

UCLA Center for Korean Studies Joint Research Project

Teaching of the Korean Language to 1.5th and 2nd generations in the Korean Community in Chile, focusing on Korean Identity and Korean-ness.

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The purpose of this research is to observe the Korean language education for the 1.5th and 2nd generations of the Korean community children in Chile to help reinforce their Korean identity and Korean-ness in a Spanish-speaking environment. To do research on Korean language education in Chile, I focused on the Korean school in Santiago, which is the only Korean language education instate available and Korean-Chilean students of the UC.

Kramsch(1993) points out that every member of each community or each social group not only expresses her experiences but also creates those experiences through her/his language. Language is a system of signs that has its cultural value. Like other Koreans communities in other countries, Korean community in Chile has its own problems, and one of them is the Korean language education provided for the children. They are living in two different cultures and societies. One is their home which still stresses the importance of Korean culture and the other one is Chilean society where they have to come up against serious rational and cultural shock. So, the aim of the Korean language education to the 1.5th and 2nd generation is to help them not lose their roots, and at the same time, to find the way with which they can survive in Chilean society. Sharing two different cultures can be to their benefit, or become a weapon if they are confused with their identity.

- Korean School in Santiago, Chile

To determine in what sense a “Korean School(한글학교)” exists and to verify the relationships between the presence of Korean institutional identity and its transnational reach we(I and my assistant Natalia Droguett) did surveys of professors and students at the Korean Language School in Santiago, Chile.

The Korean School in Chile began in the year 1975 and is now located on Eucibio Lillo Street in Santiago, the Capital City of Chile. It is the only Korean Language Education Institute in Chile. The school offers classes every Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm. Currently, it has 128 students attending 14 classes from kinder through 8th grade.

Classes	병아리	사자	1	2-1	2-2	3-1	3-2	4-1	4-2	5-1	5-2	6	진	선	Total
Numbers	9	13	9	10	9	10	9	8	8	10	9	6	11	9	129

Data of the year April, 2008

The first survey was done by me on 19th of April, 2008 to 14 professors in Korean and to 7 students of 선 class with open questions in Spanish. With the answers of those 8 students of 선 class, we made Questionnaire for all students in Spanish, this time multiple choices with some open questions. The second survey was done by me and Natalia Droguett, the assistant

of this research on 17th of May, 2008. We eliminated the students of kinder(병아리 & 사자), the 1st and the 2nd grades. The number of participants was 64. Also we did in-depth interviews with the three university students.

We decided to apply the survey from 3rd grade on because smaller children would not be able to concentrate and would be easily distracted. The 3rd graders had that problem but we still got valuable feedback from them. Some students of the 3rd graders answered with pictures. From this number, 35 students were female and 29 were male. They were usually educated in top private schools, most of them in the elite school like Nido de Aguilas(22), while the second majority(8) went to the Lincoln International Academy. From this, we can infer that most children that attend the Korean Language School come from an upper middle class or wealthy background.

The survey was originally applied in Spanish among the students, because it is their first language for most of them, and they feel more comfortable communicating through it. Many of them felt relieved that the survey was in Spanish rather than in Korean. The same survey was applied to teachers in Korean, for similar reasons.

- Survey to the teachers

This survey was applied to 14 Korean teachers who work at the Korean School in Santiago, Chile. It was conducted on April 19th, 2008, before applying the correspondent survey to the students.

Question 1 “How long have you worked in the Korean School?” obtained very dissimilar answers: they ranged between 14 years and 2 months, but most teachers had worked there less than 4 years (12 of 14); just one had taught there 8 years, and one 14.

