities abroad are affected by the dominant discourses of this period through their relationship with the homeland. To strengthen my assumptions, I will also take examples from the experiences of a Korean-Australia student in the third section. On the light of this discussion I will finally conclude with some consideration about the field of the Korean language education for Koreans abroad.

The late modern period can be simply described as the period we are living now, which is characterized by both an unprecedented movement of people defining new forms of globalization, as well as by a tendency to aspire for nationhood (Hall 1993). These two contrasting forces, globalization and localization, are mainly what constitutes the paradox of late modernity. Movements of people around the world is not a new phenomenon as Lo Bianco (2014) points out; however the last three decades are remarkable for dimensions and modalities of these movements. Nevertheless, while people are interconnected all over the world and move around it as never before, small communities have shown strong tendencies to independence, as the recent Spanish case of Catalonia demonstrates.

Both these two apparently contrasting forces must be considered when talking about language in the 21C. Starting from the nation-states of the late 19 Century, national identities have been sustained by a national culture, which of course includes a national language; however, Hall (1993) points out that such national culture is no more than an invented tradition (Hobsbawm and Renger 1984) that pretends to be always the same, unchanged from the past and projected into the future. The reality is that nation states now must face the challenge of negotiating boundaries between globalization and localization, between who and what is in and who and what is out, because in the late modern period states are “diaporized over repair and inextricably globalized and multicultural” (Hall 1993:356). For Lo Bianco (2014) this issue represents particularly challenging tasks for countries such as Ireland and Italy, countries with a recent emigration history that are facing contemporary immigration waves. We can include in this group also Korea, which is trying to accommodate in its national discourse one the largest global diaspora along with a growing influx of foreigners from other countries.
Diaspora and multiculturalism are some of the conditions that foster what Blommaert (2013) calls multilingual practices: language practices characterized by transnational engagement and enabled by contemporary communication technology. People are able to easily communicate inside and outside their communities and this makes the boundaries of the community porous; late modern communities are in fact characterized by superdiversity and cannot be understood on the ground of the only ethnicity (Vertovec 2007): a number of variables are found to stratify migration fluxes, fragmenting them into a number of sub-communities (Vertovec 2007, 2010). Therefore people participate in the life of more than a single global community, and they must adapt their language practices to each of them. For this reason Blommaert (2013) suggest redefining communicative competence in a superdiverse world as the “capacity to acquire multiple normative orientations and shift from one set of norms [...] into another” (2013:194). This also implies that in order to shift among multilingual and global contexts the knowledge of a standard language is not enough, since a standard language account for a single set of norms, which accommodate the multilingual practices of present day (Blommaert and Rampton 2011). Multilingual practices, which account for the ability to communicate across a range of norms, across global as well as multicultural contexts, clash with the nation-state’s control over a standard language, because a standard language is rigid and cannot accommodate the fluidity and adaptability required by multilingual speakers.

A further problem originating from the adoption of a normative standard language is the creation of authorized and non-authorized speakers. Since a multilingual communicative environment is characterized by hybridity, non-standard use of codes, and a non-unified group of speakers (Kramsch 2014), the language spoken by a diaspora community is therefore a chameleonic language, a contingent entity that constantly creates and recreates its own norms, inevitably different from those of the (standard) language of the homeland. This brings us to a further paradox of late modernity (Kramsch 2012a, b): can diaspora community members be illegitimate speakers of their own language? Can they be non-authentic speakers? Bourdieu (1991:143) says that the imposition of a clearly defined set of norm is at the origin of the authentic/inauthentic dichotomy. Multilingual subjects speaking a non-standard variety are often considered to be non-authentic speakers, sometimes even within the academia since “bilingualism and multilingualism are taken to be special rather than typical sociolinguistic situations” (Bucholtz 2003:405). If we consider that “authentic” means being one’s true self (Appiah 2005), then how can we reconsider some aspects of Korean language education for Koreans abroad in order to enable students to be true speakers of their own variety, and not fake speakers of the standard norm? Before starting the details of this discussion, I will illustrate the specific case of the Korean-Australian community and its relations with the homeland.

