# Conflicting Pedagogical Approaches in the Korean Heritage Language Classroom: A Call for Change in Professional Development

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#### **Abstract**

The article reports on Korean women teachers' lived experiences and perspectives on cultural conflicts in PreK-12 Korean Heritage Language classrooms. The study investigates the perspectives of first generation teachers educated in Korea on cultural differences between their own educational experiences and their generation 1.5 and second-generation students. Utilizing theoretical frameworks of reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), data from focus groups, individual teacher interviews, and classroom observations were analyzed to explore the shifting and changing professional identities of teachers. Language instructors need transformative professional development to enhance their agency and strengthen their confidence as

teachers. Analysis of the data revealed that the heritage teachers were aware of a generation gap between their own educational experiences and their generation 1.5 and second generation students. Teachers provided insights concerning traditional Korean pedagogical practices and desired more professional development concerning how to better meet their students' needs. The article calls for new directions in heritage language teacher education to increase teacher autonomy and raise the professional status of heritage language teachers.

**Keywords**: Korean heritage language education; Second language teachers' professional development; Teacher identity; Autonomy and professional status; Intergenerational pedagogical conflict; 1.5- & second-generation language learners

#### Introduction

One of the goals for heritage education is the maintenance or enhancement of students' ethnic identity. Oh and Fuligni (2010) define ethnic identity as attachment to an ethnic group and satisfaction about being part of the group (p. 208). In this regard, a teacher's ideological stance as well as his/her ethnic identity can influence students as part of their socialization in heritage schools. Since most of the teachers in heritage schools first generation Korean immigrants, are understanding the educational perspectives of their US-born heritage students is needed if they want to be culturally responsive to their students' needs and realities. The Washington Association of Korean Schools (WAKS), including Virginia and Maryland. was the setting for this study. The WAKS is a regional chapter of the National Association of Korean Schools (NAKS), a non-profit educational organization, established in 1981, with over one thousand Korean schools in all fifty states. Teachers reported that the professional development workshops offered by

NAKS and WAKS for Korean heritage school teachers provided insufficient spaces to talk about how to respond to their students' needs (Shin & Wong, 2017).

Through education that promotes the awareness of teachers regarding heritage education, these teachers may find the lack of motivation for older students to learn Korean stems not only from the instructional problems, which are what current workshops emphasize, but also from exploring the broader social context regarding learners' investment (Norton, 2010). Bourdieu's concept of 'Habitus' is an factor contributing to social reproduction important (Wacquant, 1998). Habitus refers to the ways that society imprint on the individual through lasting dispositions. If we understand teachers' habitus (beliefs and practices), it would help us understand how their dispositions (teaching beliefs and teaching practices) developed in Korea might be different from those of their students (Shin, 2014). In addition, it would help us observe how their dispositions can be changed through their practices and experiences in

Korean heritage schools, known as community based weekend schools established for children of Korean immigrants, and the foreign and second language education in the United States. The Korean heritage schools can be the social space (e.g., inherited social structure) where the identities of Korean heritage school teachers are constructed. Coldron and Smith (1999) pointed out, "Identity as a teacher is partly given and achieved by active location in social space" (p. 711).

Meanwhile, teachers have a central role as agents of social reproduction. The teachers' disposition from their educational experience perpetuates the values of their own cultures and transmits them to students, favoring the students who share the same values (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Language teaching and learning are sociocultural phenomena, so teachers and students bring their identity and negotiate various identities in the classroom. The sociocultural identities, which teachers and students are bringing to the classroom, are not static or deterministic but dynamic and

changeable by negotiating and constructing the identities (Kramsch, 1993). In this notion, we may understand that the identities of Korean heritage school teachers are (re)produced and constructed in the schools and classrooms through the negotiation of the identities in the relationship with students and other adults.

### The Research Design

The purpose of this study is to understand the unique situation of heritage school teachers and how their beliefs and values may conflict with Korean heritage language learners in their classrooms. The data were collected from participatory observation, focus group interviews, and one-on-one interviews. The participants in this study were Korean heritage school teachers in the Washington, DC area. The participants were purposefully selected from among teachers who were first generation immigrants and who had more than three years of Korean heritage school teaching experience.

The participants for both the focus group and in-depth interviews were all female teachers. Male teachers in Korean heritage language schools are rare because most of the teachers are mothers who volunteer. The dominant gendered belief is that it is the mother's responsibility to care for the children (Park, 2009). In addition, the heritage classes are offered after school and on weekends (part time rather than full time), teachers receive lower salaries than public school teachers, and in K-12 education in the United States women teachers are more prevalent than male. The research participants were in their 30s to 50s and had three to 20 years of experience teaching in Korean heritage schools. None of them had academic experiences in the U.S. and four of them had teaching experience in Korea. Only one of them had a Korean teaching related degree.

Table 1. Profile of Participants in In-depth interviews

Name	Gender	Age	Years of Teaching	Academic experience in the U.S.	Teaching experience in Korea	Korean teaching related degree
Soo	Female	40s	10 years	No	Yes	No
Hee	Female	30s	5 years	No	Yes	No
Young	Female	40s	3 years	No	Yes	No
Jung	Female	40s	8 years	No	No	No
Kyong	Female	50s	20 years	No	No	Yes
Yoo	Female	50s	12 years	No	Yes	No

The research site for field observation is the New Korean Heritage School (pseudonym), operated by a local Korean church, in Virginia, which is one of the largest heritage schools among those schools affiliated with the Washington Association of Korean Schools (WAKS). The school had 23 classes with nine different levels of proficiency offered for students between the ages of 3 to 18

9:30AM to 1:00PM.

