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Thesis for the Degree of Master of Global and Area Studies

**Factors Influencing Multicultural  
Adolescents' Bilingual Loss and  
Vietnamese Ethnic Identity Crisis**

**(The case study on Korean - Vietnamese families  
in Busan and Gyeongnam areas)**

by

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Pukyong National University

February, 2022

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**다문화 청소년의 이중언어 상실과  
베트남 종족정체성 위기에 영향을  
미치는 요인**

**(부산과 경남지역한-베 다문화 가정 사례 연구)**

Advisor: Prof. Bub Mo Jung

by

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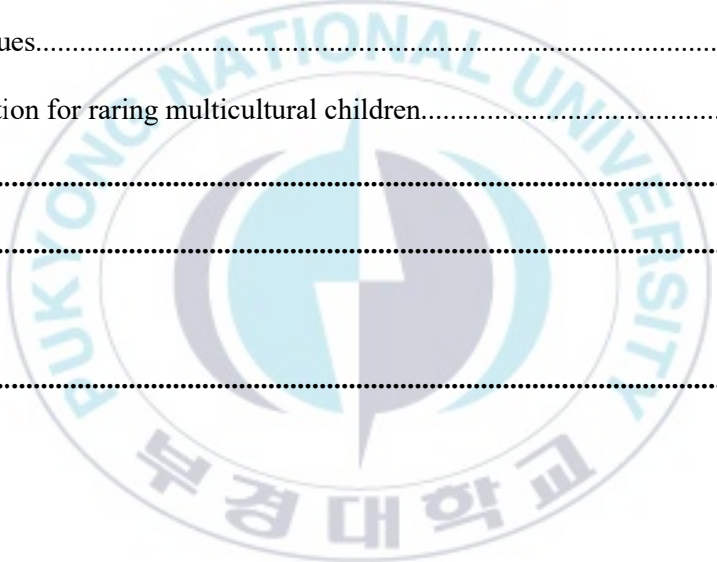
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Factors Influencing Multicultural Adolescents' Bilingual Loss  
and Vietnamese Ethnic Identity Crisis  
(The case study on Korean - Vietnamese Families in Busan and  
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**Abstract**

The number of interethnic marriages between Korean men and Vietnamese women has been rising, and these international marriages lead to an increase in the numbers of multicultural children. The existence of interethnic marriage receives significant concern from social scientists as members from different cultural backgrounds are likely to become the vulnerable objects of social isolation and discrimination. Generally, although being born in multicultural families, multicultural children tend to strongly identify themselves as member of dominant communities and adopt only the host country's language. This research aims at figuring out the factors leading to the intention not to practice bilingual education and not to maintain Vietnamese ethnic identity for biracial adolescents of migrant marriage women.

The research mainly uses mixed methods in data collection and analysis. The in-depth interviews were conducted on 13 participants (including 8 Vietnamese mothers and 5 Korean-Vietnamese children), and there were 50 participants in the questionnaire survey. Through interview content and data analysis, the research tends to illustrate the internal and external reasons causing limitation in bilingual education and ethnic identity maintainance.

Based on the research result, it suggests some recommendations to improve the life of multicultural children and and to create a healthy environment for them to grow.

**Keywords: marriage migration women, multicultural adolescents, bilingual education, ethnic identity**



다문화 청소년의 이중언어 상실과 베트남 종족정체성 위기에 영향을 미치는 요인  
(부산과 경남에서 한-베 다문화 가정 사례 연구)

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**국문초록**

한국남성과 베트남여성의 국제결혼의 수는 꾸준히 증가하고 있으며 이러한 국제결혼으로 인해 다문화 자녀의 수 역시 증가하고 있다. 다문화 배경을 가지는 구성원들은 사회적 고립과 차별의 대상이 될 가능성이 높기때문에 사회과학자들은 국제 결혼에 큰 관심을 갖고 있다. 일반적으로 다문화 청소년들은 다문화 가정에서 자라나지만 주류 집단의 정체성이나 언어로서 한국어만 학습하는 경향이 강하다. 본 연구에서는 한국사회에서 베트남 어머니와 청소년 자녀와의 관계를 살펴보고 이들이 이중언어를 사용하거나 종족 정체성을 유지하려 하지 않는 요인을 분석하고자 한다.

본 연구는 주로 데이터 수집 및 분석의 혼합 방법을 사용한다. 50 명을 대상으로 설문 조사를 시행한 후, 그 중 13 명의 참가자(베트남 어머니 8 명, 한-베 다문화 청소년 5 명)를 대상으로 심층면접을 실시하였다. 인터뷰 내용과 데이터 분석을 통해 이중언어 교육과 베트남 종족 정체성 유지에 한계를 초래하는 내-외부적 이유를 설명한다. 연구 결과를 바탕으로 다문화 청소년의 삶의 질을 향상시키고 그들이 건강하게 양육될 수 있는 환경 조성을 위한 몇 가지 정책 수립을 제안한다.

**키워드:** 결혼 이주 여성, 다문화 청소년, 이중언어 교육, 종족 정체성

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1. Statement of the problem

The world witnesses the massive international migration of human beings, from one continent to other areas, from rural areas to urban ones, from developing countries to developed nations and *vice versa*. Following the globalization trend, the number of international marriages in South Korea (hereinafter “Korea”) ‘increased gradually, this kind of phenomenon contributes to changing and reestablishing society in political and economic aspects. Within more than three decades from 1960 to 1994, the numbers of Korean rural population plunged sharply from 58.2% to 11.6 % due to the expansion of urbanization and industrialization. The unbalanced population led to rural issues like labor shortage, economic gap, and seriously the deficit in the number of the bride (Lee, 2014). To solve this problem, there were some policies conducted by the government in supporting bachelor farmers or fisheries in rural who do not have the ability in finding Korean partners by fostering marriage between Korean men and Korean-Chinese (Chosun-jok). Chosun-jok women and Korean men to some extent shared the familiar cultural and social background, which was the reason why from 1993 to 2009, the number of Chinese ethnic wife always accounted for the highest proportion. However, since 2006 the percentage of Chinese ethnic brides has gradually decreased and the Southeast Asia women were sought as the replacement (Lee, 2014). In some rural area, Vietnamese brides even took more than 70% because it was said that Vietnamese females were suitable for doing farming, and that they were also willing to sacrifice for the partner’s family and their children (Tran, et al., 2017).

Table 1. The number of international marriages in Korea through years

Nationality / Cases	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	20,637	18,307	16,152	14,677	14,822	14,869	16,608	17,687	11,100
Vietnam	6,586	5,770	4,743	4,651	5,377	5,364	6,338	6,712	3,136
Chinese	7,036	6,058	5,485	4,545	4,198	3,880	3,671	3,649	2,524
Thai	323	291	439	543	720	1,017	1,560	2,050	1,735
Japanese	1,309	1,218	1,345	1,030	838	843	987	903	758
American	526	637	636	577	570	541	567	597	432
Philippines	2,216	1,692	1,130	1,006	864	842	852	816	367
Cambodian	525	735	564	524	466	480	455	432	275
Others	2,393	2,183	2,087	2,078	2,066	2,179	2,455	2,805	2,150

Source: *Korean Statistical Information Service*

In Vietnam, cross-border marriage brings historical, social, economical relations between Vietnam and the nation of its counterpart. Historically, the international marriage between Vietnamese women and American soldiers occurred in the Vietnam War, later in the 1990s South Korea and Taiwan were two nations that attracted the most Vietnamese brides because it was supposed that there is a cultural familiarity between sending and the receiving countries. International marriages can be explained by economical theory. That is, it is supposed that women from underdeveloped countries attempt to escape from poverty and seek better financial conditions, while men of wealthier nations make use of their socioeconomic to attract brides from the poor countries (Kim, 2012). The primary motivation of most foreign brides is sending

remittance for the family and remittance is considered as an important source in improving life condition of the receiving country, therefore despite the complicated consequences of these foreign marriages, Vietnamese government almost did not have any specific policies or strategies to prevent it. Moreover, the activeness of commercials in the newspaper, television or on the streets from private marriage matchmaking agencies is also the factor fostering demand in Vietnamese-Korean marriage (Truong, Gasper, Handmaker & Bergh, 2014). In addition, recently thanks to the widespread of internet, it witnesses the number of international marriages through introducing their friends and acquaintances or meeting someone in internet platform.

While the prospect of financial improvement and economic stability draw the international bride's interest into these international marriages, the foreign brides are described as "typical traditional women" who meet the need of the groom's standard. The win-win relationship seems to bring huge beneficial opportunities for "buyer", "seller", and brokerage. However, these marriage brokerages receive criticism from civil organizations due to their human right violation against women, they argue that these "mail-order brides" are actually considered as the victims of human trafficking or sexual trading and the age gap between Korean husbands and young foreign brides is also blamed for causes leading to high rate of divorce.

The increase in the number of interracial marriages lead to the fact that the proportion of multicultural students has been increasing. While in 2012 there were 46,954 multicultural students, it increased to 147,378 students in 2020 and took 2.8% of the total number. And as reported by the Ministry of Education, the proportion of

students from Vietnamese families was the highest with 31.7% (2020), followed by Chinese and Philippines with 23.7% and 10.3% respectively.

Table 2. Number of multicultural children from nations

Nation	Multicultural students number (people)	Percentage (%)
Total	147,378	100
Vietnamese	46,683	31.7
Chinese (except Chinese ethnic)	34,885	23.7
Philippines	15,140	10.3
Chinese (Chinese ethnic)	12,296	8.3
Japanese	8,686	5.9
Others	29,688	20.1

*Source: Ministry of Korean Education*

## 2. Purpose of the study and research questions

It is hard to deny the advantages of these international marriages in solving both Vietnam and Korea's social obstacles like balancing birth rate or supplying remittance, these interracial marriages also foster the strong relationship between two nations economically and politically. Nevertheless, it brings complicated social circumstances in marriage like domestic violence, racial discrimination, high rate of divorce, illegal residence, and social exclusion. The problem does not only happen between couples, but also in child generation who are grown in these multicultural families. These students receive cultural characteristics from both mothers and fathers who derive from different social backgrounds. And the elements related to cultural differences influence their mental and physical development, especially when they interact with other peers from Korean traditional households. The growth in the



number of these multicultural adolescents created a social phenomenon receiving concerns from social scientists and local authorities, there have been many studies conducted to explore these ethnic communities, especially the relation between the cross-border mothers and their interethnic offspring. Overall, it is proved that parents are one of the main factors influencing children, not only in their adolescence but in their adulthood. Especially in multicultural families where the connection between immigrant mothers and children contains different traits, and the essential role of these migrant marriage women in from academic achievement to schooling adaption was proved, (Lee, 2013; Ding & Chin, 2019; Choi, 2019; Duong & Park, 2018; Kim, 2019).

This research basically tends to figure out the Vietnamese mothers' role to their children by exploring their experiences in educating bilingual language and maintaining children's ethnic identity, and it focuses on answering the following research questions.

1. Which factors do influence the Vietnamese migrant mothers in not teaching bilingual language to multicultural adolescents?
2. Which elements do affect Vietnamese migrant mothers in not maintaining ethnic identity to multicultural adolescents?
3. What are the result of bilingual loss and ethnic identity crisis of multicultural adolescents?

