


Chapter 4

Understanding the Teaching Strategy of Korean Heritage Language Teachers in Community-Based Heritage Language Schools

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ABSTRACT

The goal in this qualitative study is to contribute to the growing understanding that heritage language (HL) teachers' literacy teaching beliefs and children's home linguistic environment mediate teachers' HL teaching strategies, including the micro-level language policy. Following the brief history of Korean HL schools in the USA, a case study conducted at two community-based Korean HL schools in California is presented. The primary data were collected through multiple teacher interviews and participant-observations in two Korean heritage language schools. The characteristics of two HL teachers' instruction capture their beliefs about literacy teaching and micro-level language policy in the classroom. The challenges of Korean-only instruction and HL education are discussed in relation to students' linguistic home environments and macro-level linguistic policy of the USA. The author concludes with the implications and recommendations for HL teachers, HL schools, and administrators regarding how to support bilingual competences and literacies of young children in minority communities.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3448-9.ch004

INTRODUCTION

Language minority children in the USA are forced to learn English at an early age as English is the primary medium of instruction in school. As the amount of time they are exposed to English increases, their mother tongue is replaced by English during the school years (Leeman & King, 2015). In the past decades, much has changed in bilingual education policies. However, little has changed in public schools that continue to exclude heritage language (HL) education which encourages and supports the maintenance of heritage languages in children of immigrants. Under the circumstances, heritage language schools have been built by ethnic communities to maintain their HL and culture and have an important role as ideological and implementational spaces for children of immigrants to learn the HL through ethnic socialization and socialize through the use of the HL (Cho, 2000; Crawford, 2004; Hornberger, 2005; Shibata, 2000). Despite the role of HL schools in the promotion and development of any HL, however, HL education is still perceived as an after school enrichment program outside of the regular school than as a part of formal education system. As a result, many HL teachers are parent-volunteers or para-educators and HL teachers' teaching strategies in community-based HL schools have not been seriously investigated in comparison with that of second language and foreign language teachers in public schools.

Shibata (2000) claims that community-based HL schools are "one of the most effective ways to teach children a HL since parent s' efforts, patience, and resources are limited" (p. 465). As Shibata (2000)'s argument, HL schools would be the only option for some second and later generation English-dominant parents who barely speak their HLs as they were raised in homes where their parents spoke English to them. However, there is still disagreement among HL researchers about the relationship between HL school attendance and students' HL proficiency. Cho (2000) and Lee (2005) indicate that students' HL proficiency is not meaningfully related to HL school attendance and also, students show the lack of motivation to go to Korean HL school after the normal school time. Many previous studies (Tse, 1998) also stresses the quality and quantity of HL input for young children to develop the HL such as the use of the HL at home as a home language. Given Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, it is debatable that learning the HL through a medium of HL-only instruction benefits young English-dominant children to improve Heritage Language and cultural learning. Considering the disagreement among HL researchers about the effect of HL schools on HL maintenance in children, this article argues for the importance of recognizing students' linguistic home environments and the micro-level instructional practices of HL teachers, focusing on a case study of two HL teachers from two community-based HL schools in the USA. The author also argues for the close relationship between teachers' literacy teaching beliefs and teachers' teaching strategies. The results from the study address what mediates teachers' teaching strategies and how teachers implement Korean-only policy of Korean schools in their instruction in the classroom.

The goal in this qualitative study is to contribute to the growing understanding that HL teachers' literacy teaching beliefs and children's home linguistic environment mediate teachers' HL teaching strategies, including the micro-level language policy nested in social and cultural environments outside the classroom. Following the brief history of Korean HL schools in the USA, a case study conducted at two community-based Korean HL schools in California is presented. The characteristics of two HL teachers' instruction capture their beliefs about literacy teaching and micro-level language policy in the classroom. The challenges of Korean-only instruction and HL education are discussed in relation to students' linguistic home environments and macro-level linguistic policy of the USA. The author concludes with the implications and recommendations for HL teachers, HL schools and administrators regarding how to support bilingual competences and literacies of young children in minority communities.

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