The research aimed at exploring the general viewpoints and beliefs of participants regarding their careers as teachers through focus group interviews with a small number of teachers in a comfortable discussion format (with five groups consisting of 4-6 teachers). At the same time, one-on-one in-depth interviews employing storytelling were conducted. This narrative storytelling method assisted the researcher in capturing the teachers' life experiences, which have affected the shaping of their identities as teachers in both the U.S. and Korea. Field participant observation at a Korean heritage school included classroom observation, weekly teachers' meetings, and key informant interviews with administrator, parents, and teachers. The research questions for this study were:

- (1) What were teacher perceptions of cultural conflicts between teachers and students in the Korean heritage language classroom?
- (2) How were these cultural conflicts (re)produced and constructed through the practices in place at heritage language schools?
- (3) How did these cultural conflicts mediate and shape the professional identities and pedagogical beliefs and practices of Korean heritage school teachers?
- (4) How might pedagogical practices be changed or transformed to increase teacher professionalism?

## Findings and Discussion

Recent studies have investigated the multilingual, heteroglossic and hybrid identities of heritage language students and teachers (Becker, 2022; Kim & Kim, 2016). The focus group and in-depth interviews in this study also indicated that Korean heritage teachers' professional identities, that is their attitudes, values, and educational

philosophy, were shaped by their previous educational

experiences. In addition, a number of teachers indicated that

their professional identity continued to develop through

exposure and participation in U.S. classroom culture through

volunteering in their children's schools as well as NAKS and

WAKS professional development workshops.

Many teachers gained a strong sense of understanding about second and third generation heritage learners from their practical experiences observing conflicting teaching and learning styles as well as reflecting on what they considered to be conflicting value systems between students and teachers. This was (re)produced and constructed through their teaching practice in the heritage schools.

The majority of teachers maintain (reproduce) their traditional teaching styles (habitus) regardless of the conflicts with their US-born or 1.5 generation students, and they try to reduce the conflicts by disciplining students to force them to adapt to the traditional way. In addition, traditional teaching methods are supported by parents in the schools because the

parents were also mainly educated in Korea, and they are familiar with them. The data also showed that the more teachers work in Korean heritage schools, the more they feel isolated from mainstream foreign/second language education as taught in U.S. schools.

In the case of the current teachers' workshops the teachers can attend (e.g., WAKS and NAKS workshops), stakeholders decide in which issues and areas they will educate the teacher, instead of trying to understand the needs of the teachers. For this reason, the workshops not only do not meet the teachers' immediate needs for teaching in the classroom, but also do not provide any space in which the teachers can reflect and share their issues with colleagues to work collaboratively for solutions. The sociocultural perspective in L2 teacher education focuses more on teachers' cognitive processes and development (self-reflection), and how this internal activity transforms the understandings of self, students, and teaching activities (Johnson, 2009, p.13). From the sociocultural epistemological perspective, teacher

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education should focus on the teachers' reflection in their
search for professional identity.

### Understanding heritage learners vs. native Koreans.

The teachers' learning experience is only based on their experiences from attending schools in a Korean speakingsociety. Through experiences in teaching Korean heritage learners, their thoughts about their identities as teachers have shifted from that of a traditional teacher into a foreign language teacher. The teachers, at the beginning stage of teaching in the heritage schools, considered bilingualism to be nothing but double monolingualism (Kramsch, 2014). They begin to understand how their students are different from the students in Korea in terms of linguistic development and cultural awareness. The students' demographic changes have influenced the teachers' beliefs about teaching, as Yoo mentioned, "When I started teaching Korean 14 years ago, the students were 1.5 generation, but now they are second generation, and their parents are 1.5 generation. I think I have to use foreign language pedagogy, considering my students

are foreigners to Korean." We can understand the change of the teachers' position through the framework of socio-cultural identity. Teachers' identity is dynamic — it changes depending on the context in which they are teaching. As Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) indicate, teachers are not a neutral player in the classroom, but their positionality in relation to their students and to the broader context is vital.

### Learner differences

The teaching methods the teachers use are based on traditional approaches, such as grammar translation and audio-lingual methods. These methods were very popular for English education when the teachers studied in Korea around 20 years ago. Kyong remembered her early years of teaching at a Korean heritage school:

During the early years when I taught Korean at a heritage school, I wondered why the students couldn't speak Korean well even though they were Korean. After three years of teaching, my perception

had changed. They were not Korean but foreigners. My husband, who was an English major, told me that the English-speaking students have a different speech system, so they were not able to use proper pronunciation in Korean. I realized Korean was a hard language for Americans to learn. It is very easy for me, but I think it is hard for my students. I should teach everything if I want them to speak and write Korean. They should memorize, so I try to find easy rules to memorize and find how to explain Korean grammar to the students.

The experienced teacher, Kyong, shared the challenges she had when they started teaching around 20 years ago:

> There was no Korean language textbook for heritage learners, so they used the textbooks that were developed for Korean native speakers, as a language arts subject in Korea. When I took an online course for Korean teaching, I remember there was the subject called 'Korean as a foreign language'. That

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time, I taught Korean with a Korean language arts textbook. It was very confusing because it was designed to teach Korean to native speakers learning it as a school subject. In addition, it was difficult to teach since we were not from the Korean language arts teaching major. Now, I am thinking that my students are not Korean but American, so we should recognize Korean as a foreign language and not the native language of the students.

The teacher in the passage above expressed clearly that she recognized the difference between teaching Korean as a native language and as a foreign language, however she had not yet had sufficient experience to distinguish differences between Korean as a heritage language and as a foreign language.

The Korean teachers' educational programs offered by Korean universities target teachers in Korea, therefore it is hard for the teachers to apply the methods they have learned through the programs to their instruction in the heritage

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school. The teachers were aware of the differences among the
learners in heritage schools and the learners in Korea in their
practice, as demonstrated in Jung's comment:

The online courses provided by a Korean university were helpful in improving my teaching skills on certain points. However, they target the Korean teachers in Korea, so the curriculum is done from a Korean perspective and is Korean-oriented. Therefore, it has some limitations when I try to apply what I learned with my heritage school class. A new textbook came out three years ago which is much better than the previous one, because it reduced the number of grammatical concepts that we need to teach, and instead emphasized conversational skills.