Korean-Australians and the homeland

The Korean diaspora is not a new phenomenon, however the Korean community in Australia is relatively young if we compare it with other Korean communities around the world, such as those in the former Soviet Union, in China or in the US. An analysis of the last Australian national census gives some interesting insights about Korean-Australians. First of all, the community is fast growing and young. By comparing data from the last three Australian censuses it is possible to see that it has grown from 58,441 people in 2006, to 84,632 in 2011, to 113,671 in 2016 (Korean ancestry first answer, ABS 2016). Among these, 17,019 are 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation, namely Korean-Australians who were born in Australia from both Korean parents (ABS 2016). Since the focus of this paper is to discuss an approach to language education for
Koreans abroad, it is worth to conduct a deeper investigation of the data related to this specific population: 16,071 (94%) of 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation Koreans are still younger than 30 years old (ABS 2016). From a language perspective, which is the topic more strictly related to the content of this paper, it is meaningful to see how the 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation uses Korean and English. The 2016 Australian census survey did not include any item to self-asses competency in one’s own community language; however it is still possible to see that 15,334 (91%) of 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation Koreans speak Korean as a home language (ABS 2016). To put things in perspective, this data shows an extensive use of Korean as a home language, far more extended than 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation Chinese (81%), 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation Italians (41%) and 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation Germans (18%) (ABS 2016). Among the 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation users of Korean as a home language, 72% declared to speak English very well or well, 28% to speak it not well or not at all (ABS 2016). However, almost all of those that cannot speak English at all are below 4 years old, while most of those that cannot speak English very well are below 6 years old. This data shows that Korean is the first language learned and the mother language for most 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation Korean-Australians, and that most of them start learning English upon enrolment in the Australian school system. Therefore it is also possible to affirm that most adolescent or young adults Korean-Australians are bilingual to a certain degree, with a good proficiency in both languages in many cases.

Within this kind of multilingual and global communities such as the Korean-Australian, it is also important to see how the community is connected to the homeland, because the connections of a community with the homeland have a considerable impact on the use of the community language (Vertovec 2010). Vertovec (2010) notes that this relationship has undergone a deep transformation in the last thirty years due to the large availability of new communication technologies. He calls the ways of communicating and interacting with the homeland “transnational practices” and these are essential to maintain ethnic ties and build cultural identity. It is easy to see how these newer, faster and more direct routes of communication serve indeed a double purpose: on one hand, keeping more frequent contacts with the homeland, on the other offering opportunities to build even larger and interconnected global communities as well as platforms for multilingual practices.

Although new technologies are important in understanding how global communities interact with the homeland and build and reinforce their cultural identity, this perspective it is not enough to understand the interactions that shape the community’s identity. We also need to draw a picture of how the homeland views and labels its own diaspora communities. At this point some consideration regarding the “Overseas Korean Act” (below as OKA) and the “Act on Korean Language” (below as AKL) give some insight on the relationship between Korea and Korean communities abroad.

The OKA was passed in 1999 by the government as a first attempt to legally define overseas Koreans. In this act is possible to see the underground assumption about the oneness of the Korean people (Park and Chang 2005), which is a discourse that strongly connects ethnicity, citizenship, cultural values and language: either you are Korean and you speak Korean, or you are not. There is not much space available for grey areas, but how Koreans abroad are included into this discourse? In the OKA the definition of Korean abroad is quite broad: it indicates both a Korean national with rights of permanent residency in a foreign country, and also the descendant of a Korean national that acquired the nationality of a foreign country. While the former are Korean citizens, the latter are foreign citizens (OKA, article 2). It must be further noted that even if residence permission in Korea granted to the latter is not permanent, during their period of sojourn foreign national Koreans have the same rights as national Korean with regard to real estate transactions (OKA article 11), financial transactions (OKA article 12), foreign exchange transactions (OKA article 13) and health insurance (OKA article 14). The same rights do not apply to foreigners tout court. The OKA
thus seems to incorporate overseas Korean into the single economic and political entity of the homeland; however this incorporation is not symmetrical since not all Koreans abroad are considered the same and the homeland try to take advantages of economic factors (Park and Chang 2005). Aspects of this asymmetrical incorporation are visible in the AKL, an act trying to regulate policies on the national language first passed in 1989. The term “national language” (kugeo) is mostly used to indicate the Korean language used by Korean nationals, who form the core of the Korean people. On the other end, the term “Korean language” (hangugeo) is used to indicate the language learned by Koreans abroad (at the periphery of the wider Korean community) and foreigners tout court. Theory and practice of Korean language education for Koreans abroad is also carried on along with education aimed at foreigners, and the difference is also clear in the AKL: foreigners and Koreans abroad are grouped together as recipients of Korean language education (AKL article 19). Therefore if economically foreign national Koreans are somewhat included in the homeland, linguistically they are somewhat excluded. This confirms the vision that Koreans abroad are positioned at the periphery of the wider Korean community, and constitutes a grey area between who is in and who is out.

