

Chapter 15

The Language Use of a Bilingual Korean Teacher and Bilingual Korean Students in a Korean Heritage Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Many Korean parents in the U.S. send their children to heritage Korean language schools so that they maintain and further develop Korean as they acquire English. It is, thus, worthwhile to investigate how a Korean teacher and Korean students (as emergent bilinguals) used Korean and English in a Korean heritage classroom. The chapter addresses two research questions: (1) How did the teacher use Korean and English to make her instruction comprehensible during discussions about multicultural children's literature? (2) To what extent were there differences in the two groups of students' (Korean-American and Korean immigrant) use of translanguaging in their oral responses? The findings show that the teacher uses both Korean and English to make her instruction comprehensible and to facilitate her students' participation in class discussions. The findings further reveal differences in the two groups of students' use of language in their oral responses to multicultural texts.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have reported that children's bilingual development is affected by the language input that the children receive, their opportunities to use the two languages, and the socio-cultural context that surrounds their language development (Cummins, 2014; Escamilla et al., 2014). Korean immigrant families and children continue to increase in the U.S. Some of the children are first-generation immigrants, children born in Korea who later move with their families to the U.S; whereas, other children are second-generation immigrants, children born in the U.S to first-generation immigrant parents (Shin, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008; Tse, 2001). Although many second-generation Korean-American

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8283-0.ch015

children may use Korean as a primary language of communication at home with their parents, they often experience heritage language (HL) loss and/or shift (Murphy, 2014; Tse, 2001) because of the exposure to the English language in American schools and in the mainstream culture (Chung, 2008; Shin, 2005). Thus, the parents of Korean-American children are concerned about their children's HL loss/shift. On the other hand, Korean immigrant children often come to the U.S. with limited English proficiency; thus, the parents of the Korean immigrant children pay more attention to their children's English language learning. Given the different immigrant status of Korean children who attend Korean HL schools, it is worthwhile to consider a HL teacher's language use to make her instruction comprehensible and to facilitate her bilingual students' participation in class discussions.

In addition, researchers interested in the language development and use of young emergent bilingual children in the U.S. – children who know one language at home (heritage language) and who are acquiring English (societal language) at school (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008) – have focused more on the children's development and use of their second language (L2, English) than on their first language (L1) or heritage language (HL) (August & Shanahan, 2010; Goldenberg, 2011; Shanahan & Beck, 2006). For example, a number of researchers investigated how emergent bilinguals developed their English language and literacy skills (e.g., Francis, Lesaux, & August, 2006; Genesee, Geva, Dressler, & Kamil, 2006; Golberg, Paradis, & Crago, 2008; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). Yet, comparatively, little attention has been given to emergent bilinguals' language use and development in their HL (August & Shanahan, 2010; Goldenberg, 2011; Ro & Cheatham, 2009; Tse, 2001). Specifically, the extent to which Korean emergent bilinguals in the U.S. develop and use their Korean when they attend Korean HL schools is a question that has not received much attention in bilingual research to date. Therefore, we need to know more about the role of the Korean children's HL in their bilingual development and performance.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how a bilingual Korean first-grade teacher and first-grade bilingual students used Korean and English in a Korean heritage classroom. The paper addresses two research questions:

1. How did the teacher orally use Korean and English to make her instruction comprehensible and to facilitate her students' participation in discussions about multicultural Korean texts?
2. To what extent were there differences in the two groups of students' (Korean immigrant and Korean-American) use of translanguaging in their oral responses to multicultural Korean children's literature?

BACKGROUND

Theoretical Framework

This study is situated within two major theoretical frameworks: (a) children's multicultural literature both as mirror and window (Sims Bishop, 1990, 1992) and (b) translanguaging theory (García, 2009) from a heteroglossic perspective (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984).

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