## Conflicting teaching and learning styles

Heritage language teachers understand the students are not Korean natives when the teachers feel they have a different value system regarding teaching and learning. Sometimes the learning styles of the students, which are developed in

American schools, come into conflict with the teachers' teaching style. Excerpts from classroom observation field notes (February 22, 2014) illustrate how teachers' traditional teaching style conflicted with students and caused the students to resist instruction:

Classroom Vignette: The teacher is standing in front of the classroom, and students, from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, are sitting together in groups of three to four. There are three groups of students and each group sits at a table together. During class, students talk to each other in English and the teacher can't control the students.

T: "I will give you 20 vocabulary words today, and when you memorize all of them, I will give new ones. Please do it at home."

S: "Why do we have to memorize these words? I will purposely not do it and then I can stop memorizing."

T: "If you don't want to memorize, why do you come to school?

(with angry voice)

S: "I don't want to come here, my mom forced me to come. I don't get any credits or grades from memorizing vocabulary words, right? That's why I don't want to do this."

Due to this conflict, classroom management issues occurred. The teachers often blame the parents, who do not teach Korean values about how people should respect seniors. The teachers believe that the students do not appreciate them for teaching because they did not learn the values about respecting seniors. In the conversation between the teacher and the student above, the teacher interpreted the student's behavior (not following the given instructions), as a sign of disrespect. The teacher was not aware that the student might not have experienced success through traditional cramming methods of memorization of lists.

The teachers sometimes reflect on their teaching while they are observing other teachers. One of the teacher participants, Jung, commented after observing a number of classes, "I don't think the teachers in the heritage school are qualified. They don't understand the students. They don't

know what learning methods their students are used to. This school community is an entirely different world. Teachers knock on the table loudly and shout "Why you don't understand what I am saying?", "Write it down, write it down". I felt pain when I heard the loud voice of the teachers in the school."

It has been reported that some Korean language educators in Korea are critical of heritage language school teachers for not being acquainted with new, innovative, and experimental pedagogical practices that have been introduced in Korea (Im, 2013). Some teachers who took the online course programs provided by Korean universities also commented negatively about the teachers who are against traditional methods which conflict with Korean American students' learning styles. Jung argued about the old teaching methods:

Teachers develop their way of teaching from their own learning experiences as students from two decades ago in Korea and believe that it is the right

way. One day, some parents complained about the homework that had four-year-old students writing their names in Korean 20 times. The teacher didn't care about the negative comments because she believed that her way of teaching was the best. She also told the parents in her class, "Our class meets only three hours per week, do you think that is enough? I don't think so. It is because of this that I give several hours of homework to the students.

Teachers' beliefs about their students may have had an influence on their instructional style in the classroom. When the teachers treated the students in the heritage schools as native Korean speakers, not only their pedagogy but also their expectations and learning goals were often affected. As Jung commented:

> Teachers are very strict and oppressive in order to make students achieve the goal in a short time. I think the goal is the problem since it is too high, and the teaching methods are also problematic. Teachers don't

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think about or understand what students actually learn from the class.

She noted that often once a goal was set, one's tendency as a teacher was to achieve the goal regardless of the students' level.

One of the challenges the teachers faced in responding to the needs of particular students was the wide difference in ability between learners within their classrooms. Students assigned to the same class have different Korean proficiency levels depending on when they came to the U.S., their exposure to Korean-speaking relatives and friends, and what language their parents and other family members use at home. This often led to conflicts among students of varying proficiency levels. The following dialogues excerpted from field notes of a class that combined students from grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 revealed two students who had little background in Korean who expressed dissatisfaction with their class.

After 20 minutes have passed due to administrative tasks, the teacher starts the lecture. Students talk aloud in English and

Student B: (pointing to a student): He is good at Korean since he speaks Korean with his parents, but I speak English at home.

## Maintain their traditional teaching methods

Shin and Lee (2013) point out that expectations for heritage language students should not be the same as for native speakers of Korean or even for students of Korean as a foreign language. The teachers in this study agreed with this pedagogical stance. However, even though they understood the difference between the heritage language learners and students in Korea through their teaching experiences in the heritage schools, it was still not easy for them to change deeply ingrained teaching styles. There was—as is common in many classrooms—a dissonance between what teachers

'think' and what teachers 'do'. Unlike the psycho-cognitive paradigm that assumes what teachers think translates directly into behavior, several studies show what teachers know, think, and even believe can contradict their practices in classrooms (Cross, 2010, p. 439). While teachers conceptually understand the differences among heritage learners in the context of heritage schools, it is not easy for them to change without any teacher education training, which can help guide them in adapting their teaching practices.

Field notes and in-depth interviews showed that the teachers continued to use the Korean traditional methods from their own learning experiences more than 20 years ago. No one challenged the teachers' teaching practices and there were few professional development opportunities to address their needs. In addition, there was no evaluation mechanism for the teachers. The only evaluations they received were informal comments from the parents. The parents, mostly first generation immigrants, expected that the teachers would give more homework and help their children develop good

Conflicting Pedagogical Approaches in the Korean Heritage 69 Language Classroom: A Call for Change in Professional Development studying habits. The teachers understood that if a student learned Korean, he or she should follow Korean cultural norms for respectful communication. The expectation is that following societal norms and values in Korean language written, and oral communication would lead to the type of academic success Korea as a nation is known for. For heritage language teachers, teaching Korean values means persevering in helping students understand Korean culture, working to accommodate the values of the parents, and helping students develop their identities as Koreans.