Ethnic language proficiency is one of the elements to measure ethnic identity (Phinney, 2003), meaning that ethnic identity may overlap bilingual education in multicultural backgrounds. Nonetheless, this research primarily aims at highlighting the value of ethnic language by categorizing bilinguals as the equivalent segment.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Bilingual acquisition

In general, the consequence of migrant marriage phenomenon leads to the increase in the hundreds of researches related to multi-culture in Korea. First of all, in terms of bilingual language practice, acquiring dominant language is assumed to be the essential means for migrant women and their children in order to integrate into Korean society. As a result, bilingual fluency is not highly appreciated in these families, and the over-emphasis on the importance of Korean proficiency accidentally leads to the depreciation in the mother's minority language or bilingual education. Apart from Korean language priority, instead of taking advantage of bilingual environment, migrant marriage mothers are afraid that it would negatively affect children's language development (Park, et al., 2012), they tend to promote dominant language (Korean) acquirement to biracial children. In addition, the mother's mother tongue receives a negative attitude from the spouse family members (Ko, 2010) or the awareness about the origin nation of the foreign mothers and ethnic language also create a barrier in bilingual command. Gradually, the native language of foreign mothers is ignored and considered useless, then biracial adolescents who are supposed to acquire bilingual language only practice the local language and commonly have no idea about the original language of the foreign mother. The early studies in the United States and Wales assumed that bilingual ability was the negative cause leading to children's poor academic performance and creativity lacking. These students were the ones belonging to minority groups or immigrant communities,

languages of motherland is viewed as an embarrassment of their background identity and not allowed to be spoken in school (Mohanty & Perregaux, 1997). Similarly, Korean language acquisition is encouraged in interethnic families, while language of the foreign mother is limited. In Korea, according to the report of Kim (2016), there is no significant gap in Korean proficiency between groups of children, but the bilingual ability of children from Korean-Chinese, Korean-Japanese is higher than that of Korean -Vietnamese, Korean - Philippines, and etc. Language would not exist independently without community, language's growth or decline is explained by analyzing its connection to the communities. Therefore, examining the politics and power situation in which minority languages are situated becomes important. The majority language is more often superior to minority language while minority language is mostly unstable in strength as the result of social and economical status (Baker, 2011). Children from minority groups may be at risk of losing minority language because the desire to be a member of majority community fosters them to quickly learn and obtain the mainstream language. Moreover, the higher status and prestige of majority language also contribute to motivation in language acquiring (Backer, 2011). In America, languages of ethnic minorities are officially educated in classes, or in Canada English and French are both used because it is proved that bilingual children's language development and intellectual development. Nonetheless, Korean people have tendencies to ignore the importance of bilingual education (Vu, 2020).

As a result, the foreign mothers try to communicate by their broken Korean instead of their native language, and this tendency language practice leads to inaccurate grammar or mistaken pronunciation of children (Kim, 2011). The studies

of Song & Im (2020), Kim, et al. (2018), Im, et al. (2021) demonstrated the positive outcome of bilingual fluency on children, which proved that language proficiency is not negatively influenced by using the foreign mother's home language. It also plays an important role in children's schooling adjustment; the higher bilingual ability is, the more quickly children adapt at school. Besides, bilingual ability influences adolescents' psychology, those who have bilingual experiences show higher self-esteem and feel proud of themselves. Moreover, bilinguals improve the relationship between families members, not being a simple tool to communicate, but also a medium for family cohesion (Song, 2018). As the valuable opportunities of bilingual ability can not be denied in globalization, foreign language acquisition is considered as a practical communication tool for international connection and multicultural family is an ideal environment for children to enhance their bilingual practice. The recent researches of Zhou (2020) on Chinese-Korean families and Vu (2020), Duong & Park (2018) respectively illustrated that the foreign mothers from multicultural families were conscious about the importance of bilingual education on children's psychological development and future path, they express their effort in teaching ethnic language to children through various approaches like daily conversation or homeland visiting. The research of Duong & Park (2018) demonstrated that Vietnamese are conscious of the benefit of bilingual language, knowing that it is not just a means to communicate but also a channel to express maternal emotion and convey knowledge about Vietnamese history and culture. In cases of the first immigrant generation who are supposed not to be proficient in majority language, their bilingual children can become language brokers or interpreters supporting translating information for their own parents (Backer, 2011).

The bilingual language ability at the early ages also raises children's self-esteem as the relationship between parents and children reaches satisfaction (Song, 2018). Bilingualism is not only beneficial for the minorities but also for majorities as it solves ethnic conflict. However, the lacking in teaching methods and the shortage in language ability prevent foreign marriage women from conducting bilingual education. Furthermore, realizing the fact that it is difficult for teenagers from multicultural families to take opportunities in acquiring bilingual education in curriculum. Since 2010 Korean government has conducted several programs to support bilingual teaching and learning. However, these programs did not show expected outcomes because they only focused on fostering the language instructors instead of the learners (Kim & Lee, 2021).

## **2. Ethic identity**

In regard to multicultural adolescents' identity, questions related to migrant marriage women and children's ethnic identity in Korea receive special concerns from many scholars, since it causes curiosity about how they maintain identity in the society like South Korea where homogeneous-blood is more likely to be highly evaluated. As a member of ethnic minority community, they would feel uncomfortable when private matter like their ethnic identity is publicly discussed and concerned. They are even unintentionally forced to definitely decide "here" or "there", while that is sensitive and difficult to give an exact distinct decision. Being called as "marginalized citizens" make them feel like no sense of belonging to a specific group and the exaggerated curiosity from others about their identity can bring embarrassed and ashamed attitudes in these bi-ethnic members. From social perspective, there is a strong relationship between the one's identity and collective identity, because

individual is a component of community and collective identity shapes individual identity. The way a person identifies and reflects himself as a member of a large community provides prediction in a social phenomenon such as when certain groups strongly conserve their ethnic identity whereas the others accept being assimilated, or there are serious conflict occurs in other groups. Therefore, analyzing ethnic identity should be taken into account.

On one hand, the positive attitude toward bi-cultural fosters children's development has been proved by many scholars. Mun & An (2010) said the more biracial students have a right awareness of their identity, the better they adjust at school. Furthermore, strong and positive awareness about ethnic identity has a strong relation to academic achievement and healthy mentality (Wakefield & Hudley, 2017). The proper development of identity does not only strengthen schooling adaption but also has a positive impact on various aspects of multicultural youth's development such as social psychology and emotion (Kim et al., 2015).

On the other hand, the qualitative research of Lee (2018) figured out that the bicultural acceptance in multicultural youth increase until they are primary students and declines when they are in the first year of middle school. It is supposed that at this stage, they tend to interact with other peers at school rather than with their families. At the age of teenagers when it witnesses the forming of identity and high possibility in unstable psychology, their multicultural background related to ethnic minority and ethnic race also contribute to the confusion in these adolescents' ethnic identity. Lacking cohesion in ethnicity is considered as one of the main cause leading to low social adaptation and academic failure. It is reported that multicultural families have a tendency in receiving discrimination higher than Korean families, thus they are

easily become victims of social exclusion or bullying due to their physical appearance or their having "abnormal" mothers (Kim, 2018; Lee et al., 2015; Kim, 2019). While experience in social exclusion and discrimination have a negative impact on children's ethnic identity, multicultural families in Korea are attached to poverty, high unemployment rate, poor health condition, and etc., compared to Korean families. Moreover, the perception of Korean students about "multicultural" is quite negative, as Korean students commonly define this group as "bully" (wangtta), "pathetic" (ansseureoum). They label the children of young Southeast Asia women and old-aged Korean men as "child of aborigine" (senjumin - extremely racist meaning), because these children have different color skin and different languages so that they can not get along well with Korean students. In addition, the committing suicide rate of the adolescent in Korea is the highest of all OECD (Organization for Economic Corporation and Development) countries, students from multicultural families are at risk of suicide behavior three times higher than the normal ones because of factors related to their social background such as low academic performance and poor economic support (Park & Lee, 2016).

Therefore, due to the experiences of social discrimination, multicultural adolescents have no choice except to integrate and become a member of dominant community, they are even encouraged to preserve Korean identity (Lee, Kim & Lee, 2015) by their own parents. According to the research result of Seol (2015), there were 97.2% of migrant marriage women who agreed that their children are Korean. Many multicultural children avoid mentioning themselves as multicultural adolescents, while Japanese-Korean children do not take pride in their biracial background due to stigmatization on historical tension between two nations,

Southeast Asia-Korean ones express low pride in biracial identity because of the poor social-economical situation (Brown & Koo, 2015). Additionally, lacking opportunities in visiting foreign parents' land and language practice lead to low self-esteem about the multiculturalism of children. Because they are not able to access knowledge about foreign parents' motherland, they merely suppose that it is more inferior compared to Korean ones. Consequently, multicultural education is not identified as a priority in Korean society (Kim, 2011).

Although most multicultural adolescents are born and raised in Korea, their multicultural family creates a unique background in which elements deriving from foreign parents also contribute to their identity development. In other words, these adolescents partially receive customs and experience foreign parent's cultural values through daily life pattern, it means that being different from single-ethnic children, they have high chances in conceiving bi-ethnic identity. However, the migrant marriage women tend to strongly define themselves as Korean identity and try to orientate their bi-ethnic children as Korean identity too. Ethnic identity is contributed by various components and measures by numbers of scales, in which self-identification is the most obvious and straightforward one (Phinney, 2003). People identify themselves as ethnic group names by adopting original country nationality or the host country nationality, or even multi-ethnic label, such as Korean-Vietnamese. According to the qualitative research on multicultural Korean - Vietnamese families of Kim and Hong (2018), when being required to answer the open-ended question "which is your nationality", the answer of adolescents were categorized and analyzed as follows: firstly, there was more than 75% of bi-ethnic children defined themselves as Korean instead of other nationalities because they



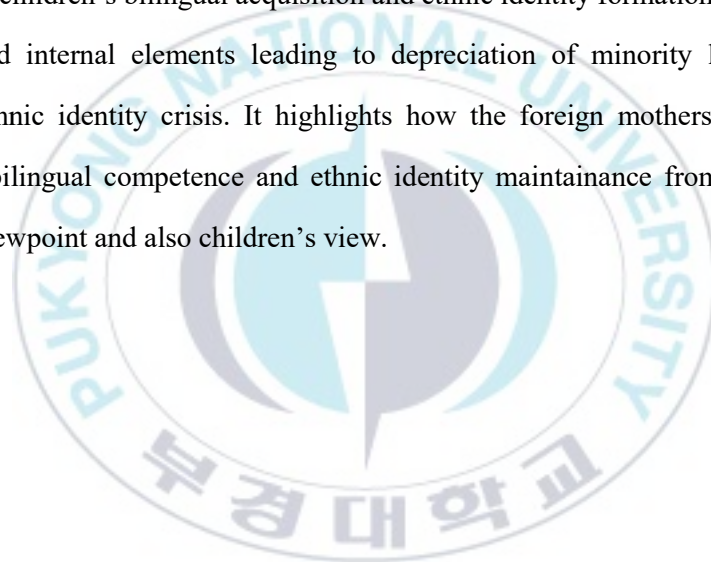
were born in Korea. Secondly, the percentage of adolescents who considered themselves as Korean - Vietnamese was about 25%. Lastly, there were not many children who defined themselves as Vietnamese or they were not mature enough to be conscious about nationality.

Korean identity is priority over minority identity can be explained by the sociocultural context of the host country and experience in social exclusion. First of all, since international marriage is the consequence of gender inequality where Korean men find it hard to meet the appropriate spouses, they mostly seek Asian brides whose skin colors are not distinctively different. Although being defined as “a multicultural nation”, characteristics related to the multiculturalism of Korea are quite distinct from other countries. For example, the major citizens of the United States are immigrants or the descendants of previous immigrants, or in countries like Vietnam and China, the majority and ethnic minorities here are integrated into one state. In Korea, the increase of immigrants is the result of international brides, laborers, and overseas students. And in cases of the foreign brides, they individually immigrate into Korea without their families or relatives (Yang, 2011; Jung, 2014). This phenomenon creates distinct multiculturalism in Korea. Secondly, as marginalized citizens, foreign brides are bound by the role attached to them. The Korean mothers-in-law tend to impose patriarchal ideology and subordinate position on the foreign daughter-in-law due to her lower social status and economic poverty (Lee, 2014). These foreign brides also expectedly become reproductive objects and sacrifice their whole life for taking care of their husband and children as traditional Korean female.

In conclusion, the behavior in which multicultural children and migrant marriage women constantly identify themselves as members of the host country is viewed as

the essential strategy to prevent discrimination and meet social expectation, thus this tendency predict the crisis in ethnic identity of this ethnic group.

Being different from the existing researches, in this paper, the author does not only explain the Vietnamese mother's attitude toward ethnic language education, but also the attitude of the mixed-ethnicity children's attitude. Instead of explaining how these marginalized citizens identify their ethnic identity or the relation between ethnic identity to children development, this research mainly demonstrates factors influencing children's bilingual acquisition and ethnic identity formation by analyzing external and internal elements leading to depreciation of minority language and minority ethnic identity crisis. It highlights how the foreign mothers play role in children's bilingual competence and ethnic identity maintainance from Vietnamese mother's viewpoint and also children's view.