Question 2 “Before working in Korean School have you taught Korean somewhere else?” aimed at their prior experience. Eight of fourteen teachers had taught Korean before, one teacher had taught for 6 years, one for 5 years, one for 3, another for 1 year 6 months, one for 5 months and the one who had less experience, for 3 months. This is a key aspect of the standing of the school when it comes to teaching Korean as a second language: most teachers lack the sufficient experience and formation in pedagogy, which directly affects the way in which contents are presented to the students, and the way they learn. We think this is one of the most decisive factors of the school; however, it cannot be helped, the community in Chile is very small and the opportunities for improving this are few. Nevertheless, there have been instances of formation courses in the near past: during the last two years, the author has conducted sessions of improvement in the teaching of Korean as a second language. And in September, 2008, a specialist from the National Institute of the Korean Language 국립국어원(belonging to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of South Korea 문화체육관광부) will come to Chile and deliver a two-day lecture on the subject, so the teachers can benefit from this instance.

Question 3 “Why do you work at the Korean School?” most teachers work there because they were suggested to do it by the Korean Community or by chance. One teacher answered “because I was interested in teaching Korean as a second language”, another “I studied teaching Korean as a second language, and I feel responsible for the teaching to the

second generation.” Two interesting answers were “for the education of my son in the Korean School” and “I felt limited when I taught my children Korean at home, so I decided to join the Korean School.” These two teachers saw the Korean School as an opportunity for their own children, probably because of the classroom environment and the provided materials. However, most teachers work there because they were asked to and were available to do so, not because they were previously trained.

Question 4 “What is the difficulty in teaching Korean in this school?” most teachers make reference to either the lack of interest from the students, their separateness from their Korean roots, or the differences in proficiencies found in the same class: students are placed in different grades according to age, not proficiency, so there is a diversity in progress among students in the same grade.

Question 5 “According to your opinion, what is the main difficulty for students that learn Korean here?” teachers refer to how students do not use Korean in their daily lives, living in a Spanish speaking country. Connected to this, there is a lack of understanding of grammar, spelling and vocabulary. Since most students were born in Chile or someplace else, not Korea, according to the teachers there is a lack of “spontaneity” in class, and also a lack of “sentimental knowledge.”

Question 7 “What do you think the problem with the materials you have at the Korean School is?” most teachers answered that the textbooks provided were wrong for their students’ context: textbooks are created with students learning in Korea in mind, not students studying Korean abroad, so it is hard for Korean Chilean students to relate with the situations exemplified in the books. Also, some teachers think the level of vocabulary and grammar is too advanced for these students. Another answer is that textbooks are not interesting enough, students find them boring and unattractive, which makes them inadequate in their opinion

Question 8 “What methodology do you use in class?” most teachers use the textbooks in class, they explain the corresponding lessons, grammar, dictations and repetitions of all these elements. Since most of them have not had formal training in teaching, for them to only follow the textbooks is expected. Also some teachers said to be concerned about developing their students’ speaking and reading skills. Teachers who were in charge of smaller children said they preferred songs, flashcards, and storybooks in order to catch their students’ attention. Although only one teacher mentioned the importance of teaching culture, it is implied by other answers to the survey that they do focus on cultural aspects when teaching language.

Question 9 “What do you think is the most necessary aspect right now at the Korean School?”, three teachers mentioned the environment in which the school is inserted. It is important to note that the school is located in Recoleta, the same *comuna* (district) where the small “Korea Town” is found (known as the Patronato neighborhood); however, the sector of Recoleta where the school is in is very poor, and rather dangerous. Although security measures are strict, there is a feeling among teachers (and probably parents) that the school should be located in a better area.

Most teachers are also aware of the need of transmitting culture along with language, as one of them stated they need to “teach Korea more than Korean,” but they find it difficult because of the conditions they are in, the lack of opportunities to do culture related activities,

lack of interest from students', and lack of parental participation. Some teachers said there is a need for better audiovisual material, and others think textbooks need to be updated and improved.

Question 10 "Do you think that when students learn Korean in the Korean School it is helpful for them in order to feel Korean?" most teachers agreed that the Korean school helps them to feel Korean. A teacher said that "students want to speak Korean but their mouths do not follow their minds, so the Korean school is important for them to feel Korean. While they are younger, they feel more Chilean but while they grow older, they feel more Korean." This is an opinion echoed by many, and proved right by the survey we applied to the students: older children recognize the importance of the Korean school more than younger children, also they are more aware of the differences between them and mainstream Chileans, which makes them turn to their Korean roots.