### Being a more traditional Korean teacher

For teachers who have studied in Korea and have had little academic experience in the US, the only opportunity for them to explore other teaching methods is through professional development workshops. However, the format of the current workshops for Korean heritage school teachers is lecture-based, and there is little space for teachers to exchange their thoughts to solve problems that occur in their own classrooms. Through field observations of Korean

heritage language professional workshops, we noticed that the workshops consisted of lectures on teaching methodology rather than experiential activities. With teachers' participation as passive receivers of knowledge (Freire, 1970), there was little chance for them to reflect on their own teaching and adapt their practices to the learners' needs (Shin, 2015).

The classroom observation revealed that the heritage teachers' styles school teaching were predominantly traditional. There was little pair or group work, even though the current pedagogy in Korea has changed in language education to incorporate more Western teaching methods (Littlewood, 2007). The teachers explained lesson content in English when the students did not understand. This means that students were not fully exposed to Korean during the class. Instead of using non-verbal instructional methods such Total Physical Response (TPR) or visual images to promote the students' understanding of the lesson, the teachers spent most of the class time on explaining grammar in English.

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Consequently, there is too much time spent by the teacher speaking and not enough time for the students to practice speaking. This is not ideal for a language class. The field notes (March 8, 2014) for the class of four-year-olds illustrated how the class is managed in traditional Korean ways:

> Classroom Vignette: Korean alphabet and songs were taught. The music teacher came and taught a song and told the students that they should memorize the lyrics. There were 20 minutes for a whole class activity about transportation led by the homeroom teacher. Then, the four-year-old students worked individually on several pages in the workbook for two hours without a break. They had to sit very quietly and do their individual work.

Since the teachers do not have knowledge about foreign/second language education, the main methods they use rely on the ways they are familiar with. The classrooms' aura was influenced by the teachers' expectation of students' attitudes in the class. From observing the class for

four-year-olds, we found that students were expected to be quiet, complete their work, and be able to read the Korean alphabet (Hangul) in order to succeed in class. The students the teacher did not favor were those who had non-Korean parents. Since the students did not speak Korean well, they did not receive the same amount of attention in class. The teacher told me that a key factor for a student to be successful in class is their speaking level in Korean. She argued that if a student cannot speak Korean well, she or he cannot pay attention in class and will fail to learn the Korean alphabet, which is the main goal of the class. The teachers acted very strict to make students concentrate on their individual work for a long period of time and to pay attention to the teacher-centered lecture. The field observation notes (April 6, 2014) for the five- and six-year-old class also illustrated how much the teacher controlled the students to make them engage in the class:

Classroom Vignette: T: Greetings are important. Say 'thank you' all the time. 'Thank you for teaching, teacher.' 'Thank

you for cooking, mother.' You come to the school to learn how to speak Korean and you will learn Korean to talk with your friends. So you should practice speaking Korean.

(to a shy student who doesn't talk) T: Why don't you pay attention? Why don't you listen to me? What did I say? If you don't pay attention, how can you do your group work? If your group does poorly, you will feel sorry to your group members. (the teacher is speaking quickly)

When the teacher gave feedback on a student's incorrect grammar usage, the teacher explicitly explained the grammar rule to whole class. The teacher points out every time students make a mistake and corrects them simultaneously.

#### **Isolation**

One of the prominent challenges the teachers face is the isolation from mainstream foreign/second language education. Their Korean identities (e.g., first generation immigrants, patriotism, Protestants, members of Korean churches) may have cultural and social capital in the field (heritage schools), but it is hard to be recognized in the

mainstream foreign/second/bilingual educational field with very limited knowledge of U.S. society or its cultural context. In addition, there is no opportunity for these teachers to connect with other heritage language teachers since each heritage school is based in its own ethnic community.

#### No capital

The teaching experience in heritage schools should be a way to gain experience in one's career. However, the teachers complain that no matter how long they teach, their experience is not counted as teaching experience in the foreign/second language teaching field. They believe that Korean heritage education is not taken seriously in mainstream society.

Bourdieu (1986) argues that some forms of cultural capital have a higher exchange value than others in a given social context. The Korean teachers' teaching experience in the heritage schools as well as their academic experience in Korea is of 'lower value' in U.S. society. In addition, the wage for the teachers is not enough to compensate for attending

Economic capital. Korean heritage school teachers, especially those who want to work outside of heritage schools, such as in U.S. public schools or adult educational settings, understand that they need to have more academic experience (e.g., college or professional development workshops) in order to meet the U.S. foreign language

education standard. However, it is very hard for these teachers, who are mostly housewives with children, to have money for tuition and time to study in a graduate program (for K-12 Korean teaching license) and engage in professional development. Kyong argued, "Many Korean teachers have a main job, either part-time or full-time, during the week. You know how much money we need to make to live in the United States. It is hard for the teachers to spend time on professional development." Soo's comments supported Kyong's argument. Soo argued, "As a mother, it is hard for heritage school teachers to get funds to support their teaching career since they need to spend a lot of money to support their children."

A teacher complained that the principal asked them to improve their teaching abilities by attending professional development workshops, but did not provide any support or time off from the school to do so. A teacher in the focus group interviews talked about this issue:

When we need to attend the semi-annual workshops, we still have to work in the morning and attend the workshop in the afternoon. They don't charge us for professional development, but after three to four hours of teaching, I feel too tired to attend the workshop for five hours. Therefore, it is hard for me to concentrate. I understand that attending the workshop is one of the requirements for teaching, but our school asks us to do too many things.

A teacher in the focus group interviews shared her story about attending an East Coast foreign language teachers' association workshop, emphasizing that it was very helpful for her to apply and use what she learned for her class right away, unlike the workshops the Korean heritage school teachers attend.

> I had a chance to attend the regional workshop for foreign language teachers. It was very helpful for me because the lecturers at the workshop taught us the way of teaching step by step. Although they spoke

English, I could understand. I felt that Korean language education in heritage schools is behind. There is no school support for us to attend local or national workshops or conferences related to foreign/second language teaching. I know that our school can support us financially, but it does not. In addition, my husband doesn't understand why I have to spend money to attend workshops other than the workshops offered by WAKS and NAKS.