### **III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

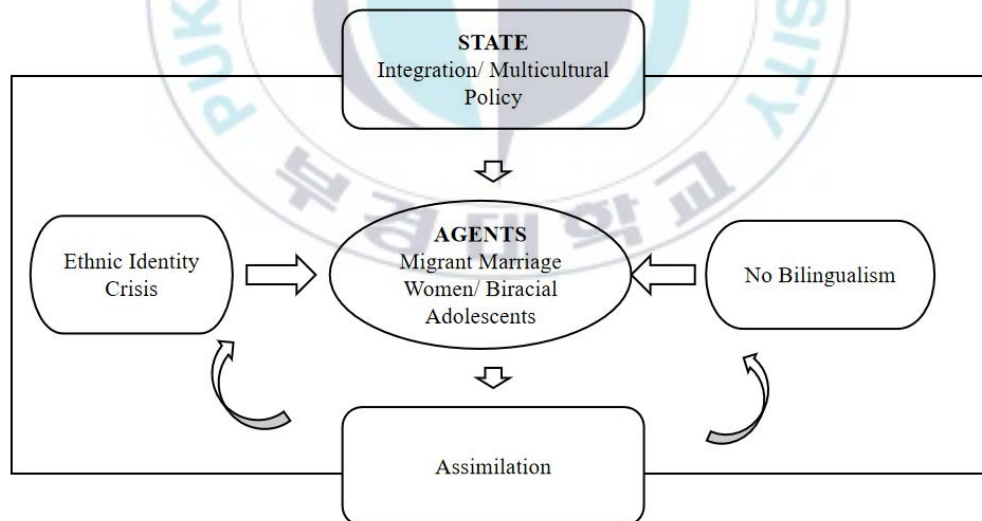
#### **1. Theoretical framework**

Conflict is predictable as there are two or more two cultural groups interact, thus it raises a question of how the individual in these groups changes behavior and manner to depress conflict and maintain harmonization. Acculturation is considered as the outcome of majority and minority relations, acculturation includes four strategies, assimilation, separation integration, marginalization. Each strategy is adopted by minority members depends on the degree in which they express their willingness in maintaining cultural heritage and the degree they seek engagement with the majority society. Among four strategies, the integration is considered as the ideal approach that encourages retaining valued features for those who wish to maintain, at the same time reinforcing the involvement of minority groups into the dominant society (Berry, 2003). In assimilation, it witnesses the disappearance and the decline of original ethnic distinction while the majority's value is more preferred and favored. Contrary to assimilation, separation is defined as the objection of majority culture while only minority culture is reserved. In marginalization, neither majority nor minority value is significantly salient. In terms of definition, assimilation and acculturation sometimes have been used with the same meaning.

Acculturation strategies can be predicted through cultural identity, and ethnic identity is related to separation. Assimilation is predicted by national identity, while biracial identity predicts integration and no clear identity means marginalization

(Berry, 2003). Assimilation is constructed when the newcomers change themselves to blend into the host community. In their standpoint, erasing ethnic differentiation means escaping from the subordinate position and being accepted as a member of the dominant community (Shibutani & Kwan, 2005). Although assimilation fosters the adjustment of the immigrants into the host country, it is defined as a painful and uneasy experience. If a person can suffer from confusion in playing two roles at the same time such as one in minority and one in the dominant group, he is likely to become the victim of humiliation and social exclusion due to his ethnic identity. Achieving assimilation happens when someone expresses his willingness in adopting dominant values and his willingness is accepted by the majority.

Figure 1. The model of relation of assimilation on ethnic identity and bilingualism



The tremendous increase in the number of foreign labour and migrant marriage women turns Korea into a multicultural society. Although the proportion of foreigners

in this country is still lower than that of Western European countries where the immigrant occupies about 20%, which challenges the Korean government in establishing and amending policies related to these alien community (Kim, Jo & Kim, 2017). Figure 1 explains the main theoretical framework that is applied in this study. Rhetorically, the Korean government promotes the idea of multiculturalism by conducting policies supporting migrant marriage women's adaption such as Korean classes, cultural experience and employment training. Migrant marriage women are also advised to adopt Korean culture as a means to solve their difficulty in adjustment. It indicates that their belonging to Korean ethnic group is the essential and prerequisite condition for erasing differences. In contrast, policy related to supporting multicultural families has been criticized for its natural assimilation rather than multiculturalism (Kim, Jo & Kim, 2017; Yang, 2011; Beslanger, Lee & Wang, 2010, Yoo, 2021). Consequently, assimilation ends up with a crisis in ethnic identity and the loss of minority mother tongue. In reverse, the crisis in ethnic identity and decline of minority language predicts the high pressure of strong assimilation.

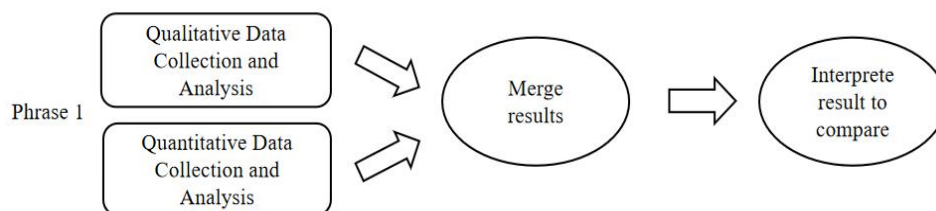
Under the globalization of the contemporary world, transnationalism is considered as a new theory in contributing to the limitation in literatures related to the migrant phenomenon. Transnational migration is the pattern in which one maintains a connection to the sending country although he moves across national borders and establishes new relations to the receiving nation (Guarnizo, Portes & Haller, 2003). Transnationalism claims that during practicing and adjusting, immigrants permanently maintain a connection to the original country in social and cultural aspects instead of diminishing completely the commitment to the sending country (Joppke & Morawska, 2003). It is also explained that transnationalism weakens the

power and control of migrants of the receiving state. Therefore, the commitment to the sending country undermines the assimilation model on the newcomer and their children. Nonetheless, in this paper, the author intends to prove that the pattern of migrant marriage in Korea is supposed to lean toward assimilation rather than other kinds of theories.

## 2. Research methodology

In this paper, the researcher chooses the mixed methodology to clarify finding by taking advantage of the strength of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mixed method is considered as the methodology helping find out the answers that can not be conducted separately by quantitative or qualitative (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This kind of methodology is defined by various terms such as "combined" or "integrated research" in which it is the combination of the qualitative and quantitative data. Among three core mixed method design created by Creswell (2017), this research adopts the convergent design (one-phrase design). Figure 2 explains the research procedure in which the qualitative data and quantitative data are both collected and analyzed separately, then the results are merged and interpreted.

Figure 2. Convergent Design (One-Phrase Design)



Source: Adapted from Creswell (2018)

Firstly, among 5 main approaches in qualitative research, phenomenology and ethnography are the most suitable approaches which are applied in this study. The reason for this choice is explained as follows; phenomenology describes the common experience of a group of participants (Creswell, 2016). This study analyzes a phenomenon in which a group of Vietnamese women got married to Korean men, and gave birth to rear hybrid children. It focuses on what these women experience and how the mother's role influences their children's life. Then, ethnographic research interprets the common belief, values, behavior and language of cultural-sharing groups (Creswell, 2016). In multicultural families, it witnesses the interaction between Korean and Vietnamese culture in various aspects like language, value, heritage, etc. And this research intends to figure out "the way of life" of this identifiable group. By using the mother tongue in in-depth-interview, the Vietnamese mothers would find it comfortable to express and share what they have been experienced while living in Korea and raising their children. Drawing upon the ethnographic work, the author has intention in setting up interviews with participants at convenient spaces where the interview can be comfortably conducted such as coffee shops or interviewee's house. Each interview is expected to last 45 minutes to 90 minutes and the participant can provide insightful stories about their life pattern and relationship with their multicultural children. In 8 months, from March, 2021 to October 2021, 8 in-depth interviews had been conducted (see Appendix 1). Through the Vietnamese community in Busan, the researcher made rapport with Vietnamese mothers who had resided there. Then, the data is not only based on the interview content, but also based on the observation via directly attending Vietnamese classes with children. Among the research participants, Huong is a migrant mother who was working at the

Multicultural Family Support center; Bang, Phung and Mai are three single moms who are the breadwinner, playing roles of both father and mother. During conducting in-depth interviews with participants who are Korean-Vietnamese children, due to the limitation in language ability, the researcher asked for local supporters in translating and transcribing interview content in Korean. All of the names of participants are pseudonym to protect their personal information.

Secondly, to clarify the general overview about the biracial adolescent's bilingual acquisition and ethnic identity maintain, the quantitative survey was conducted on 50 Vietnamese migrant marriage women having experiences in raising Korean-Vietnamese children. By emailing and contacting multicultural supporting centers in Busan, the Vietnamese workers from these centers agreed to support in introducing and delivering online questionnaires to migrant marriage women through google sheets. The data then is collected and analyzed by SPSS 26 and excel programs.



## **IV. BILINGUAL LOSS IN MULTICULTURAL FAMILIES**

### **1. Priority in evaluating the dominant language**

The equal opportunity to learn mother tongue should be given to all students, but it should consider the status of ethnic language in social and political perspectives. The status of ethnic language can be explained through the bilingual education system. On one hand, as bilingual education is also a complex issue where linguistic diversity can be harmful to the national unity, the disorganized writing system or the competing for minority's language and identity in African countries resulted in the replacement of English or French as the official language (Mohanty & Perregaux, 1997). Furthermore, the question like whose mother tongue should be taught at school or how many languages should be taken is also complicated. In Korea, most of bi-ethnic students from multicultural backgrounds are expected to acquire Korean as the first and official language at school, they are taught to read and write the language that is put at the higher position rather than their migrant mothers' languages. The position of mother's mother tongue is even more inferior to English as English acquisition is the compulsory subject in the educational system because English fluency is also supposed to bring more socioeconomic advantages.

Apart from education at school, family is viewed as an ideal condition for learning language naturally, and the foreign mother plays the role of guiding their children on how to practice it. However, it seems impossible to take advantage of this context. School language and home language are not antagonistic but connected through interrelationship, and this interrelationship contributes to establish children's

awareness and consciousness in linguistic competence (Mohanty & Perregaux, 1997). At school, if the minority's language is not measured as the dominant language, it results in children's low acknowledgment of the presence of other languages outside classroom. At this point, the educational system fails in raising the positive attitude of students toward the minority's language. Students assumed that it is not necessary to attain the language of minority due to the impractical evaluation, thus these minority languages lead to its disappearance in daily conversations between migrant mothers and children. The situation in which the majority language is likely to be acquired at home and school definitely replaces the minority language.

Int: 왜 베트남어를 공부 안 해요? (*Why didn't you learn Vietnamese?*)

Phung's daughter (Miyoung): 영어가 주요 과목 중 하나여서 영어를 먼저 공부해야 해요 (*I have to learn English at first, 'cause English is the subject.*)

(Field note, April, 2021)

The daughter of Phung refused to learn her mother's homeland language because she was preparing for high school graduation examination and English was emphasized as a compulsory subject in school. She would prefer to learn English because she presumed that English is a global language and she can communicate with the Vietnamese people in English if she had a chance to go there. Thus, there is no motivation to learn minority's language.

Int: Lý do gì mà chị không có ý định dạy tiếng Việt cho hai bé? (*What is the reason why you do not teach them Vietnamese?*)

Phung: Chị dạy, có dạy nhưng mà nó kêu bà mẹ khó quá đi, kêu nó học mà nó nói bà mẹ học tiếng Anh, về Việt Nam nói tiếng Anh cũng

được vậy. Giờ ở Việt Nam nói tiếng Anh nhiều mà, nó nói vậy đó. (*I do, I do but they said that it's difficult. I ask them to learn, but they said that English is enough. If they come to Vietnam, Vietnamese people speak English a lot, they said*).

(Field note, April, 2021)

Huong is a mother of two children, one 7 year old boy and 5 year old girl. She shares that the main language used at home is Korean, because she is anxious that Vietnamese acquisition can lead to underdevelopment of the dominant language in children. She also believes that English should be considered priority to Vietnamese. Although English is not the majority language in Korea, it is defined as a higher prior status to the minority language. We can see that the lacking diversity of educational system which emphasizes the necessity of Korean and the popularity of English creates severe competition for the existence of minority language. In both learners' and guiders' mind, it is not really essential to practice minority language as global language bring more expedient. Then the attitude in more appreciate majority and popular language threatens the presence of minority language.

Int: Bạn có thể cho mình biết thói quen sử dụng ngôn ngữ trong gia đình hằng ngày của bạn không? (*Can you let me know about your language using habit in your family?*).