Teachers focused again on cultural aspects, and how important they are when teaching language. Only one teacher plainly answered "no" to this question. Thus, they do think that the Korean atmosphere created in the school is very helpful for students to shape up their identity.

Question 11 "What do you think students need in order to feel Korean," eight of fourteen teachers mentioned the parents' role, their support and involvement in their children's education. Since the school has only session on Saturday morning, teachers agree that most of the responsibility falls into their family's hands: the feeling of being Korean should start and grow strong at home. Here we recognize another major problem when it comes to shaping up the Korean identity and use of language of immigrant's children: most parents work, either in important companies or as shop owners. Children spend the majority of time either at school with their Spanish speaking classmates, or with their caregivers, who are either Chilean or from neighbor countries, such as Peru. The amount of time spent with their parents, then, is small, so the role of the Korean school is magnified by these particular circumstances.

Consequently, teachers also see the importance of their own responsibility as teachers, and said that they needed to emphasize the knowledge of Korean history and culture among their students in order to make them feel Korean.

In question 12, 13 and 14, teachers were asked about their academic level, specialty and occupation. Nine of fourteen teachers said they had earned a University degree, while three were attending University at the moment. Only two had not attended a higher education institution. Their degrees were on varying subjects, with three who had studied or were studying something related to Business and Administration, two degrees on History, two on pre-School education, one on Sociology, one on Spanish and one on Protestant Theology; only one person, though had obtained a degree on Teaching Korean as a Second Language. Regarding their occupation, six teachers were housewives, two were shop owners, three students, one said to have a part-time job, one was a missionary and one did not answer.

- Survey to the students I

Before surveying a questionnaire to the students, I did in-depth interview with 7 students of 3rd class on 19th of April, 2008. The Questionnaire was in Spanish accompanying

by in-depth interview with author in Korean and in Spanish.

In Question “Which is the main reason you learn Korean?”, ID 1 said, “To know and understand my root. Obviously if someone is Korean, he/she needs to know the language. Although I don’t speak or write very well, but I want to learn more.” ID 2 studies Korean “Because I am Korean and my parents, too.” ID 3 studies Korean just because her parents are Korean. ID 4 was born in Chile, but she thinks that Korea is her country and Korean is her mother language, so, it’s very important to know his mother language. She is learning Korean to communicate with her family. ID 5 answered in Korean, and the reason she attends Korean School is know her mother language and also she wants to go to the Korean university in the future. ID 6 was born in Argentina and living in Chile for 8 years. She learns Korean because she is Korean and to prepare her future career. ID 7 was born in Korea and came to Chile three years go. He doesn’t have any reason to go to Korean School just his mother requires to attend it.

- Survey to the students 2

In question number 1, “Where are you from?”, 22 students answered that they were born in Korea, 34 were born in Chile and 6 were born somewhere else; 2 students did not reply.

Question number 3, “Have you been to Korea?” was meant for those who were born in Chile or other countries 32 said they had visited Korea, 15 said they had not, and 17 did not answer (apparently many students were confused and answered this question even when it was not aimed for that). Question 3.1 asked “How many times?” the answers fluctuated from 1 to 9 times (a student from 3rd grade wrote the number 50, but we interpret this as boredom or playfulness). When we asked about what nationality they thought they would choose when they reach 18 in Question 3.2, 21 said Korean, 3 said Chilean, 23 answered they did not know and 18 did not answer (this adds up to 65 answers because one student probably meaning he would choose both, answered 1 and 2).

Question number 4, “Have you been to Korea after you arrived to Chile?”, was meant for those who were born in Korea or outside of Chile, 16 said they had 18 that they had not and 30 did not answer (again, many students who were born in Chile answered this question).