The limitation of funding impacts the choice of teaching materials in classrooms. The teacher cannot access any technology for effective teaching, as a teacher mentioned, "The environment in heritage schools is very limited. We cannot teach with multimedia since students cannot access computers here. I love teaching but the limited resources make me feel down."

Cultural capital. Cultural capital is knowledge of the dominant culture, the knowledge that counts (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Therefore, knowledge of U.S. culture

constitutes cultural capital for Korean heritage school teachers. On the other hand, Korean teachers' extensive knowledge about Korean culture and language, as well as their teaching experiences in heritage schools, are not recognized as cultural capital in U.S. society. Through interviews I conducted during data collection, I found that many of the teachers want to work not in Korean immigrant communities, but in schools in the broader American society. They have confidence in their teaching ability developed in heritage schools. However, they also accept the reality that both their teaching experience in the heritage schools and the academic knowledge from Korean education cannot be converted into cultural capital for a teaching career in mainstream society. It is hard for them to get a job outside of heritage schools since their experience as teachers in heritage schools is not valued by the U.S. foreign/second language education community. A teacher informed me, "I finished four years of college (online program) for teaching Korean as foreign language, but it is not recognized here in America. I

want to be a public school teacher, but I don't know how to enter the field." In my opinion, the teachers seek to have an opportunity to connect with American society in their language of expertise teaching Korean. Soo explained about her wish for a future career:

I want to be a public school teacher since I want to interact with American students. However, I am not able to devote my time to get the license since I have a full time job. If there were a collaborative program between Korea and the U.S., the credits I had from online courses offered by a Korean university could be transferred to a U.S. program. I believe that I could be a good Korean language teacher in public schools with my nine years of teaching experience in heritage schools and knowledge from the Korean educational system."

Jung's arguments described how, in addition to the societal barriers preventing heritage school teachers from working in American communities, sometimes the teachers themselves

Language Classroom: A Call for Change in Professional Development do not have the intention to get information to connect with educators outside of Korean communities. Jung's comments reflect that the teachers suffer from a lack of confidence and do not make the effort to be an agent to change the status quo by emphasizing their knowledge and experience as a capital.

The teachers who have been working in heritage schools for 10-20 years have strong knowledge about teaching here. However, they don't have any other teaching experience beyond the heritage schools. They don't know what's going on outside of the heritage schools, so they think they are doing well. Our school assigns the same teacher for the same level every year, so the teachers teach the same level class for several years. The teachers don't want the teaching environment to be changed. They don't want to change themselves, I mean, they don't know how to change.

Yoo also brought up the issue of the qualifications of Korean heritage school teachers, saying, "There are so many teachers who are not qualified. They don't have enough knowledge about Korean language and teaching methods. There is no specific hiring standard, so anyone can be a teacher for the Korean heritage schools. I hope there is a license or certification to improve the teachers' qualifications."

An experienced teacher in the focus group interviews commented that she thought young teachers had to attend professional development workshops, but they did not. According to her, the reason why the young teachers don't do their best in teaching is they have the opportunity to find other jobs besides teaching at heritage schools, thanks to their English ability:

The teachers who have been working in heritage schools for several years are either those who don't have any other job or those who have a blue collar job (which is not as much valued as white collar jobs)

outside of school. Traditionally, teaching is a job respected by people in Korea, so teachers keep this job. However, the young teachers think family gathering or their children are more important than schools. We need young teachers who speak both English and Korean.

The teachers agreed that English is a critical factor that makes it possible for them to work in American society. Soo asserted, "Many teachers here want to be a public school teacher, but their English is not advanced enough. When they teach Korean, they can speak Korean all the time in the class, but they still need to know English for the school administrative work." They also know that understanding American culture is important to work with American students in public schools. As a teacher mentioned, "I understand that I cannot teach American students since we have different cultures. I worked for a public school as a volunteer and it was hard. It is very hard to control American students)."

However, it is not easy for them to acquire linguistic and cultural competence since they keep themselves in Korean immigrant communities. Teachers in Korean heritage schools do their best regardless of the low wage, limited and commitments teaching environments, outside of classroom teaching in the schools. However, their efforts are not sustainable, as a teacher complained, "We sacrifice ourselves even though we receive very low wages and we cannot spend time with our family on Saturdays. I was very disappointed when my principal told us one day, 'You all cannot teach in public schools. Do you know how much effort it takes to be a public school teacher?' Several teachers expressed their hope of being public school teachers of Korean language in the future. They put in effort by sacrificing themselves in heritage schools, but are also discouraged by social assumptions about what public school communities are like. Their negative self-perceptions, such as a 'lack of English ability', 'hard to manage American students due to cultural differences', and 'unrecognized teaching

At the same time, the teachers value their teaching and have confidence in their abilities as a teacher. For this reason, they believe that they could be a good foreign language teacher if they have the opportunity. Young argued about Korean heritage school teachers' capabilities, comparing them with English teachers who are native speakers of English teaching in Korea. She seemed to emphasize language ownership and the position of native

large part of how we define ourselves" (p.164).

language teachers in comparison to English teachers in Korea (Parmegiani, 2008):

I believe that Korean heritage school teachers can be good foreign language teachers in public schools. They do their best in this limited environment. Since heritage schools are not regular schools, we were not formally trained as teachers. However, we have a lot of teaching experience here. In the case of Korea, there are many native speaker English teachers who are not trained as teachers. They just teach because they are native speakers. We are native speaker teachers and we have teaching experience as well. How can't we do better in comparison with these English teachers?