Huong: Bây giờ ở nhà mình sử dụng ngôn ngữ Hàn không à, nhưng mà thỉnh thoảng... Tại vì sao ngày trước mình không sử dụng ngôn ngữ Việt chung vì mình sợ bé hai ngôn ngữ sẽ bị chậm, tùy bé... mà bây giờ nó lớn xíu rồi mình dạy hai ngôn ngữ...(My family uses Korean mostly, but sometimes... in the past, I didn't use Vietnamese 'cause I was afraid that if the child use two languages, they would be

*slow. It depends on children...I will teach bilingual language as they grow up).*

(Cont.) Nói chung là nó không hiểu nhưng mà khi mình dạy thì bé sẽ nói, có nghĩa là mình chưa có dạy nhiều, mình muốn bé học tiếng Anh và tiếng Hàn trước xong rồi ngôn ngữ thứ ba là ngôn ngữ mẹ đẻ của mình, có nghĩa là mình đợi bé vào lớp một ổn định tiếng Hàn trước đã, xong bắt đầu lúc đó dạy tiếng Việt cũng chưa muộn đâu...(Generally, they don't understand (Vietnamese), but when I teach they will speak, which means I did not teach much, I want them to learn English and Korean firstly, the third language is my mother tongue. I will wait until they are in 1<sup>st</sup> grade when their Korean ability is stable, it would not be late...).

(Field note, May, 2021)

## 2. Devaluation in minority language

Table 3. Not teaching Vietnamese

	Responses		
	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Learning Vietnamese negatively affect Korean ability	7	26.9%	31.8%
Korean is more important	2	7.7%	9.1%
Receiving objection from the relatives	2	7.7%	9.1%
Children do not want to learn	10	38.5%	45.5%
Do not have time	5	19.2%	22.7%
Total	26	100.0%	118.2%

Table 3 shows the reasons leading to decision in not teaching Vietnamese to children of the participants. Among causes, the higher appreciation in dominant language had been analyzed above, and this part tends to focus on demonstrating depreciation of minority language. The language shifting is the result of assimilation, as assimilation is associated with the burden of the immigrants in giving up the native language to quickly transit into the host country's language (Mohanty & Perregaux, 1997). Before making a decision in entering Korea, the cross-border marriage brides only imagine their prospective life without being conscious that they might lose their own mother tongue and cultural values. The pressure on the new environment adaptation forces them to learn and acquire Korean language as much as possible. In addition, it was proved that foreign mothers' Korean proficiency directly affects children's schooling adaptation, because they are afraid that their broken Korean negatively impact children's language development. Then the guilty feeling in language shortage forces these abnormal mothers to perpetually make effort in learning the dominant language. Once children have difficulty in majority language literacy or failure in academic achievement, bilingualism is blamed for the main explanation. The belief that children should become fluent quickly in the dominant language automatically forces the foreign mother to provide the conditions where Korean acquisition is needed. Gradually, their mother land's language becomes nonfunctional and unpractical. No matter how much the migrant mother make effort to reach excellent standards in Korean, it is difficult to deny the fact that they seem clumsy in performing Korean due to the awkward pronunciations and cracked grammatical structures. Then children express their disappointed attitude toward the shortcoming of their mother's Korean ability. Bang said:

Lúc nó nói cái gì đó mà mình nghe không có hiểu, nó quay lại ‘mẹ, con vừa nói mẹ cái gì? Đấy, không để ý chứ gì, không quan tâm chứ gì, nói mà không hiểu, không biết’. Nhưng nhiều cái nó nói mình quên, mình không nhớ nổi, không phải là không nhớ mà là mình không biết nghĩa nên mình quên luôn. (*when she said something that I didn't understand, she turned to me 'mom, what did I just say? Look, you don't care about me, I said but you don't understand, you don't know'. But sometimes she says something and I forgot, I can't remember, it's not because I don't remember, I don't know the meaning, so I forget it all*)

The monolingual environment where there is no existence of mother's mother tongue leads to the situation where the Vietnamese mothers themselves are strongly expected to be excellent in Korean language they would not receive an understanding and sympathy from children and their spouses. In such a monolingual context, the migrant mothers find it hard to convey their thinking comfortably by the language which is not their mother tongue. The more children attain Korean education properly at school, the more advanced proficiency they reach. In contrast, the primary purpose of inter-ethnic marriage does not tremendously require migrant Vietnamese women to acquire Korean at a high level, the standard conversation level is enough for them to do manual occupations or housework. In spite that being fluent in Korean supports their smooth adaptation, it is not necessary to attain an intermediate or even professional standard which are linguistic pronunciation, grammatical correction and accurate spellings. Slowly but surely, the inadequacy in Korean ability between parents and offspring creates the invisible divergent gap that drives the maternal relationship to the edge of being wrecked. However, this maternal relationship might

not be cracked by the language barrier if Sujung was a bilingual child and Bang was able to deliver her thought naturally in her mother tongue. It is said that “the way to the soul was through the mother tongue”, but the depreciation in migrant marriage women’s mother tongue prevents them from gaining soulful utterance.

Ideally, language choice does not only derive from internal demand, but also from social expectation. Phinney (2001) said that the migrants who try to retain their native language are likely to receive unfavorable attitudes from the members of the host country. Minority language is attached to poverty, academic failure, and is also supposed as the obstacle to acculturate themselves into the dominant community of migrants. The previous papers figured out that the external factors such as husband family’s disagreement, disfavor on ethnic language, etc., led to the intention not to transmit mother tongue to the second generation of the migrant brides. In this research, Bang and Kieu also received criticism from the relatives, specifically from the mother-in-law and father-in-law.

Int: Ở nhà với ông bà nội có kiểu không cho chị dạy tiếng Việt cho bé không? (*At home, didn't grandparent-in-law let you to teach Vietnamese to her?*)

Bang: Có đó, ông nội nó thì ít nói... bà nội với bố nó lúc nào nói là nó học tiếng Hàn còn đang đầu đầu, mình vì lý do đó nên mình không muốn dạy cho con mình. Đàng nội không cho dạy tiếng Việt, bảo là nó đau đầu, nó còn bé tí bắt nó học cả tiếng Việt nữa. Cũng vì cái đó mình không dạy, sau này đi ra ngoài mình cũng lười luôn (*Yes, her grandfather was quite silent...her grandmother and her father said that she was headed due to learning Korean, that is the reason why I didn't want to teach her. My husband's family didn't allow me to teach Vietnamese, they said that she would be headed, she is too little*)

*to learn Vietnamese too. That's the reason why I didn't teach, later when I went out, I was lazy to teach).*

(Field note, May, 2021)

However, the opposition from family members is not the only reason causing ethnic language's extinction. Mai and Bang got divorced and they do not live with the husband or husband's family. The independent life after divorce means they can use her mother tongue in daily conversations without objection from surrounding relatives. Otherwise, in case of Han, her spouse showed his support in Vietnamese acquisition of children, and he even persuaded children to learn Vietnamese. Nevertheless, Vietnamese language acquisition in these cases seems hard to be successful due to the habit in language use. On one hand, although migrant marriage mothers use their native language as they got pregnant, they have a tendency to swift into Korean when these children turn 3 years old (Park et al., 2012), it means that at the stage when these children start attending kinder garden, they have chances to interact with normal Korean kids and learn Korean naturally from other peers. On the other hand, the time staying in Korea of these migrant mothers is long enough to be familiar with the local culture, and their Korean ability is also proficient enough to conduct normal communication in daily life despite obstacles and difficulties at the beginning period. Consequently, Korean is the main language used between migrant mothers and children, then the minority language is not reproduced as the parents use the majority language to speak to children. The tendency in language shifting from Vietnamese mother tongue to Korean leads to the disappearance of ethnic language and weakness in ethnic language awareness of children.



Bang: Ngày xưa mình nói (tiếng Việt) nhưng mà nó nói là nó không hiểu nên nói tiếng Hàn cho nó nghe, nó không chịu học. (*Previously, when I spoke it (Vietnamese) but she said that she could not understand, so I spoke Korean instead, she did not want to learn*).

(Field note, May, 2021)

Int: Từ khi mấy tuổi mà tụi nó đã không muốn học rồi? *Since when did they do not want to learn Vietnamese?*

Phung: Ngày xưa chị cũng dạy [...], lâu lâu dạy nó đó cái nói quên mất đi, chị bận á, ngày xưa chị đi làm. Chị nói dụ sáng chị đi 9 giờ sáng, đâu có rảnh đâu, rồi mệt nữa, về đâu có làm được đâu. cũng không có dạy được nữa. Lớn rồi cái từ từ nó quên đi, nó nói khó quá nó hông học. (*Long time ago, I taught them, sometimes I taught and they forget it, I am quite busy, I have to go to work [...] I am tired too, I can't do anything and can't teach them. When they grow up, they gradually forget, they said that it's difficult and they do not learn*).

(Field note, April, 2021)

Int: Nhưng mà khi trả lời lại trả lời với mẹ bằng tiếng Hàn? *But will they (your children) response by Korean?*

Han: Nhưng bây giờ chị giỏi tiếng Hàn rồi nó đơ tiếng Hàn với chị luôn, nó không nói với chị tiếng Việt nữa. (*But now I am good at Korean and they response by Korean , they do not use Vietnamese anymore*).

(Field note, March, 2021)

As mentioned before, it is obvious that the ethnic language is unable to expose its potential in such an environment where Korean is the mainstream language. Thus, the foreign mother's language would be spoken and practiced at home between foreign mothers and children. Nonetheless, the reality demonstrates that if ethnic language is not practiced when inter-ethnic children are young, as they grow older, the flexibility in the dominant language and ethnic language switch seems impossible. Ethnic minority's language is also supposed to be practiced outside home if there is an available context, but due to the lacking connection to the minority community, there is no place for these multicultural youth to approach mother's language, and then there is no proper motivation in learning.

### **3. Practicing ethnic language passively**

Among 8 participants, there is only the case of Han that the bilingual is practiced in the conversation between mother and children. However, there is an unbalanced ability between listening skills and the remaining three skills such as speaking, writing and reading. The language practice pattern of them can be described as follows. The mother uses Vietnamese to speak and her children respond to her in Korean, which means these children are capable of only one receptive skill, and incapable of three remaining skills. But bilingualism without biliteracy means that language is going to decline in status and it is hard to remain its linguistic stability (Baker, 2011).

Int: Ở nhà thì nó nói tiếng Hàn hay tiếng Việt vậy chị? (*Which language do your children speak at home?*)

Han: Nói tiếng Việt, chị dạy tiếng Việt. À không, thế này cháu nghe được tiếng Việt nhưng mà đọc với nói rất là ít. Bởi vì tụi nó biết mẹ

nói tiếng Việt nó trả lời bằng tiếng Hàn. Chị nói nó là “con ơi đi tắm đi, con ơi đi rửa bát đi” thì nó sẽ trả lời chị bằng tiếng Hàn, nhưng mà chị nói bằng tiếng Việt thì con chị hiểu hết, “con ơi lấy giấy cho mẹ, con ơi đi đổ rác cho mẹ là nó, ... nói chung là cháu phải nghe được đến 80 phần trăm. Nó cũng như là chị nghe tiếng Hàn được 80 phần trăm đó. *(Vietnamese, I teach them Vietnamese. Like this... they can understand Vietnamese, but they rarely read and speak. 'Cause they know I know Korean, I speak Vietnamese and they reply in Korean. For example, I say: “ let's take a shower, let's wash dishes”, they will reply by Korean. When I speak Vietnamese, they fully understand, generally they understand at 80%, it's like I can understand Korean.*

Int: Quay lại vấn đề về mối quan hệ giữa chị và hai đứa nhỏ á, thì như lúc này chị nói là ở nhà chị nói tiếng Việt, con chị nói tiếng Hàn. Theo chị thì tại sao nó lại không trả lời chị bằng tiếng Việt? *(Turn back to the relationship between you and your children, as you said before you speak Vietnamese and your children speak Korean. So why don't they reply in Korean?)*

Han: Nó lười, biết nhưng mà nó lười, nó trả lời tiếng Hàn cho nhanh, cũng giống như mình điên lên mình chửi tiếng Hàn nó mới nhanh, chửi tiếng Việt nó không nghe được hết. *(They're lazy, they know but they're lazy, they use Korean more quickly. It's like when I'm angry, I use Korean to scold them, it's more quickly, if I scold them in Vietnamese they can not understand fully).*

Int: Bé có viết được tiếng Việt không chị? *(Can your children write Vietnamese?)*

Han: Không, mù chữ. Ngày xưa con Hoa sang dạy, nó bảo khó lắm nó

không học đâu (*No, they are illiterate in Vietnamese. Some time ago, when Hoa (their cousin) taught them, they said that it's difficult and they don't want to learn*).