Question 5, “How would you describe your proficiency in Korean?” in the 4 linguistic skills like Listening Writing, Reading and Speaking, in Listening 7 students answered they had basic skills, 20 intermediate, 17 advanced and 13 almost native. 6 did not answer and 1 said Basic and Advanced at the same time. In Writing, 12 said basic, 25 intermediate, 14 advanced and 7 almost native. In Reading, 11 basic, 22 intermediate, 13 advanced and 11 almost native. Finally, in Speaking, 15 basic, 21 intermediate, 8 advanced and 15 almost native. From this, we can infer that Listening would be the weakest ability for this group, while Speaking, the strongest. The first majority was always found in the Intermediate category.

Question 6, “What language do you use in the following situations?”, 36 answered that they used mainly Korean with their parents, 5 mainly Spanish and 17 both in the same proportion. With their siblings, 7 mainly Korean, 38 mainly Spanish and 9 both in the same

proportion. With their friends of the same background, 7 mainly Korean, 38 mainly Spanish and 13 both in the same proportion. So most students use Korean with their parents and probably other adults from Korean origins, while with their peers, they mainly use Spanish. The reasons for this could be many: maybe their parents do not have a grasp of the local language, or simply they want their children to preserve their customs. However, when they are away from parental watch, they relax and use Spanish which is, in most cases, their native language. From *in situ* observation we can say that when children play of chat among themselves, they do use mainly Spanish, with some Korean and English (we observe that their English is more advanced than Korean since most of them study in international academies) in a lower level intervened.

Question 7, "What is the main reason you attend Korean Language School?", 36 students answered that because their parents demand it, 27 because they are Korean, 15 because it could be advantageous for getting a job in the future and 7 because they would like to attend a Korean University in the future. 14 argued other reasons, such as "going to Korea and be able to understand the language", "to learn more about my Korean culture and language", and "because I don't want to forget how to speak Korean." Still, more than half of them thought that going to Korean Language School on Saturdays was an obligation imposed by their parents.

Question 8 asked them to choose a number to identify themselves from 1 to 5, 1 being "I am Chilean" and 5 "I am Korean." 4 said they felt they were Chilean, 11 chose number 2, 24 chose number 3 (the middle ground), 9 chose number 4 and 12 see themselves as Koreans. 4 did not answer this question. The first majority is found in exactly the middle, number 3, but still more children felt they were almost completely Korean or closer to Korean than Chilean. This could be explained by the reason that they are raising in a mainly Korean environment, with a predominance of Korean customs and values. Also, the alienation and discrimination suffered by main stream could play a role in making more students feel completely Korean than completely Chilean.

Question 9 "With which of the following you have contact with?", Korean food was the most present in their lives, with 3 saying they rarely had it, 12 that sometimes and 46 that they frequently had it; 3 did not answer. Korean music was not as present, with 6 saying they never had contact with it, 7 almost never, 10 rarely, 19 sometimes and 18 frequently, also 3 did not answer this question. Korean videos had a similar distribution, with 5 never, 5 almost never, 7 rarely, 19 sometimes and 22 frequently; 5 did not answer. Korean books was the least present, with 9 never, 18 almost never, 8 rarely, 12 sometimes and 12 frequently; also 3 did not answer. Korean friends was the second most present, with 1 never, 1 almost never, 7 rarely, 8 sometimes and 42 frequently; 5 did not answer.

Question 10 "Through what do you have contact with Korea?" 50 students said that through their families, 36 through church, 33 through friends, 25 through the Internet, 7 through Korean TV, radio and newspapers, 6 through other ways, 5 through Chilean TV, radio and newspapers, 4 through Korean newspapers, and 4 through newspapers or newsletters of the Korean community. 2 did not answer. So, at least for this group of students, their families and church are the main link they have with Korea.

Question 11 "What do you think is necessary to feel Korean?" the first majority was speaking and writing Korean with 35 instances, then keeping Korean tradition with 32,

visiting Korea with 17, going to Korean Language School with 10, 6 answered other reasons, 4 marriage between Koreans, 3 with contact with Korean TV, radio and newspapers, 3 with trade among Korea and Chile and 2 did not answer. So, most think that speaking Korean and knowing about the tradition are the most necessary factors to feel Korean.