One alternative way the teachers suggested to connect heritage education to public education is for heritage schools to get accredited by the state education department. The teachers think if mainstream education does not recognize heritage education, they should attempt to adapt the

curriculum used in American education. Soo planned a curriculum adaptation from public schools, but she worried that individual teachers' efforts wouldn't get credit in the collectivist community (the heritage school). She argued that any individual teacher's work would be recognized as the school's overall performance and not the teacher's work:

I think we have enough knowledge about Korean, but if we become a public school teacher, it wouldn't be easy because we don't understand the U.S. school system. Instead of being a public school teacher, my colleagues and I would like to develop a lesson plan which incorporates the Korean program from public schools. If this school can become an accredited school, it promotes not only the status of the teachers but also students' motivation. If so, students would come here with the motivation of receiving foreign language credits. We want to work with Americans. They have more respect for teachers in heritage schools. However, I don't think our principal

will like it or give us any credit. If we can't get any credit from our school, we don't want to waste our time.

## Disconnecting from mainstream education

Korean heritage schools were initiated by Korean immigrants and developed with the support of the Korean government and community leaders. In addition, they are mainly affiliated with Korean churches. Therefore, the school administrators are not necessarily related to Korean education. Although the schools have been increasing along with the numbers of students in Korean immigrant communities, the numbers of the schools are not feasible in the U.S. foreign/second language education field. By the same token, the Korean heritage school teachers are "marginalized" in the mainstream U.S. educational field which devalues their qualifications as a teacher. The perception by teacher trainers or workshop leaders that these teachers have a lack of professionalism has promoted top-down professional development methods where the "other voice" and not their own voice is dominant

## No connection with outside FL /HL teachers

Along with cultural capital, social capital should be examined in conjunction with the status of the teachers. Social capital is an issue of developing a human network for one's social mobility (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this notion, what social groups the Korean heritage school teachers belong to may impact their professional identity and ability to use their network as a ladder for social mobility. The data from the in-depth and focus group interviews indicated that their professional circles are limited to the Korean community. It is difficult for them to connect with other foreign or heritage language teachers in mainstream education. The teachers want to know about the educational field outside of heritage schools. As one teacher in a focus group interview commented, "I want to learn the teaching methods which are used in U.S. classrooms. I won't go back to Korea. I will live

here in the United States. So, I want to learn the methods I can apply in the U.S. classroom. I am very curious how American teachers write a lesson plan." In addition, the teachers desire to learn how to manage their U.S.-born students who are familiar with the teaching styles in American schools. A teacher in the focus group interview stated that she wanted to learn how to manage students because she was not able to control them. Teachers complained that students talk to each other in English during class.

Another teacher in the focus group commented that even though she wanted to have a professional teaching job, she could not access information on how she could become a teacher in a U.S. public school. She argued that most heritage school teachers didn't have any connection or networking opportunity with educators in public schools. Therefore, it is hard for them to acquire any information regarding requirements for teacher licenses or certifications or announcements about open teaching positions. This issue not only applies to teaching jobs in public schools but also for

Conflicting Pedagogical Approaches in the Korean Heritage 91 Language Classroom: A Call for Change in Professional Development attending mainstream foreign language teacher conferences, as a teacher mentioned, "No one told us. We don't have any connection with teachers outside of the heritage schools. If we attend workshops for foreign language educators, we can build a network with them." Kyong shared her experience asserting how networks play a role in creating new opportunities:

When I am at this school only, I didn't know how many teaching jobs are out there. A teacher who visited our school for her research introduced me to a substitute teaching position at a government contract language training company. During my time working there, even for a short while, I found there were more opportunities than at heritage schools. I should have studied more in the U.S. and pursued a higher degree to apply for those jobs.

# The gap between classroom practice and the national standard

The teachers feel that they are behind the standard of foreign language teaching whenever they face challenges in their classroom. The teachers want to know how foreign language teaching is practiced in the public schools, especially when the students in their class compare them with the teachers in their home schools. They do not have sufficient knowledge on national standards for foreign language education, which promote students' learning outcomes to meet the societal needs for foreign language skills (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2015). The teaching materials they use in the classroom, which are provided by the Korean government, are sometimes not applicable to the students' level. A teacher in the focus group interview argued that the publishers of Korean textbooks for heritage learners didn't know the situation in the U.S., saying, "The professors who write the books only know about foreign language learners in Korea. The expectations and achievement goals are much

higher than the actual possible outcomes for the students

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here."

The teachers strongly indicated a desire to have the opportunity to participate in the writing process of the textbooks with scholars in Korea. Jung gave her opinion about the teaching materials for her students:

I believe that the heritage school teachers should participate in writing textbooks. The new textbooks the Korean government provided focused on only lower grade level students (e.g., pictures, content). Therefore, we need more books targeted at the students who have a high cognitive level but a low Korean proficiency level. I believe that the teachers here should write the textbook because they understand the students the best. For this reason, I wanted to write a book for my students as well, but the principal was opposed. She told me that there is a standard for the books set by the Korean government, so all decisions are made in Korea. I

told her that other foreign language educators in U.S. public schools practice very advanced teaching methods focusing on tasks and content-based approaches, but we are only teaching our students simple grammar rules to make short sentences.

On the other hand, Soo, as mentioned below, argued that if heritage schools adapt the textbooks published in the U.S. and meet the national or state standard for world language education, it would be more beneficial for the students to connect their learning to Korean programs in public schools:

I want to use the textbooks that public schools use in our county. There is an exam for high school foreign language credits. It is very hard for our students to pass it since it is an essay test. I looked at the textbook (which is made by K-12 Korean public school teachers in the U.S.) and it was good. I hope the Korean government stops making new series of textbooks.

Other teachers in the interviews agreed with this argument, saying that the textbooks and the curriculum the Korean government provides are not suitable in their schools. They believe that the teachers who understand their students and the education environment of heritage schools should make the curriculum for the students. The teaching materials the Korean government provides are designed for Korean heritage learners all over the world. Therefore, the teachers think materials customized for the students in the U.S. are needed. In addition, when making a good textbook, as the teachers argued, writers should know the difference between Korean and English, and the students' level in Korean heritage schools.