Int: Vậy, ví dụ như đưa sách đọc thì cũng không đọc được? (*So, if we give them a (Vietnamese) book, they can't read?*)

Han: Không được (*They can't*)

(Field note, March, 2021)

Han got married in 2006 and gave birth one year later. Her twin boys were taken care of by the Vietnamese grandmother until they were 5 years old. Living with the Vietnamese relative, Han's children (Junyoung and Junhee) had chances to practice Vietnamese as they imitated and communicated with the native speakers. After 5 years, when their Vietnamese grandmother returned to her home country and did not live with Han's children anymore, it was time that Junyoung and Junhee were sent to the kinder garden where they started interacting with other Korean peers and Korean teachers. When they were in elementary school, Han used to offer Vietnamese classes for them, but she assumed that the teacher's methodology is not effective, thus her children dropped Vietnamese classes after 2 weeks.

The language used in Han's family is described as follows. In making conversation, they favor the language which is the most comfortable to each of them. The first generation prefers speaking minority language, while the youth rejects the minority language and would choose the majority language, and the conversations between children (Junyoung and Junhee) are also conducted by Korean. This kind of language habit causes passive bilingual competence or partial bilingual ability in which children only passively receive language without producing it.

Table 4. Korean-Vietnamese adolescent's Vietnamese listening capacity

		Listening			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Very bad	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
	Not good	11	22.0	22.0	34.0
	Normal	15	30.0	30.0	64.0
	Good	13	26.0	26.0	90.0
	Very good	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total		50	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Korean-Vietnamese adolescent's Vietnamese speaking capacity

		Speaking			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Very bad	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	Not good	16	32.0	32.0	46.0
	Normal	20	40.0	40.0	86.0
	Good	3	6.0	6.0	92.0
	Very good	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total		50	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 and Table 5 show that the capacity in listening is higher than speaking, showing that these interracial adolescents tend to retain understanding of Vietnamese, but using the majority language in response to the foreign mothers and other siblings. This kind of language practice demonstrates the tendency in which children quickly lose their ability to actively produce language, and passive or partial bilingual is not the final destination of bilingualism.

The ability to read and write is considered as a tool for one's survival and security as everyday basic activities require literate ability. For example, the drivers have to read the road signs and traffic instructions, and the citizens need to read newspapers to know the local authority's policy and voice their political rights. Literacy enables people to perform their linguistic creativity through novels, books, fiction, etc. The importance of literacy is strongly affirmed as human activities can not be replaced by verbal language, and people can be excluded from social and economical benefits if they are unable to read and write. Literacy is also regarded as the main means to surpass the chronic poverty in underdeveloped nations, thus illiteracy reduction is the prior aim of UNESCO (Baker, 2011). It is noticed that literacy in the majority language is definitely essential for majority social connection, thus it raises a question about whether children should be with majority language monoliteracy or with biliteracy.

Table 6: Korean-Vietnamese adolescent's Vietnamese reading capacity

		Reading			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Very bad	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Not good	19	38.0	38.0	68.0
	Normal	11	22.0	22.0	90.0
	Good	4	8.0	8.0	98.0
	Very good	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: Korean-Vietnamese adolescent's Vietnamese writing capacity

		Writing			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Very bad	18	36.0	36.0	36.0
	Not good	18	36.0	36.0	72.0
	Normal	13	26.0	26.0	98.0
	Good	0	0.0	0.0	98.0
	Very good	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Biliteracy is the higher goal of bilingualism, literacy is not normal understanding a writing a text, it is also deeply attached to abstract thought, critical thinking, and cultural heritage. These mixed-ethnicity children might miss their chances to reach language at the advanced formal level if they are not given opportunities in accessing literacy of minority language. The low capacity in literacy of the mixed-ethnicity children raises a prediction about weakness in minority cultural maintenance that will be discussed later in this thesis.

#### 4. Internal hesitance

The limitation in acquiring ethnic minority language does not only derive from external conditions, but also from internal intention. If ethnic language is not practical and valuable at school or other social communities, it is obvious that family is the ideal context where ethnic language can expose its validity. School and language institutions are supposed to replace parents' roles where parents do not raise children by minority language at home. But the formal language learned in school may not be practical in informal conversations between parents and children. Even if students are

literate in the minority language, language reservation is unlikely to be successful as they do not receive support and aspiration from the previous generation. The school language is just the school language if it is not reproduced and transmitted through generation. Once the home language is lost, the cognition about language which is developed through dialog seems hard to be maintained.

Table 8. The attitude of Vietnamese mothers to the importance of bilingual education

		<b>Bilingual education's importance</b>			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Disagree	0	0	0	4.0
	Normal	6	12.0	12.0	16.0
	Agree	18	36.0	36.0	52.0
	Totally agree	24	48.0	48.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 9. Vietnamese teaching

		<b>Vietnamese teaching</b>			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Yes	42	84.0	84.0	84.0
	No	8	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	



Table 10. Children attitude in Vietnamese acquisition

		<b>Children's learning attitude</b>			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly unenthusiastic	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Unenthusiastic	4	8.0	8.0	18.0
	Somewhat unenthusiastic	8	16.0	16.0	34.0
	Normal	18	36.0	36.0	70.0
	Somewhat enthusiastic	6	12.0	12.0	82.0
	Enthusiastic	4	8.0	8.0	90.0
	Strongly enthusiastic	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Although migrant marriage mothers show their high positive attitude in bilingual obtainment of their children (table 8 and table 9), children do not show their high enthusiasm in learning minority language. There are 84% of participants who answered that they teach Vietnamese to children, but the provision of learning setting is not enough for bilingual achievement. Similarly, table 6 demonstrates that children's refusal is also one of the major reasons leading to migrant mothers' reluctance in Vietnamese teaching. The learner's attitude to language is also one of the key components in contributing to whether language is practiced or not (Baker, 2014). Moreover, children's beliefs and cultural values may be influenced by the society in which they reside (Baker, 2011). In the case of Korean-Vietnamese mixed-ethnicity children, they prefer the host country's language while bilingualism is not highly appreciated, which explains the reason why these adolescents fail to learn and use bilingual language. The failure in attaining the minority language can be

explained by an active intention of the foreign mother without active action. Overall, Miyoung (Phung's daughter), Junyoung, and Junhee (Han' children) express their refusal in acquiring the minority language because they assumed that it is difficult to learn. In addition, as the long-term benefits of being bilingual seems invisible to these adolescents, there is no real inspiration forcing them to attain Vietnamese. In the case of Hue's daughter, she used to be sent to Vietnam within 6-7 months in 1998 which was the time of the IMF crisis in Korea. Living and staying there, she was used to be able to be fluent in Vietnamese for a while. However, after coming back to Korea, her talent in Vietnamese ability was not properly nurtured and concerned. Eventually, she returned to become a monolingual person.

Similarly, Huong delayed intention in educating Vietnamese language to children until they reach stable capacity in Korean. It means that children learn Vietnamese as the foreigners who acquire a second foreign language rather than the native speaker acquire Vietnamese as the second mother tongue. Language is not only a means to communicate, it also implies sociolinguistics and sociocultural competence. If children do not receive appropriate instruction in bilingual acquisition from parents, they may lose opportunities for bilingual achievement.

In conclusion, in terms of language practice, the reality reflects that Korean is the main language conducted in these multicultural families. To some extent, Vietnamese mothers show their desire in teaching their mother tongue and Vietnamese culture to their children, but due to varieties kind of reasons, the practice has been postponed or adjourned. First of all, Korean language acquiring is always viewed as a primary tool for children to communicate with Korean people and gain academic achievement at school. The anxiousness in children's Korean proficiency shortage reinforces these

foreign mothers in making effort constantly to create an environment where children can acquire Korean as much as possible, and they even use their own broken Korean ability to educate children. Moreover, although English is not the dominant language, fluency in English brings more socioeconomic opportunities. From children's perspective, learning English is more important because it is a compulsory subject at school. The lack of diversity in their heritage language education at school leads to the awareness that there is no visual benefit to reinforce them in learning their mother's mother tongue. Secondly, the tendency to strongly emphasize the significance of dominant language leads to devaluation in minority language. When children were young, they are not provided opportunities to speak or use Vietnamese, so they gradually lose their interest in obtaining the mother's original language and the unfavorable attitude from the outsiders toward minority also prevents Vietnamese mothers from performing their heritage language at home. There are some cases that children were taught Vietnamese when they were kids, but they do not practice it regularly, then there is no flexibility in switching between Vietnamese and Korean. Thirdly, for families practice partial bilingual in which the speakers prefer language that they are more comfortable, their language using pattern can be explained as follows; Vietnamese mothers speak Vietnamese and children use Korean to respond. This kind of language practice habit prohibits children from producing speaking skill, they just passively absorb language without reproducing it. And partial bilingual or passive bilingual is not the destination of bilingual education. Fourthly, the hesitance attitude toward the heritage language of both mothers and children is one of the

essential reasons causing monolingual practice in multicultural backgrounds. While children express refusal viewpoint due to difficulty in language learning, Vietnamese mothers do not enthusiastically create an available environment where children are supported and encouraged to acquire heritage language.



## **V. ETHNIC NEGOTIATION OF MIGRANT MARRIAGE WOMEN AND THEIR BIETHNIC OFFSPRING**

### **1. Assimilation on the 1<sup>st</sup> generation**

Cultural shock or cultural conflict is an unavoidable problem that cross-border brides have to face. Researchers have indicated that migrant marriage women regularly struggle in dealing with cultural conflict. The most suitable solution for cultural conflict is assimilation under the name adaptation.

A new cultural context brings these foreign brides into contact with differences and difficulties. They have to negotiate and reestablish their identity to be suitable to the social expectation. However, the process is not easy to be done because they are not supposed to receive support from the new social affirmation (Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997). Even if ideally, the change in ethnic identity of migrant marriage women is accepted by the host communities, it is continuously examined by the dominant communities. The constant uncertainties and problems deriving from conflict can lead to high possibilities in crisis. To deal with the crisis, they often invent strategies to suppress the crisis and maintain family cohesion. Among identity strategies, integration is viewed as the most favorable one. According to Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre (1997), integration can be possible if it meets two conditions: firstly, the newcomers are able to learn language and culture in order to engage in the new environment. Secondly, the cultural values of the host country should not be sharply opposed to the original country's one. Obviously, migrant marriage women

are expected to acquire Korean before arriving in Korea. Acquiring Korean language skills is one of the compulsory conditions for conducting communication in a new environment. In addition, after the migration, there are many supporting programs to help these foreign brides quickly adapt to Korean society, from Korean learning classes to cultural popularizing. Geographically speaking, Vietnam and Korea belong to the Asia continent where the cultural values are the consequences of Chinese impact. Sinicization and Confucianism are the typical features left in two nations through thousands of years. The above fundamental conditions contribute to and foster the success of marriage between Korean men and Vietnamese women.

However, the contradiction in values between two nations is hard to avoid. Changing behavior according to the social situation is the strategy allowing them to moderate the occurrence of conflict. For example, in religious belief, Bang said that before arriving in Korea, her religion was Buddhism, but she changed her religious belief into Protestantism as her husband's family members were Protestantism. While the changing of Bang's religious belief means that she could be considered as a member of the dominant community, this acceptance also implied the denial of the previous religion. Obviously, the church attendance of Bang derives from her motivation in creating smooth integration and maintaining family harmony. Furthermore, she also confesses that she can receive support from the church. She seems voluntarily modify herself to match the husband's family's belief. But, to some extent, she is assimilated as there is no choice except for adopting the dominant's religious practice because she does not want to be left behind or viewed as the outsider. After getting divorced, despite the separation from her husband and the

spouse's family, she and her daughter (Sujeong) constantly maintain the connection with the church and participate in religious activities.

Int: Lý do chị thay đổi tôn giáo là gì ạ? *What is the reason why you change your religion?*

Bang: Lấy chồng nhà chồng kéo mình đi thì mình đi chứ biết làm sao bây giờ. Sang đây, từ ông bà nội, cô chú nó đi nhà thờ hết. Đi nhà thờ được nhà thờ giúp đỡ nên mình phải theo thôi. *(I got married and the husband family took me there 'cause I didn't know how to do. Since I've been here, from grandparents to the uncle, the aunt, they've gone to the church. We receive support from the church, so I have to go...)*

(Field note, May 2021)

Apart from religion changing, in daily meals, Bang is willing to change her original dietary habit in order to be suitable to her husband's family.