Question 12 "Are you proud of Korean History?" 21 said they were proud, 18 more or less proud, 16 very proud, 4 were not proud at all, 1 not very proud and 2 had no idea about Korean History. 3 did not answer the question. So most students felt some pride in Korean history.

Question 13 "What is the most difficult aspect of living in Chile as a minority?" 24 answered that there was no problem and that was the first majority, 16 thought discrimination was the most difficult aspect, 8 losing their identity, 6 division of the Korean community, 5 difficulty to extend their activities to the mainstream society, 2 answered "other reasons" and 5 did not answer at all. It is interesting to note that option 2, that is "discrimination," grew in frequency with the age of the students; older children noticed discrimination more than the small ones, which is logical since they have more contact with the mainstream society and are more aware of the differences that exist among themselves and other Chileans.

Question 14 asks "Can ___ be Korean?" with several options. 36 thought North Koreans could be Korean, 22 that they could not. 57 answered that their Korean parents could be, 1 that they could not. 59 answered that their Korean father could, and 57 that their Korean mother could (one of the students has a Korean father and Chilean mother). 32 said that foreigners in Korea that could understand the culture and language could be Koreans, while 21 said they could not.

Question 15 "What is more important to define oneself as Korean?" 21 said that bloodline, 21 that ability to speak Korean, 16 that an understanding of Korean culture, 16 nationality, 3 dependency to the Korean group and 7 did not answer. So, for most of the students the most important aspects would be bloodline and speaking Korean.

Question 16 asks about discrimination, and is an open question. Until fifth grade the answers were similar, saying simply "no" or "never" most times, with a few instances of "yes, they bother me" or "I get beaten." From 6th grade up the answers are more complete and most of them confess being discriminated against. Many said they were confused with the Chinese, with people calling them thus or even yelling at them. Chile is not a very multicultural society, most of Chileans are mestizos of European and native (indigenous) ancestry, so when someone is from a different racial configuration, they stand out. Besides, for someone belonging to the mainstream society distinguishing Asians is basically impossible: "all look the same," not many know the differences between Asians.

Question 17 "Do you think going to Korean School helps you to identify as a Korean?" 50 answered yes, 13 no and 3 did not answer. So, these students do recognize at some level that the Korean School is useful for them, at least to preserve their "Korean-ness."

Question 18 "What are the difficulties in going to the Korean School?" 34 said that they wanted to rest on Saturdays, 19 that they did not have time to dedicate to study what they learned at Korean School because of their regular schools, 14 said there was no difficulty, 9 that they were not interested in Korean School, 8 that even in Korean School they did not

have the chance to speak Korean, and 3 said "others"; 4 did not answer. It was a predictable question, since children go to regular school from Monday to Friday; going to Korean School on Saturdays probably is tiring and bothersome for many of them, especially if we connect this question to number 7, in which the first majority said they went to Korean School because their parents require them to attend. So for them it becomes an obligation instead of a voluntary activity.

Question 19 "Do you study Korean at home?" 34 said they did, 24 that they did not and 6 did not answer. Since most of them speak Korean with their parents, they do have the chance of practicing what they learn at home, so maybe that is the reason many do not study it (formally).

Question 20 "What comes to your mind when you think in Korea?" also is an open question. Again up until fifth grade answers were not as elaborated: many wrote "nothing" or did not write at all. Interestingly, some children drew people, food and also airplanes instead of writing. Some of them answered that they thought of family and friends. From sixth grade up the answers are more complete and diverse: although they do speak about family and friends, some of them also say tradition, food, technology, shopping, and fashion.