# Professional development

The habitus of Korean teachers resists change in the field of heritage schools, and it is hard for them to have a second habitus as well. This might be because the current catalysts for change, such as teachers' workshops and top-down knowledge-based programs, do not help them to change in

the ways they need. The professional development workshops the Korean heritage school teachers can attend are not helpful for them to improve their instructions in terms of learning how to change their traditional teaching styles to adapt to the needs of students with different backgrounds. However, traditional knowledge-based L2 teacher education has been grounded in the perspective in which it is common for teacher educators to lead the theory and pedagogy. If it shifted to a sociocultural teacher education perspective for the "dynamic process of reconstruction and transforming a teacher's practice to be responsive to both individual and local needs" (Johnson, 2009, p. 13), it would satisfy the teachers' needs.

The teachers argued that there is a mismatch between the stakeholders planning the workshop programs and the needs of the teachers. For instance, workshop presenters are either their teaching colleagues from heritage schools or scholars from Korea. However, the leaders are invited by administrators and not by the teachers; therefore,

Teachers write feedback after they attend the semi-annual workshops for DC Korea heritage school teachers, but they (administrators) do not listen to us. The principals of the heritage schools do not understand our needs either since they don't teach students, so they don't understand our demands. In addition, the concepts I learned from a teacher preparation course from a Korean university do not match with the actual situation in America. Since the teacher trainers all studied Korean education (language arts), they taught us what Korean students (native speakers) know. After I took the course, I taught my students the way I had learned using a lot of grammar terminology, but they didn't understand it at all.

Soo also agreed with the notion that workshop leaders should be persons who understand Korean heritage learners in the U.S. as well as those who have knowledge or experience in U.S. education. According to Soo, the NAKS conference invited famous people from Korea, supporting their airfare, accommodation, and honorarium. She opposed the idea that well-known individuals (either scholars or politicians) from Korea can provide useful knowledge or effective teaching methods to teachers within the U.S. context:

I don't understand why the association invites those people and spends all that money. One day, they invited a distinguished Korean linguistic scholar as a keynote speaker, but I didn't learn anything from him. I hope to meet someone who can give us useful information about the society we belong to (U.S.). Why does the association invite a person who cannot benefit us? Teachers here don't have enough information regarding foreign language education here in order for them to answer the questions

parents ask regarding education. I don't think the association does any networking to find American scholars to invite. We need to get new information to adapt ourselves to the changing U.S. society. I wish the association would work with mainstream foreign language conferences or workshops.

National or local foreign language education conferences and workshops, such as ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), NECTFL (Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) or FLAVA (Foreign Language Association of Virginia) can be a good place for Korean heritage school teachers to connect with each other. The teachers can not only learn about the latest pedagogical knowledge, but also have the chance to network with other foreign/second/heritage language school teachers while attending workshops. Specifically, ACTFL has a SIG (special interest group) for heritage language educators in order for them to pursue collaborative work in developing heritage education.

## Low autonomy and self-efficacy

The Korean heritage school teachers have limited autonomy in terms of instruction, assessment, or decision making due traditional hierarchical relationships in Korean to communities. This low autonomy in their profession lowers their self-efficacy as a teacher. Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain (1998)'s argument about "positionality" is a very important concept in understanding the identity of Korean school teachers because heritage "when people positioned, they are not engaged in self-making, rather, they accept, reject, or negotiate the provided identities" (Urrieta, 2007 p. 109).

The teachers do not have confidence about their students' progress since they cannot see how the current levels of the students are connected with the next level, nor do they understand what the ultimate goal is for the students when they graduate. Hee commented on the challenges she faced in the school:

There are several levels in our school, but the proficiency level for each level is very ambiguous. In addition, we don't know how to measure an individual student's progress through the schooling here since there are no students who started schooling here from four years old to the high school level. I am teaching Korean to my own kids at home since I don't trust the school curriculum and the teachers' instructions. I don't believe my daughters' improvement should rely on the heritage school.

### Top-down management and hierarchical relationship

Even though the teachers have limited autonomy within their class, there is a strict hierarchical order the teachers should follow. One of the issues the teachers talked about is that there are many local-level official events that students should participate in, offered by WAKS. The principals in each school pressure the teachers to recommend students and help students who have potential to get awards at the events. Winning awards is very important for principals because

parents use awards to measure the ranking and prestige of the schools.

These numbers also impact the registration numbers for the next school year. However, these extra duties are a burden for the teachers since they need to help these students after school hours. In addition, only a few students whose Korean proficiency level is high enough can become finalists and attend WAKS events. Therefore, most of the students are excluded from several events. Kyong complained about the events because they didn't help the average students' progress:

There are so many Korean language competitions among the heritage schools. Since the Korean government provides some funds for heritage schools, the administrators want to show what they do with the funds and how the students' performance has improved. For vocabulary competitions, teachers should teach 200 vocabulary items and ask students to memorize them all. I don't

think it is effective, but if there is no student who wants to participate in the competition, our principal blames us. Therefore, we must help the students who participate in the competition after school ends.

This top-down process in the schools influences not only the teachers' instruction but also the teachers' professional development. I found through observation of the morning teachers' meeting before the class starts that the principal's decision impacts which workshops the teachers should attend. There was an opportunity for teachers to attend regional foreign language teachers' conferences and workshops with special rates, but the principal only emphasized the NAKS workshop and encouraged the teachers to attend, offering financial support.

#### Relation with other adults

The teachers' self-efficacy is related to other adults in schools such as parents, colleague teachers, or principals. The teachers' position in their social space (Korean heritage schools and local Korean communities) is relational

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), which means that teachers know where and who they are by knowing their proper relation to others (Coldron & Smith, 1999, P. 713).