The analysis of a further aspect of the AKL shows the government will to control the Korean language through rigid standardization. This act establishes in fact a Korean Language Deliberation Council with several roles with regards to language policies. The council deliberates on many aspects of language policies, among those on “matters concerning the enactment and revision of language norms” (AKL article 17). Moreover it also states that the government has the duty of “preserving the Korean language” (AKL article 8). Efforts to preserve and standardize are elements that concur in commodifying a language; this process, Haller (2010) argues, transforms a language into a product to be valued, produced and constrained, it is also an act of imposition which claims authenticity by stating what is true and what is not. The result is that the language constrained and defined by the AKL and the Korean Language Deliberation Council is assumed to be the real Korean language and the only version that is worth speaking. A consequence is that those who do not align with these norms are not deemed to be authorized speakers. Therefore Korean language teaching aimed to foreigners and to Koreans abroad, as well as all language teaching in general, is an attempt to control what is legitimate and what is not (Heller 2010).

2nd generation Koreans abroad: fake speakers of their mother language?

In the first two sections I discussed how two apparently divergent forces, one directed toward globalization and the other directed toward localization, characterize late modernity. I also illustrated how the consolidation of a nation-state is often based on cultural features and traditions that pretend to come unchanged from the past; however actually these are quite recent, sometimes even “invented”. These traditions, as well as the discourses that underlie them, are often reflected in overseas communities and used as an identity link with the homeland. 2nd generation Koreans abroad find themselves between these two forces and must negotiate their position, as well as their identity, between opposite discourses. In our specific case, we can say that they must find their position between a economical, political and cultural discourse that try to include them, and a linguistic one that exclude them through the imposition of an authorized form of language.

Lo Bianco (2014) sees the creation, maintenance, and promulgation of a standard national language as an attempt to make “language symmetrical with nation”, therefore the use of a standard form of language indexes an insider, while the use of a non standard version, or of a “globalized” version, shows non-belonging to the original group, generating thus a
feeling of non-authenticity. I discussed in detail this feeling of non-authenticity in Fraschini (2017), where I highlighted that the monolingual discourse of the Korean homeland influences the positioning between two cultures of young Korean-Australians, who often see themselves as outsider with respect to the Korean language. I will use here the case of Hyeonju, one of the six young Korean-Australians taking a Korean language unit at university in Western Australia to illustrate how this sense of non-authenticity originates and develops. Hyeonju is a 2nd generation Korean-Australian who was born in Australia from Korean parents. She learned Korean first, and she started learning and speaking English once she attended school. She expressed her thought about her relationship with the Korean language in a blog writing activity used as pedagogical tool for the university unit where she was enrolled. The discussion about language belonging clearly visible in her posts arise from an essay criticizing the use of the terms “Korean language” and “national language”, which are used in Korea to indicate the same object (the language) but to differentiate its speakers (foreigners and Korean abroad for the former, Koreans for the latter).

As in my case too (since I was born in Australia) I think I have never called Korean my national language. Even if I learned Korean before English and Korean is my mother language, as Sumi said before, I don’t think that I qualify to the point of calling it my national language, so I have never called it like that. (Hyeonju)

In the post above Hyeonju reflects on how she calls the Korean language. In this post it is possible to see the first element that create one of the paradoxes of late modernity. She acknowledges that Korean is her mother language, the language of her parents as well as the first language that she learned. However she does not believe to be entitled to call it national language, since she is not, strictly speaking of citizenship, a Korean national. She was born and raised in Australia; therefore she never referred to the Korean language with the term “national language”. In the post above it is possible to see that Hyeonju sees Korean as one of her languages, but she does not submit to the equivalence that a language corresponds to a citizenship, or to a country. She then elaborates further on the same topic:

So I realized that in the Korean society the difference between Koreans and foreigners is rigid and clearly marked. I am really curious why there should be a difference in naming the language learned by “pure” Koreans and that learned by those that are not, and why you should know this since young. (Hyeonju)