Int: Lúc này em có hỏi là ở nhà chủ yếu ăn món Hàn hay món Việt? *(Earlier, I ask you that which kind of food your family prefer?)*

Bang: Tại vì ngày xưa ở với bà nội, như kiểu mình sống ở đâu mình quen ở đó, kiểu như người ta không thích á thì mình bắt buộc phải thích nghi thôi, ăn món Hàn nó quen rồi nên mình cũng không thèm món Việt [...] *(Korean one...in the past, when I lived with my mother-in-law...it's like when in Rome, do as the Romans do... it seemed they didn't like... I've to adapt ...I'm familiar with Korean food and I don't want to eat Vietnamese one more [...])*

(Field note, May 2021)

The strategy to quickly adapt to the dominant society is assimilation. The member of ethnic minority is assimilated by the dominant community physically and culturally. Although they imitate and exercise the host country's values, one denies and refuses their differences (Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997). If integration naturalizes and harmonizes the contrast, assimilation is viewed as the stronger strategy. The assimilation does not only derive from the willingness of oneself but also from external pressure. Once making a decision in getting married to foreign men, migrant marriage women hold out much hope of settling down permanently. As migrant marriage women, they do not only play the role of the wives, but also the role of daughter-in-law and even the caregivers of biracial offspring. In this regard, their existence raises a concern about the host country's multicultural policy. Due to the growth in residence of foreigners since 2006, Korea officially declared it as a "multicultural - multiracial society" and started conducting policies related to deal with the vulnerabilities and difficulties of citizens from a multicultural background (Kim, 2014). There have been many services and programs providing free Korean classes, children-raising training, etc., for multicultural families. Specifically, the Multicultural Families Support Act, which was released in 2008, aimed at fostering a stable life for members of multicultural families. The establishment of hundreds of multicultural centers proved the government's responsibilities in improving the social situation of migrant marriage women and its openness to multiculturalism (Kim, 2011). However, although the primary goal of these programs is to support the foreign brides in integrating into the host community and preventing domestic violence, it was criticized by many scholars in assimilation perspectives. They argue that the act merely emphasizes paternalism and lacks cultural diversity. Meanwhile,



foreign wives are encouraged to learn the Korean language and absorb local cultural rituals, cooking, etc., her spouse and his family are not supposed to understand the bride's country's culture and customs (Yang, 2011).

The foreign brides are encouraged to develop Korean identity through Korean classes, traditional cooking, cultural lessons, etc. They are supposed to be experts in cooking Korean cuisine and following Korean tradition. These social policies from the government somehow support these foreign brides in quickly adapting to the new environment. On the one hand, these strategies encourage them to seek acceptance as a member of the majority. On the other hand, they are discouraged from preserving the ethnic minority's values.

In conclusion, assimilation in adjustment narrows the boundaries between the dominant and minority. However, it also leads to the loss of ethnic identity as merging into the major group. The gradual changes in attitudes and values of the first generation leads to the weakness in persisting minority ethnic identity of the later generation. Consequently, the minority cultural value fails in the promotion.

## **2. Weakness in motherland's cultural maintenance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation**

The accumulation into the Korean society of migrant marriage women might lose attachment to their ethnic culture. However, no matter how they are assimilated, they cannot completely deny or give up their original cultural values, and the cultural maintenance by parents is one of the significant elements contributing to the ethnic identity of adolescents (Phinney, 2001). The parent's supportive attitude in creating

cultural socialization encourage children to practice cultural values and promote parents' value.

Table 11. Attitude toward Vietnamese identity maintenance

		Vietnamese identity			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Totally disagree	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Disagree	0	0.0	0.0	4.0
	Normal	3	6.0	6.0	10.0
	Agree	29	58.0	58.0	68.0
	Strongly agree	16	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 12. The main food enjoyed at home

		Food			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Korean food	17	34.0	34.0	34.0
	Vietnamese food	6	12.0	12.0	46.0
	Both of them	27	54.0	54.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 13. Vietnamese cultural transmit

		Vietnamese culture			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Never	0	0	0	0
	Rarely	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Normal	32	64.0	64.0	80.0
	Regularly	8	16.0	16.0	96.0
	Very often	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Overall, Vietnamese mothers express their positive attitude in maintaining ethnic identity to the second generation during integration into the majority society. Sujeong's mother used to let her take a flight alone and live in Vietnam within one month with her grandmother. Since return Vietnam, according to Sujeong's mother, Sujeong expressed her enthusiasm in learning Vietnamese and increasing interest in her mother's homeland.

Int: 집에서 엄마가 베트남에 대해서 알려준 것이 있나요? (*At home, do your mother tell you about Vietnam?*)

Sujeong: 베트남에서 밥을 먹을 때 어떻게 하는지. 집을 만들 때... 베트남에 대해서는 제가 물어보거든요. (엄마가) 알려주기도 하고, 모르는 거 있으면은 엄마한테 물어보면 알려줘요 (*When I ask her about Vietnam, she'll let me know, about how we should act in the table, how people build their houses*)

Int: 베트남에 대해서 무엇이 제일 궁금한가요? (*What are you curious most about Vietnam?*)

Sujeong: 이미 가봐서 궁금한건 딱히 없어요. (*I went there already, and there is nothing to be curious about*).

Int: 어디가봤어요? (*Where did you go?*)

Sujeong: 할머니집 가봤는데, 시장이랑 다 나가봐가지고... 궁금한거는 제가 그 때 그때 물어보는 성격이라. 궁금한건 없어요. (*Grandmother's house, market... 'cause I'm kind of one who asks right away, there is nothing to be curious*)

(Field note, October 13, 2021)

Ethnic identity is composed and measured by various components. The relationship between these components is also complicated and complex. This research mainly focuses on ethnic's cultural experiences. Among miscellaneous cultural items, food and cooking are considered significant components for newcomers to maintain ethnic identity. Generally, 34% of the participants totally varied their original eating habits from Vietnamese food to Korean food, 12% of them answered that they enjoy Vietnamese food only in their family meals, and 54% said that their families consume both Korean and Vietnamese cooking. In taking family meals, Huong said she makes Korean cuisine in the morning and Vietnamese food for dinner. Primarily, it seems their family enjoys having both Vietnamese and Korean cuisines, but Huong explained that because her husband only eats breakfast with family and does not follow a routine in having dinner at home. After getting married, Huong modifies her food appetite to adjust her husband's Korean food preference. She also enjoys Vietnamese taste only when there is no her husband's presence. In Han's family, Han also lets children enjoy some traditional food like spring rolls and

*pho*, but these cuisines are not used regularly. They enjoy it on the weekend or at special events.

This research illustrates that the ethnic minority community members do not only integrate to depress the contrast but also erase negative images attached to them. To avoid stigmatization and depreciation of identity, consistency is believed to be one of the key identity elements. However, consistency only occurs when a positive identity exists. Good images mean being able to owe something nominated rather than others, particularly when someone interacts with others (Camilleri & Maleska-Peyre, 1997). For example, the academic achievement of Asia-American students proved their courage in against prejudices against Asia.

As mentioned above, the minority in Korea is usually labeled with negative images like poverty, high rate of divorce, low social status, etc., while negative labels are associated with social exclusion and discrimination. Although it is hard to illustrate how migrant marriage women improve or replace the negative stigmatization, the author had a chance to observe and conduct interviews with them. Jisu and Jiyu utilize their family background to take pride in their identity to other peers.

Int: 학교에서 지유가 다른 친구한테 엄마가 베트남 사람이라고 이야기 해요? (*Do other friends know that your mother is Vietnamese?*)

Jisu: 아니요 (*No*)

Int: 왜요? (*Why?*)

Jisu: 안 물어봐요 (*They didn't ask*)

Jiyu: 내 친구는 아던데 *My friends know*

Jisu: 모르는데 *They don't*

Jiyu: 내가 초등학교일 때 애들이 다 알았어, 다 알고 있어  
*(Since elementary school, they officially knew it)*

Int: 그때 그 친구가 뭐라고 말했어요? *(What did your friends tell then?)*

Jiyu: 그때 한 번 말하니까 쌀국수 맛있냐고 나한테 물어봤어  
*(They ask whether rice noodle was delicious)*

Jisu: 맞아맞아, 음식이 맛있냐고 물어봤던데 *(That's right, they asked if it was delicious)*

Jiyu: 쌀국수를 자주 먹을 수 있어서 좋겠다고 했어 *(They said that that it 'd be nice to have noodles more frequently)*

Jisu: 아, 베트남어를 아냐고 물어봤어 *(Ah, they ask if I know Vietnamese)*

Int: *Do you speak Vietnamese to them?*  
*(Jiyu tried to say something in Vietnamese, but the interviewer did not clearly understand)*

*(Field note, May 2021)*

In this case, Jisu and Jiyu took advantage of their chances of enjoying delicious Vietnamese food to replace negative images and expose a positive identity. Their motivation in confirming ethnic original values is to make them highly regarded. In other words, retaining positive images about ethnic identity fosters cultural heritage in the second generation. Especially, Jisu pretended to know some Vietnamese phrases and took it as her pride in front of other peers.

Although these women indicated their determination to convey original value through daily meals or stories, their intention in cultural transmission is prevented by the language barrier. Mai expressed her powerlessness in conveying her whole idea as

abstract topics were mentioned. If she spoke in Vietnamese, her children would be unable to comprehend. Conversely, she cannot express her initial explanation due to her Korean deficiency. Once again, the negative consequence of monolingual context restricts migrant parents and children from touching each other “soul.” It prevents the comprehensive promotion of ethnic identity in biethnic adolescents. While children are expected to learn cultural heritages and social values through dialogues with parents, if parents are unable to talk pleasantly to children, they cannot accurately transfer their beliefs, values, understanding (Backer, 2011).

Mai: Chị cũng muốn nhưng mà chị cũng không biết cách nói làm sao cho hai đứa, nhiều lúc cũng muốn để cho con biết về văn hóa Việt Nam, [...], rồi cũng muốn cho nó biết văn hóa Việt Nam với nước Hàn Quốc nó khác nhau phần nào vậy đó. Nhiều lúc chị cũng muốn để cho biết nhưng mà nói cái đó bằng tiếng Hàn thì mình không nói sâu xa được, mình không có nói được. Còn nói về tiếng Việt thì con chị nó không có biết em. (*I want, but I don't know how to convey. Sometimes I wanna let them know about Vietnamese culture[...], the difference between Vietnam and Korea... But I can't deeply express those things in Korean, I can't speak, if I speak Vietnamese, they don't understand.*)

(Field note, April 2021)

Consistency in ethnic identity tends to weaken in the next generation have been proved (Phinney, 1990). In reality, not all migrant marriage women use integration and assimilation strategies. This means that they somehow resist the influence of the dominant community by transmitting ethnic identity to their descendants. However, it seems the resistance is not strong enough to be salient. Apart from traditional food, other intangible cultural like national music, history, folk songs seem hard to be

conveyed. In summary, cultural maintenance by parents plays an essential role in transmitting cultural values to the next generations, but in the Korean-Vietnamese bi-cultural context, cultural retain is hampered. Thus it leads to the fact that the ethnic identity of the second generation tends to decline.

### **3. Tight acceptance to father's nation while losing connection to mother's homeland**

This part demonstrates how ethnic identity develops by analyzing the cultural context. By doing so, it explicitly demonstrates the relationship of the individual to minority and dominant connection. By measuring one's relationship with the mainstream and ethnic group, it is assumed that the orientation of individuals to the dominant culture is more important. As mentioned above, the ethnic identity of the next generation of migrants tends to decline due to the assimilation process. Besides, the longer they live in a new environment, the weaker their ethnic identity is (Phinney, 1990). On the one hand, once making a determination on getting married to foreign spouses, cross-border brides expected that they would have a permanent life where they obtain better chances in social status and financial support. On the other hand, from a gender perspective, foreign brides are expected to solve the social problem of gender inequality and improve the low birth rate in Korea. The presence of the biethnic kids binds their mother to mainstream society. The living time and maternal relation reinforce their commitment to the dominant society. They do not have intention in return to the motherland. The tight connection to offspring tie and bind them to the host country.



Table 14. The intention in residing in Vietnam

		Vietnam living			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Yes	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	No	14	28.0	28.0	42.0
	Do not know	29	58.0	58.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Phung is a single mother whose husband passed away in a traffic accident when her second child was 3 months old. After her husband's decease, her family (including her husband's mother and 2 children) moved from Daegu to Busan to live. The single mom's status and financial obstacle threw her into a miserable life. She said: *"if it was someone else, she would left. But they were my children, I had to raise"* (Gặp ai là người ta bỏ đi rồi chứ chị, con mình mình nuôi chứ làm sao). Phung's husband was the only child, while the husband's mother was too old to work. Thus, Phung has to rear two children and takes care of her mother after her husband's passing. The difficulty in adaption and cultural depression force many foreign brides to get a divorce or return hometown as a way to escape from the miserable marriages. However, Phung decided to stay and raise two children as a single mom. Phung shared that her mother-in-law is always afraid that Phung would secretly leave her behind with two young children. However, after years of living together, Phung and her children consider the mother-in-law as her mother and their grandmother. Unlike other kinds of immigrants (laborers, study abroad students, refugees), these migrant women accomplish their mission as cultural and biological reproducers that they are

initially supposed to do (Kim, 2021), and the duty of being migrant wives, mothers, and daughter-in-law fastens them tightly to the host country.