Question 21 "What do you want to visit when you go to Korea?", another open question, has a slightly more enthusiastic response from smaller children than other open questions; though many again leave a blank space, others mention Seoul, the beach, relatives' homes, buildings, etc. Among older children, especially girls, the mall is a popular place to visit. Lotte World one of the famous amusement parks in Korea is an interesting spot among all age groups, almost as popular as Seoul itself. Also, another interesting aspect of the students' answers is that many of them wrote in Korean letter Hangeul 한글 or a combination of Hangeul and Spanish, maybe because they understood the question was specifically aimed at Korea and their knowledge of the country.

Question 22 "What is the advantage of being Korean Chilean?" is an interesting one, but the trend is repeated: younger students answer "nothing" or leave blank spaces, while older students agree on the same with very few exceptions: knowing two or more languages and being able to understand both cultures. Curious answers were along the lines of "Koreans are faster while Chileans are more fun," "I have friends in this country though I am not from here, and "I can insult in Korean while I don't like in Spanish, when they don't know the language."

Question 23 "What is the disadvantage of being Korean Chilean?" predictably enough, among young students the answers were typical: blank space, "nothing" or "I don't know;" also, "Korean School" was present a couple of times. Though many of the older children answered "none" or "there is no disadvantage," still the problem with discrimination persists and is present in their answers as the most difficult aspect of being Korean Chilean. Especially when it comes to their looks, how people call them "Chinitos" which means Chinese in Spanish and how some of them do not feel accepted by the mainstream society.

Question 24 "When do you feel you are Korean?" the first majority was alternative 4, "when I speak Korean with my family" with 30 instances, language then is given a key role in their self-identification and awareness of being Korean. The second majority was alternative 1 "when I study Korean at the Korean School," reinforcing again the importance

of the Korean Language when it comes to being Korean, and how the School helps them in the process. We believe that although the Korean School might be seen as a nuisance for many of the students, at some level they recognize its value and what it does for them, especially then they get older and have a grasp of what it means to be Korean living in Chile. The third majority was alternative 3 "when I go to Church," yet another instance of Korean Language in use and sharing with the community. 16 students that playing with their Korean friends is important to feel Korean, 6 did not answer and 3 said they did not feel Korean at all.

- The Importance of the Korean School

As we have pointed out before, the Korean School has its sessions on Saturday mornings, and most of the students confess attending because of their parents' requirement. However, we still think Korean School is important in the development of their Korean consciousness, and some answers to the survey reveal that. For example, in question 7 "What is the main reason you attend Korean School?" 27 students answered that "because they are Korean," linking their ethnicity and origin to the obligation of going to School and learning the language.

In question 11 "What do you think is necessary to feel Korean?" Korean School had some presence directly and indirectly: it was an alternative and got the fourth majority (10), but still it has an important role through "Speaking and Writing in Korean" which was the most voted. The fact that the children are exposed from a young age and regularly to an all-Korean environment outside of their homes (which is the school) undoubtedly helps them in the development of the linguistic skills that even they recognize as important in the process of self-identification. Through question 15 "What is more important to define oneself as Korean?" again language was considered highly important, which brings up the influence of Korean School.

Question 17 asked straightforwardly "Do you think Korean School helps you to identify as a Korean?" and 50 of 64 students answered "Yes," which is a vast and important number. Korean School is an island of Korean-ness in which they are surrounded by people, symbols, customs and the language belonging to their ethnicity, while existing in a country which is completely foreign to their origins. This island could be considered then a bridge between them and everything belonging to the Korean culture with language playing a protagonist role. Korean School does help them to identify themselves as Koreans even when it is an imposition, and most of them know it and appreciate it at some level (or eventually will do so).

In Question 18 we see what are the "cons" of going to Korea School for them, and again we see that the imposition of attending it on a Saturday, one of the two days off they get from regular schools, as the biggest difficulty for them. Interestingly, 8 students said that even in Korean School they did not have the chance to speak Korean. The reason for this could be that even though the teachers speak Korean only and demand their students to do the same, children still communicate mainly through Spanish among themselves, and when they are not being watched they keep on doing so.