In this other excerpt she demonstrates to understand the monolingual and essentialist discourse alive in the Korean society, and she also realizes that this discourse positions her at the margin of what is considered to be the broader Korean community. What needs to be remarked is her use of the term “pure Koreans”. By using this term to indicate the Koreans born and raised in Korea, she implies that she does not see herself as a pure Korean, despite being born from Korean parents and speaking Korean as a mother language. She also feels discriminated because she is positioned as a foreigner by this essentialist discourse which connects language to ethnicity, to citizenship. She is recognized as a speaker of Korean, but not a true one. She lacks authenticity as a Korean language speaker, although she learned the same language in the same way of Korean young children in Korea, and Korean is still and will be her first and mother language.

The two short excerpts above clearly show that firstly, young Korean-Australians can be aware of the monolingual and essentialist discourse alive in the modern Korean society, which aligns a language with a citizenship and a country; and secondly that since young Korean-Australians realize to be placed at the margins of the global Korean community, they
are considered fake speakers of their own language, they do not represent a model of the
Korean language, even when they feel to own it. At this point it is interesting to see how
young Korean-Australians react to this paradox through the next example from Hyeonju’s
blog post.

Moreover, I remember that whenever I used foreign gestures or expressions, [my father]
would scold me by saying that those were wrong and that it was not good manner. I had
the resentment that my life as kyopo was not being respected. (Hyeonju)

As a practice common to multilingual speakers, Hyeonju too does not use a single
language system in everyday life, namely English or Korean, but she uses both at the same
time, making the best out of the language resources she has available. However, this seemed
to irritate her father, who did not want her to corrupt the Korean language with English words,
expressions or gestures. His father is reproducing the essentialist and monolingual discourse
in the home environment, however Hyeonju shows resentment to this imposition since she is
not as Korean as her father would like her to be. She states in her post that she is a kyopo,
therefore she feels entitled to use her both languages together, because both languages make
up her communicative resources and participate in expressing her identity not as Korean, but
as Korean-Australian.

Through Hyeonju’s blog posts it is possible to see that the monolingual and essentialist
discourse which connects a language to a speaker, and both to a citizenship influences
Koreans abroad by creating a feeling of non-authenticity and by placing them at the margin
of the wider Korean community. However, it is also possible to see that Koreans abroad react
to this categorization by creating for themselves the label of multilingual (Korean) speakers,
claiming for themselves a multilingual space where they create their global identity.

A critical consideration of two aspects of language education for Koreans abroad

In this last section I will draw some conclusions in relations to Korean language education for
Koreans abroad, on the ground of the discussion illustrated above. Here I will limit my
reflections to two specific topics: terminology and teachers, although a multitude of other
aspects could be discussed, such as syllabus design, program development, material writing,
pedagogical activities and so on.