When parents acknowledge and respect the teachers as professionals, the teachers can have authority in class. Conversely, if parents have little regard for the teachers' teaching methods, the teachers have difficulty establishing authority over their 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation students. Jung argued, "If a teacher cannot handle a student in class, the teacher will report that to the parents. However, the parents don't take it seriously. I don't think teachers in heritage schools have any authority as a teacher." Soo also stated, "How do people in the community know whether a teacher is good or bad in heritage schools? Parents are the judge and they think if a teacher gives a lot of homework, they think the teacher is good. In Korea, when their kids talk negatively about their teacher, parents will support the teacher. However, here, if students don't like the teacher, parents think the teacher is bad." Nonetheless, being a heritage language

Conflicting Pedagogical Approaches in the Korean Heritage 105 Language Classroom: A Call for Change in Professional Development teacher may be a way to have a better social status in Korean immigrant communities. As Jung explained, "Many teachers in the heritage schools had white collar jobs in Korea, but as immigrants, they have very limited options for their careers due to the language barrier and most of them become laborers. Teaching jobs in heritage schools are relatively good because they give you a certain status (white collar job) in the community."

## Extra burdens of teaching

The teachers must follow the direction of the principals if they want to keep their jobs. However, the teachers have the burden of not only making teaching materials to meet the students' needs and levels, but also other duties besides teaching, such as volunteering for several schools, WAKS, or community events. Young explained about the kinds of events teachers should help at.

There are many events such as vocabulary competitions, making short sentences, talking about my dream, poetry and traditional story presentations,

competitions, traditional holidays essay and celebrations. Parent meetings (twice a year), teacher meetings (once a month), NAKS workshops (once a year), WAKS workshops (twice a year); why do we spend our time for these events? I don't think these help students improve their Korean events proficiency. These events (competitions) are only for privileged students.

The other burden the teachers have is pressure from parents' unrealistic expectations for their children's progress. The teachers complained that parents in the heritage schools do not support or help their children complete homework, but they still expect their children to show progress. As Soo mentioned;

Only four hours per week in Korean schools is not enough for students to develop their language skills. The students who live with their grandparents can reach a high proficiency level since they speak Korean at home. Other students usually just quit

when they learn how to read and write. I speak both Korean and English in the class because they don't understand Korean well. I don't think I provide students with full immersion lessons which maximize students' listening and speaking abilities.

Regardless of the burden of working inside and outside of the classroom, the teachers have a strong desire for self-improvement as a teacher by learning the required knowledge for language teachers. Hee said, "I love to be with the children. As I teach more, I have more desire to learn Korean pedagogy more systematically. I want to have self-efficacy as a language teacher through professional development. I don't want this job to be a volunteer job but instead I want it to be a professional job."

# **Conclusion and Implications**

The study contributes understanding and insights into the heritage teachers' perspectives on teaching and learning in Korean heritage schools. The professional identity of Korean

heritage school teachers is shaped from their own academic experience in Korea and several other experiences such as volunteering in public schools, professional development workshops. Their identity is further (re)produced/constructed through their teaching in heritage schools. Teachers have broadened their understanding of the heritage language learners through teaching experience at heritage schools. Teachers have learned that their teaching methods conflict with students' learning styles and that there is a conflicting value system between students and teachers in their classrooms.

However, teachers maintained their traditional teaching styles (habitus) regardless of these conflicts. The teachers' dispositions (teaching beliefs and teaching practices) are perpetuated because there is a lack of professional development opportunities, which could provide a space for the teachers to reflect on their teaching beliefs and practices (Borko, 2004; Freeman & Johnson, 2005). They also believe they are disconnected from mainstream foreign/second

Language Classroom: A Call for Change in Professional Development language education. The study also presents an opportunity to analyze the current heritage teacher education model, which is top-down with little space for the voice of heritage language teachers. This is unfortunate because teacher experience and insights can contribute positively to teacher education (Hammerness et al., 2005).

Exploration of Korean teachers' identity may help motivate the heritage education community to redesign future teacher education programs. This study was valuable because it provides a space for the participating Korean heritage school teachers to reflect on their professional experiences and identities as teachers. Cross's (2010) study with a Japanese teacher has revealed that "good practice" emerges from a social and cultural context. Therefore, the knowledge base of language teacher education must always take account of the contexts within which that knowledge is to be applied. The format of the current workshops should be changed to meet the teachers' needs. Decisions concerning the topics and content of the workshops should be made by the teachers. In

this way, teachers could bring up their own challenges in the classroom, have a space to reflect on their teaching experiences, and share them with other colleagues for consideration.

Since this study was conducted, NAKS has collaborated with the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) for a new certificate program. This is a promising development and there is a need for additional funding for programs in teacher licensure so that heritage language teachers are able to teach in PreK-12 public schools. Since the development of the COVID pandemic in 2020, there has been a growing teacher shortage nationwide. In addition to the above recommendations, considering that the majority of Korean heritage school teachers are mothers with children, the following three practical suggestions are made for active participation in professional development workshops. First, sufficient childcare services should be provided to ensure that female teachers are free to attend workshops. In addition, administrators should recognize the

need and value of teacher education and increase the participation of teachers' workshops; participating teachers should be paid to attend the professional development opportunities. Second, teachers should be provided with travel funds to attend conferences to present their work. Through such opportunities, teachers will be able to communicate with other language educators, and it will help them broaden their scope and understand the current trends in language education in the U.S. Third, even though the NAKS and WAKS have tried to provide more teachers' workshops to meet the teachers' immediate needs, such as developing teaching activities and assessments, redirect recommend that they their curricular approaches/goals to be aligned with national standards for world language learning for students in the U.S. Finally, teachers themselves should form a teachers' community for advocacy and joint action so that they can strengthen their identity as professionals—not as volunteers. Involvement in a teachers' community creates opportunities for regular

meetings with other teacher mentors and sustains a long term community of practice that enables teachers to reflect on and transform their own teaching.

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