Int: Sau này chị có ý định sẽ quay trở lại về Việt Nam sống không?  
(*Do you have intention to comeback Vietnam to live?*).

Phung: Không, để sau này con lớn rồi lo, chị có tiền về thăm gia đình xong chị quay lại, vậy đó (*No, I will think about when my children grow up. If I have money, I will visit my family and them comeback here, that's it*).

Int: Lý do gì mà chị không có ý định quay về Việt Nam sống lâu dài?  
(*What's the reason why you don't have intention to live in Vietnam for long period of time*).

Phung: Tại có hai đứa con ở đây, về Việt Nam sống thì nhớ con. (*'Cause my children are here, if I come back Vietnam, I would miss them*).

(Field note, April 2021)

The intention of not residing in the homeland of Han is so firm that she expressed her willingness to renounce Vietnamese nationality. Since 2010, dual citizenship was acceptable for the first time,<sup>1</sup> however, this amendment did not apply to those who were naturalized before 2011 (Kim, 2021). Initially, the changes in the original nationality through the years weakened Han's attachment to her homeland. She presumed that she was a foreigner and did not have a sense of belonging to the motherland.

<sup>1</sup> The Amendment to the Nationality Act passed the National Assembly on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010 and was promulgated on May 4<sup>th</sup>. For the first time, dual citizenship was allowed.

Int: Chị có ý định sau này sẽ tiếp tục sinh sống ở đây hay là sẽ về Việt Nam? (*Do you have intention to live here continuously or come back Vietnam?*)

Han: Chị ở đây luôn, chị không về. Nếu như con chị về Việt Nam làm việc thì chị sẽ về Việt Nam, con chị ở bên này thì chị sẽ ở bên này, chị phụ thuộc vào con. Con chị về Việt Nam thì chắc chắn chị phải về rồi, vì ngôn ngữ của nó chưa thành thạo bằng chị. Sau đó con thành thạo rồi thì chị sẽ quay trở lại chứ chị cũng không thích ở Việt Nam, chị không thích ở Việt Nam. Ở cái tuổi này rồi ở Việt Nam chị không biết làm cái gì ra tiền nữa, mà cái mức lương ở Việt Nam rất là thấp, [...] Thứ hai nữa là chị không có quốc tịch Việt Nam, chị mất quốc tịch Việt Nam rồi (*I will stay here, I will not comeback Vietnam. If my children comeback to Vietnam I will comeback. If they stay at here, I will stay at here. I am dependent on them. If they comeback Vietnam, I surely comeback 'cause their language is not fluent as mine. After that, I will return Korea, I do not like living in Vietnam, I do not like living in Vietnam. At this age, I do not know what should I do to earn money if I live in Vietnam, the income is very low...Secondly, I do not have Vietnamese citizenship, I lost Vietnamese citizenship*).

Int: Em tưởng là mình có thể có hai quốc tịch...? (*I thought that you have two nationality?*)

Han: Ý là những năm về sau, những bạn nào nhập hai quốc tịch... những năm 2012 thì nhập 2 quốc tịch, còn chị nhập quốc tịch từ năm 2009 nên chỉ có một quốc tịch thôi. Chị là người nước ngoài, chị không thể sinh sống (*It means some year later, since 2012 they can acquire two nationality...I was naturalized in Korea in 2009 and I have only one citizenship. I am foreigner, I can not live in Vietnam*).

Int: Ví dụ như bây giờ mình xin lại quốc tịch không được hả chị? *You can't apply for Vietnamese citizenship?*

Han: Xin lại là được nhưng mà nó mất tiền nè, nó lằng nhằng nè, chị không muốn xin. Chị không xác định về Việt Nam sống nên chị không xin (*I can, but it costs money, it's complicated, I do not want to apply, 'cause I don't have intention in living in Vietnam*).

(Field note, March 2021)

Similarly, in the cases of Mai, Phung, Hue, and Kieu, all of them agreed that there is no reason to obtain Vietnamese citizenship even if they would be allowed. These women affirmed that Korean naturalization brings more benefits and advantages than Vietnamese one. As Hue said: “*Lấy lại quốc tịch Việt Nam làm gì? Em lấy quốc tịch Hàn em đi đâu cũng rất có giá trị. Em đi Mỹ, đi Nhật em đâu có cần Visa đâu*” (*why we do regain Vietnamese nationality? If you get Korean nationality, it's valuable whenever you go with Korean citizenship, you don't need visa to go to America and Japan*). There are no participants in this research containing dual visas at the time of the interviews taken. All of them naturalize before 2011 and have only Korean nationality.

The tendency to identify themselves as members of the dominant community does not only come from migrant women, but mixed-ethnicity children also express their strong emphasis on defining themselves and their migrant mothers as Korean. Sujeong had no hesitation in stating her mother's sense of belonging in Korea because her mother has Korean citizenship and she does not reside in Vietnam. Although she somehow restored her pride as being a multicultural child, refusing her Korean identity from surrounding people reinforces her in hiding her half-blood identity.

Int: 수정이는 어느나라 사람이라고 생각해요? (*Which nationality do you think you are?*)

Sujeong: 저는 당연히 한국사람 (*I'm Korean, of course*)

Int: 엄마는요? (*How about your mother?*)

Sujeong: 엄마는 국적을 땀으니까 한국 사람이라고 생각해요 (*My mother got citizenship, so I think she is Korean*)

Int: 그러면 엄마도 이제 한국사람이라고 생각하는 이유는 국적 때문인가요? (*your mother got Korean citizenship, so you think she is Korean?*)

Sujeong: 네. 그리고 베트남은 놀러가는 거고 베트남에 살지는 않을 거니까 (*Yes, and she visits Vietnam, she doesn't live there*).

Int: 학교에서 친구들이 혹시 다문화라서 차별한다던가..(*Do your friends discriminate you 'cause you're multicultural children*).

Sujeong: 지금은 차별을 안하고 오히려 부러워하고 저번학교에서는 거의 다문화 애들이 많아가지고. 딱히 그런거는 차별 받은 거는 없어요. 근데 기분나쁜말은 들어본 적 있어요 (*Now they don't discriminate, they're rather envious, in the previous school, there are many multicultural students there and there is no such discrimination. But I've heard bad things*).

Int: 어떤말들..? (*What kind of words?*)

Sujeong: 저보고 저는 한국인인데 베트남사람이냐고 물어보고 그런게 기분이 좀 나빠요. 그리고 엄마가 외국인이라고 조금 비하하는 그런 말도 조금 들어본 적있는데 딱히 신경은 안써

요. 제 얘기가 아니기 때문에 (*They look at me, I am Korean and I feel bad for being asked whether I'm Vietnamese. And I've heard a little bit of derogatory comments 'cause mother is foreigner, but I don't care 'cause it's not about me*).

(Field note, September 2021)

Interracial marriages have a higher possibility of divorce compared to homogeneous ones. Specifically, the research of Yoo and Yoo (2019) figured out that the age gap between Korean husbands and foreign wives is one of the main reasons leading to the breakup of these couples. After getting a divorce, some of them decide to return homeland and bring their mixed-race children there. The ethnic identity of these mixed-race children also receives considerable concern from social scholars. However, this research does not cover cases of repatriated women. It mainly aims to analyze the ethnic identity of children living and growing in Korea. For mothers who make a decision to reside permanently in Korea, they are supposed to become the single moms and the breadwinners in their families.

Besides maternal affection, socioeconomic opportunities for both mothers and children are also the main reasons for their decision to stay in Korea. Han showed her anxiety in occupation seeking in case she returned to Vietnam. Mai hoped that her children would obtain brighter prospects when they resided in Korea. The tight binding to the dominant society of these migrant marriage women and multicultural adolescents loosens their engagement and attachment to the original country.

Int: Chị có nghĩ là cho các bạn về Việt Nam học đại học hay sống hay gì không? *Do you have intention in send to Vietnam to live?*

Mai: Về Việt Nam thì chị không có muốn, chị mong con học ở đây, làm ở đây à. Ừa, thấy nó tốt hơn vì nói chung học cái này cái kia cũng tốt hơn. (*I do not, I hope they will study and live here. Korea is better, 'cause they can learn something better*).

(Field note, April 2021)

Table 15. Times visiting Vietnam

		Visit Vietnam			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	0 time	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
	1 time	17	34.0	34.0	44.0
	From 2 to 3 times	12	24.0	24.0	68.0
	From 4 to 5 times	9	18.0	18.0	86.0
	From 6 to 9 times	6	12.0	12.0	98.0
	Above 10 times	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Realizing the importance of the foreign mother's country to children's ethnic identity formation and financial burden in traveling cost. The Korean government has conducted programs to support multicultural youth in visiting their foreign parents' country. Among participants, Phung, Hue, and Kieu registered for the program one to two times and took their children to visit their hometowns. However, the restricted requirement of these programs frustrated Kieu's intention in registering. For example, her family had to follow the fixed schedule decided by the sponsor, or the program required all family members to take part in it while her husband was not allowed to take annual leave within 10 days. Hue's children expressed their rejection of joining

these visiting programs due to the uncomfortable feeling when the sponsor accompanied them. Besides the financial burden in traveling cost, the failure in marriage prevented Mai from returning home. She separated from her husband in 2015 and officially got divorced in 2019, she did not inform her situation about her family until she submitted all of the documents related to divorce.

Int: Từ hồi chị qua đây đến giờ thì chị có hay về Việt Nam thăm gia đình không? *Do you usually come back to Vietnam to meet family since you immigrant here?*

Mai: *Mấy năm về trước, còn siêng thì chị một năm hai năm về một lần. Từ khi gia đình chị bị vậ đó, thì năm sáu năm rồi chị không về (Some years ago, I came back one time every one or two years. Since my family have problem (divorce), it has been 5-6 years, I have not come back)*

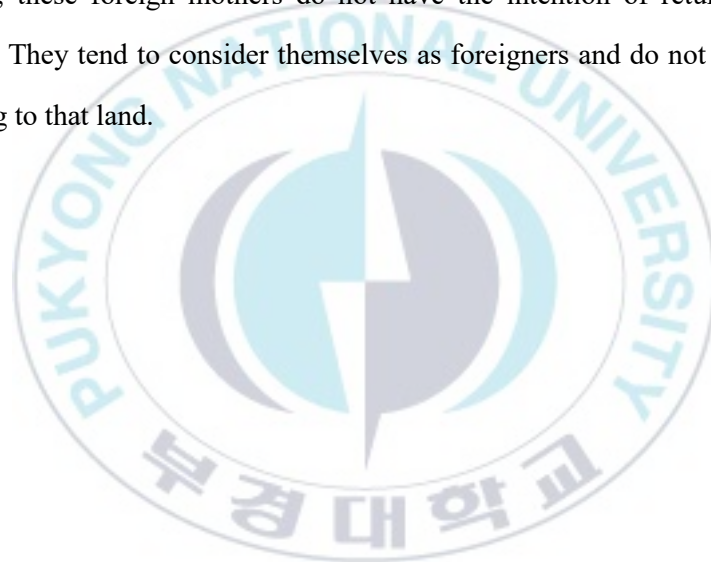
(Field note, April 2021)

The tendency in which migrant marriage women and their offspring express the strong loyalty to the host country while attenuation to the home country implies unconscious assimilation process of these citizens. The identity of the original place is replaced by the expectation in residence at mainstream society. The cultural change of the first migrant generation predicts weakness in the ethnic identity of the second generation. Moreover, the commitment to the dominant community derives from preferences for wealthier status, children's better future.

In summary, in terms of Vietnamese ethnic identity, it witnesses the crisis in Vietnamese ethnic identity in these multicultural families. Firstly, during the process of becoming the ideal parents, Vietnamese migrant mothers gradually lose their original identity to be accepted as Korean citizens, from religion to eating habits.