Discussing terminology is important, because labels are tools for people to construct
their identity. In this way, labels should empower people in order to give them the
opportunity to build the most positive identity possible for themselves. Unfortunately, too
often labels are imposed, compelling people into categories devised by somebody else. About
this first point I will discuss how Korean language education could be referred to in diaspora
contexts. It is noteworthy that different terms are already used around the globe to define
diaspora languages in multilingual settings, in most case in contrast with a common national
language, which is spoken in mainstream society and considered the official language. The
term preferred in the US to indicate these languages is “heritage language”, while
“community languages” is adopted in Australia (Hornberger 2005). In both countries the term
is used with reference to the language spoken by expatriates communities and local
indigenous people. How would be better to define the Korean language used by multilingual
Koreans abroad? Kang (2013) already took into consideration several terms, many suggested
by other scholars in the past, such as national language, mother language, ethnic language,
traditional language, heritage/inherited language. She discards the term “national language”
because it includes a political entity. “Mother language” is not to take into consideration
since it would not identify any difference with national Koreans. Kang (2013) also discard “ethnic language” since it is not always possible to assume that an ethnic community adopts only one language. Eventually she suggests the adoption of the term “heritage language” (keoseunghoe), which was already widely used in the Korean academia. Starting from some critic already referred to by (Van Deusen-Scholl 2003) I want to point out that the term “heritage language” is also not appropriate to define the language spoken by the global communities of the Korean diaspora. Although I recognize that the term “heritage” has the power of create a ground for identity construction by connecting people to a common and unifying past and therefore would be helpful in this sense, it also represents something which is static and located far away in time and space, something in danger to be preserved in its most authentic form, something that must survive untouched and unmodified: heritage is what is received, protected and transmitted. The Korean language spoken as “heritage” is not something used creatively and crafted individually, it is something received in a bundle with its norms and constrains, regulated by the original and authentic keepers of the language norms, who reside in the homeland. Considering language use in a superdiverse society (Vertovec 2007) and concerns related to the concept of “native speaker”, which can lead to dangerous assumptions such as that referring to someone as authentic speaker and to someone else as non-authentic (Coupland 2010), the term “heritage language” constrains its speaker more than empowering them. The Korean language spoken in global diaspora communities must enable its multilingual speakers to move across norms related to the context of their lives. The language cannot be static but must be live, fluid, adaptable and able to create its own norms, although these norms might be, and more than often are, distant from the “standard” language of the homeland (Lo Bianco 2014). Instead of using the term “Korean as a heritage language” it could be useful to refer to the language education of Koreans abroad with such terms as the already existent Australian “Korean as a community language”. However, in late modern term also “community language” comes with its own problems. It depict a media for communication, which is used mainly within the borders of a community; however immigrant communities languages might be not restricted to the use within a single, localized community, most of times relatively limited. Multilingual speakers live in a globalized world, where they can use their languages to communicate with local communities as well as more worldwide ones. As Blommaert (2013) points out, a standard language is not enough to them, since it represent a single limited practice. Multilingual speakers need to be able to move among different sets of norms, to cut cross practices, to be able to adapt their language to the global, multilingual and multicultural contexts of their lives. Hence the term “Korean for multilingual contexts” would be a term that better fit their situation. It would also be a term with the potentiality to empower its speakers, since it does not constrain them to a static and received language (like Korean for heritage learners), and it does assume as use limited to the only local community (Korean as a community language).

A second aspect of Korean language education for multilingual speakers in abroad communities that must be considered under the light of the global life of the late modern period is that of teachers. As already seen above, language teachers might run the risk of reproducing constraining discourses related to the language. When teachers instruct pupils in the so called ethnic language schools, or weekend community language schools, they sometimes avoid providing room for multilingual practices, which in some extreme case are openly contrasted (Blackledge and Creese 2008). This of course reflects the will not only to preserve the language in what is assumed to be a “pure” form spoken by assumed “authentic speakers”, but also to transmit the language in form of heritage. However this has the downside of compelling the learners to a language use which does not belong to them and which does not reflect their identity. The context of this paper does not allow for a consideration on the teaching practices, which can be different from teacher to teacher and
from institution to institution; however it makes possible to start a conversation on who could be a model teacher for “Korean for multilingual contexts”. A monolingual speaker, as well as a speaker with an intermediate low proficiency in the local language, would not be the best model for multilingual learners, since learners cannot identify themselves in a model that does not reflect their lives. It would also represent an unattainable speaker model, and a model of language use that might not fit exactly in the context of use of 2nd generation multilingual Koreans. A monolingual, or almost monolingual, speaker would only be helpful in reproducing the discourse firstly produced by the homeland. Although scholars like Kang (2013) recognize the need to frame Korean language education for speakers of Korean abroad in a multilingual and multicultural perspective and efforts are at present undergoing in Korean to start speaking about “heritage Korean in a bilingual perspective”, nevertheless a discussion on the characteristics of a Korean language teachers for Korean in multilingual context is still missing. Teacher should be at least a multilingual speaker and engage in their everyday life in the same multilingual language practices of their students. They should allow for deviation from the norm when this reflects identity and it is a feature of everyday use in the local context. Moreover, such a teacher should understand what the imposition of a single language system on a multilingual speaker means in term of identity construction (or constrain). Education conducted by such a teacher should not aim to create less perfect or not real and not authentic speakers, or to reproduce a heritage, but it should aim to foster awareness in being authentic multilingual language user.

This paper aims to contribute to the discussion about the shape of Korean language education for 2nd generation Koreans abroad. It does not offer any solution of strategy to adopt for the future; however it calls for a (re)consideration of what I labeled as “Korean for multilingual contexts”, to be grounded on future research about language use, pedagogical practices and educational believes of Korean communities abroad.

References