Although they are not forced to violently give up their original culture, it does not mean that they are allowed to practice it freely. Secondly, these women express their positive expectation in transmitting and maintaining Vietnamese cultural value to children, but once again, due to the language barrier between generations, the Vietnamese are unable to deliver abstract topics to children. Thirdly, these women decided to give up their connection to the motherland and sacrifice the rest of their life for their children in the host country. Due to the close-knit maternal relationship, these foreign mothers do not have the intention of returning to their motherland. They tend to consider themselves as foreigners and do not bring a sense of belonging to that land.



## VI. CONCLUSION

### 1. Key issues

Overall, Vietnamese language and ethnic identity are not strongly promoted in these multicultural families. Regarding Vietnamese heritage language, children's communicative competence emphasizes the roles of parents and caretakers, especially the role of maternal in transit ethnic language to children is not only explained through external socio-cultural impact but also through parents' attitude toward language teaching and children's awareness. Firstly, the language of the minority hardly takes place in a society where the dominant language has a prior claim over the rest. While practicing Korean has prestige, it is an essential means for Vietnamese marriage migrant women and their children to integrate into Korean society. However, Vietnamese practicing is put a lower position than English. The popularity of the English language and the shortage of diverse education programs drive the Vietnamese heritage language on the edge of disappearing in these multicultural families. Secondly, the partial bilingual performance and hesitant attitude in minority language practice of the caregivers and learners make it worthless and impracticable. These external and internal causes lead to the monolingual speaker in the multicultural background instead of reaching multilingual mixed-race adolescents. Children are intrinsically gifted at bilingual. The actions in preventing them from accessing bilingual means depriving their individual rights in language choosing. Therefore, maintaining bilingual education aims at fostering minority language in adolescents, emphasizing the importance and essence of a minority language to

strengthen people's awareness about minority's rights in a nation and encourage bi-ethnic children to turn it into an advantage.

In this research, bilingual language and ethnic identity are divided into two equal sections to emphasize the important role of foreign mothers on children's bilingual command and ethnic identity. However, there is an unseparated relation between ethnic identity and language, minority cultural experience fosters minority language practice, and the minority language is more desirable if children are provided chances to participate in the minority community, and among elements, parents play an essential role in orientating and directing children's ethnic identity formation. Regarding Vietnamese ethnic identity, firstly, maintaining different ethnic identity and minority language fostering are assumed as the causes of ethnic conflict and disharmony. Thus the Vietnamese marriage migrant women and their Korea-Vietnamese children seek acceptance as members of the majority. They are willing to give up their original values to adopt the dominant community's values. Secondly, although these women, to some extent, express their positive attitude toward transmitting Vietnamese customs to children, due to the language barrier, these intention is hard to be conducted. Thirdly, it seems difficult to maintain minority cultural values to multicultural adolescents as both express their tight commitment to the majority. The strong acceptance as a member of the dominant community leads to weakness in connection to the minority community.

By analyzing policies related to multicultural families in Korea, the existing literature concluded that the characteristic of multicultural policies is assimilation rather than integration (Kim, Jo & Kim, 2017; Yang, 2011; Beslanger, Lee & Wang, 2010; Yoo, 2021). However, there are few studies exploring assimilation by

considering the perspective of migrant marriage women, whether they remain conscious that they are assimilated or how they react to the natural assimilation of the host nation. On the one hand, this research also proves the assimilation of multicultural families by demonstrating the factors leading to the loss of minority language and the crisis of ethnic identity of biracial adolescents in Korea. On the other hand, it explores how these migrant marriage women respond to the natural assimilation conducted by the dominant community. Apart from heading for acceptance by adopting the dominant's cultural practices and language, migrant marriage women, to some extent, to express their positive attitude toward remaining minority language and original cultural value to their second-generation as the action of involuntary assimilation.

## **2. Suggestion for raising multicultural children**

The assimilation into the dominant community of the foreign mothers prevents them from exposing minority ethnic identity to children. Therefore, bilingual education can be considered as the feasible solution for mixed-race adolescents where they can take advantage of both languages' influence while fostering a positive attitude toward ethnic identity, and the acceptance of ethnic identity also reinforces them in acquiring minority language. The residing place does not only have the unique element influencing ethnic identity formation. The opportunities to engage in ethnic relevance also enhance the positive ethnic feeling and sense of belonging (Phinney, 2003). Hence, creating a cultural context where the members can experience and practice ethical values also fosters emotional connection and ethnic

identity awareness. For example, children can explore the mother nations through books, magazines, or social media.

The prospect that the minority language is preserved while the majority language is also developed is possible (Baker, 2014). Bilingualism does not deny the importance and precious opportunities from attaining the majority language as it attributes to one's political power, job-seeking economic success, and academic achievement. Nonetheless, competence in the majority language should not result in the loss of the minority language. Bilingualism means addition, not a deduction. It would be a mental burden if a bilingual command is compulsory for biracial children, but instead of forcing them to obtain it as a duty, creating an environment where they can find actual aspiration to learn is more essential. Raising awareness of minority language by reinforcing positive awareness of mother's origin country and gaining support from relatives, specifically the Korean spouse. Children are likely to practice minority language in the family if their Korean caregivers also express willingness to learn together.

Acquiring two languages at the same time or one language later both leads to bilingual achievement. However, it is more valuable if a home can provide an environment for children to develop bilingual ability earlier because, in general, children pick up the language accidentally and naturally. They are also able to adept at language than adults. Expecting children to "balance" two languages or the two "native speakers" in one person is inaccurate because of the gap between two languages in the width range of vocabulary and complex structure. Thus it is inappropriate to compare bilingual children's language performance to the monolingual ones. Their grammatical accuracy and rich vocabulary can be lesser than

monolingual children, but by acquiring two languages simultaneously, they are able to communicate in both languages and in one language. Apart from language practicing at home, the child learners are fascinated in minority language through amusing music and drama, pleasure activities related to minority language motivate the language ability inside them.

Parents use various methodologies to maintain bilingual in children. Firstly, each parent uses one language to children. Korean fathers speak the majority language, while Vietnamese mothers encourage children to answer in Vietnamese. Secondly, migrant parents do not need to use the host country's language at home because children have chances to use that language outside the home. This strategy is suitable for single-parent families. Thirdly, both parents use both languages to children. In the case of Vietnamese-Korean multicultural families, if the Korean father also speaks the minority language, it would increase the minority language's valuation in children's eyes. Additionally, migrant marriage wives should be allowed to promote their ethnic identity, maintaining the way of life by connecting to ethnic, so the minority's cultural values would not be lost or prevented, assimilation should be replaced by multiculturalism where pluralism and diversity are respected.

## APPENDIX 1

Table 1. The list of Vietnamese mother participants (in-depth interviews)

No	Name	Place of birth	Job	Arriving year	Marriage status	Children
1	Han	Hai Phong	Factory worker	2006/	Married	Twin boy (15 years-old)
2	Mai	Dong Nai	Restaurant worker	2006/ person introduction	Single mom	One 15 year old girl and one 13 years-old
3	Phung	Phan Thiet	Restaurant worker	2004/ personal introduction	Single mom	One 17 year-old girl and one 15 years-old girl
4	Tuyet	Can Tho	Farmer	***/ brokerage	Married	Two girls (15 and 10 year old), one boy (12 years-old)
5	Bang	Hai Phong	Factory worker	2006/ brokerage	Single mon	One girl (13 years-old)
6	Huong	Hai Phong	Multicultural supporter	2011/ brokerage	Married	One boy (7 year-old) and one girl (5 years-old)
7	Kieu	Kien Giang	Restaurant worker	***/ brokerage	Married	Two boys
8	Hue	Ho Chi Minh	Factory worker	2007/ personal introduction	Married	One 26 year-old girl and one 15 years-old boy

Table 2. The list of multicultural adolescents (in-depth interviews)

No	Name	Gender	Ages	Mother
1	Miyoung	Female	14	Phung
2	Jiyu	Female	14	Mai
3	Jisu	Female	12	Mai
4	Sujeong	Female	14	Ba
5	Junyoung	Male	14	Han
6	Junhee	Male	14	Han

Table 3. Participant's information (questionnaire survey)

Items	Frequency	Percentage	
Age	20s	15	30.0
	30s	29	58.0
	40s	5	10.0
	50s	1	2.0
Time living in Korea	Less than 6 years	20	40.0
	From 6 years to 10 years	17	34.0
	More than 10 years	13	26.0
Occupation	House wife	27	54.0
	Factory worker	13	26.0
	Office worker	9	18.0
	Farmer	1	2.0
Marriage status	Married	48	96.0
	Divorced	2	4.0
Number of children	1	23	46.0
	2	23	46.0
	3	4	8.0
Total	50	100.0	



## APPENDIX 2

### A. Interview guideline for Vietnamese mother and Viet-Han adolescents

#### ※ For Vietnamese mothers

##### 1. Personal and family information

Tell me about your self, time living in Korea, family member, marriage status, job, number of children, hometown in Vietnam

##### 2. Questions related to bilingual language

- a. Can you describe your family language using habit?
- b. Can you share your experience in teaching bilingual language?
- c. In your opinion, is it important for children to acquiring minority language?
- d. How can you teach Vietnamese to your children?
- e. How do your children response to learning Vietnamese?
- f. How do you evaluate your children's Vietnamese ability?
- g. What is the reason why you did not teach Vietnamese to your children?
- h. How is your children's attitude toward Vietnamese?

##### 3. Questions related to ethnic identity

- a. How do you transmit Vietnamese cultural and traditional values to your children?
- b. Which kind of food do your family prefer? (Korean or Vietnamese)
- c. How about the relation between your child and other multicultural adolescents?
- d. How often do you take your children to Vietnam to visit?
- e. How about your intention in returning home country to live?

※ **For multicultural adolescents**

1. Personal information

Tell me about your self, age, schooling

2. Questions related to bilingual language

- a. Why did not you learn Vietnamese when you were young?
- b. How can you learn Vietnamese?
- c. Do you want to learn Vietnamese?

3. Questions related to ethnic identity

- a. At home, what do your mother tell you about Vietnam?
- b. What do you like about Vietnam?
- c. How do you contact to relatives in Vietnam?
- d. Do you have Korean-Vietnamese friends

**B. Survey questionnaire**

**I. Questions related to bilingual education**

1. In your opinion, bilingual education is necessary
  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Normal
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly agree
2. What is the language used in your home?
  - a. Completely in Korean
  - b. Mainly in Korean, sometimes in Vietnamese

- c. Using Korean and Vietnamese equally
  - d. Mainly Vietnamese, sometimes Korean
  - e. Completely in Vietnamese
3. Language usage habits in communication between mother and child
- a. Both mother and children speak Korean
  - b. Both mother and children speak Vietnamese
  - c. Mother speak Korean, children speak Vietnamese
  - d. Other
4. Understanding between you and your children
- a. Very bad
  - b. Not good
  - c. Normal
  - d. Good
  - e. Very good
5. The Vietnamese ability of your children

	Very bad	Not good	Normal	Good	Very good
Listening					
Speaking					
Reading					
Writing					

6. Do you teach Vietnamese to your children
- a. Yes. If yes, please do not answer the question 7
  - b. No

7. What is the reason why you do not teach Vietnamese to your children
  - a. Vietnamese is not useful
  - b. Learning Vietnamese negatively affect Korean ability
  - c. Korean is more important
  - d. Receive objection from the relatives
  - e. Children do not want to learn
  - f. Others

8. Evaluate your children's attitude in learning Vietnamese from the scale 1 to 7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly unenthusiastic						Strongly enthusiastic

## II. Questions related to ethnic identity

1. In your opinion, it is necessary to transmit Vietnamese cultural identity to children
  - a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Normal
  - d. Agree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  
2. The main food used in your family
  - a. Korean food
  - b. Vietnamese food
  - c. Both of them
  - d. Other
  
3. How often do you educate/transmit Vietnamese traditional culture and customs to your children?
  - a. Absolutely not

- b. Rarely
  - c. Normal
  - d. Regularly
  - e. Very often
4. How many times have you and your children return to visit Vietnam
- a. 1 time
  - b. From 2 to 3 times
  - c. From 4 to 5 times
  - d. From 6 to 9 times
  - e. Above 10 times
5. Frequency of cultural exchange with other Korean-Vietnamese multicultural families
- a. Absolutely not
  - b. Rarely
  - c. Normal
  - d. Regularly
  - e. Very often
6. Your intention in returning and living in Vietnam
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Do not know

**III. General information**

1. Age
- a. 20s
  - b. 30s

- c. 40s
- d. 50s
- e. 60s
- 2. Time of residence in Korea: .....years
- 3. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Marriage status
  - a. Married
  - b. Divorced
  - c. Widow
  - d. Separated
- 5. Numbers of children: \_\_\_\_\_



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