The last question of the survey "When do you feel Korean?" was answered mainly in terms of the importance of language, and Korean School is given explicit relevance as the

second majority chosen by the students. The first one was “when I speak Korean with my family” and the third “when I go to Church.” These three instances involve atmospheres of almost exclusive presence of Korean elements in which language plays a key role, that the children can identify as factors that help them feel Korean. Being surrounded by Korean people speaking the language and behaving in a way which is different than the mainstream does, makes them aware of the differences with other Chileans, aware of themselves as a part of this community, and aware of their condition as Koreans inserted at some level in Chilean society. The fact that most of them were born and raised in Chile, speak Spanish as their first language, go to school with other Chileans, watch TV, etc, gives them a dual identity which is undeniable, and an inclination towards what is more present, i.e. Chilean culture, would not be rare. Thus, the efforts of parents and adults make in order to keep their Korean-ness alive need to be great, and Korean School is an example of a collective effort from the community in order to preserve the new generation’ identity.

- Survey to the university students

To continue the research process, we found 15 students from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile: we knew some of them because they had taken my classes (Korean Culture and Language LET035E and/or Korean Culture and Language II LET049E), some of them were found through the University’s data base, which only students or faculty members have access to. The criterion for our search was common Korean names and surnames.

We sent them the following e-mail on October 14, 2008:

Hola,

Mi nombre es Natalia Droguett y soy estudiante de Letras Inglesas. En esta oportunidad les escribo en nombre de la profesora Min Wonjung, asociada de la Facultad de Historia, Geografía y Ciencia Política, como su asistente de investigación. La profesora Min está desarrollando un proyecto de investigación sobre la conexión entre la identidad coreana y la enseñanza del idioma en el Colegio Coreano de Santiago, enfocándose en los coreanos-chilenos de las generaciones 1.5 y segunda. Por lo tanto, queríamos solicitarles su colaboración, muy necesaria dentro del proceso de investigación: quienes estén dispuestos a ayudarnos sólo necesitan participar de una entrevista corta, para lo cual coordinaríamos nuestras disponibilidades horarias. No es necesario que hayan atendido al Colegio Coreano para participar en la entrevista.

De antemano agradecemos su voluntad y tiempo.
Natalia Droguett

Translation:

Hello,

My name is Natalia Droguett and I am a student of English Literature and Linguistics. In this opportunity I am writing in representation of Professor Min Wonjung, associated of the

Faculty of History, Geography and Political Science, as her research assistant. Professor Min is developing a research project about the connection between Korean identity and language teaching in the Korean School of Santiago, focusing on Korean-Chileans of 1.5th and second generation. Therefore, we wanted to ask for your collaboration, which is very necessary in the research process: those of you interested in helping just need to participate in a short interview, for which we can coordinate our availability. You don't need to have attended the Korean School to participate in this interview.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,
Natalia Droguett

From the fifteen students that were contacted, only five answered our email. Min Jeong Bag, the first to respond was interviewed on Thursday, October 23, and Seoung Ha Kim, the second, on Friday, October 24. The interviews are conducted by Natalia Droguett. These two first interviewed revealed a manifest recognition of their Korean heritage. First of all, they had in common that both of them were born in Korea and spent their early childhood there. Therefore, they learned the Korean language in the mother land. Secondly, after the immigration process and having spent most of their lives in Chile, they still think speaking Korean is an important thing for them, and they do so with regularity. A key aspect regarding these two students is that they recognized the role their parents played in this process: Min Jeong Bag (PUC alumni, has been practicing Medicine for two years), for example, highlighted the fact that Korean was always spoken in her house, and that in contrast with most Korean Chilean children she spent a lot of time with her parents when she was younger. Her opinion is that one of the failures in transmitting the Korean heritage is that generally parents work the whole day, and children are left at the care of Spanish speaking nannies.

Regarding the Korean School, both (Min Jeong and Seoung Ha) think that it would have played an important role in their formation as Koreans had they attended it from a younger age. Seoung Ha unwillingly studied there for about a year, only because his parents insisted on him doing so. He thinks the School was not very helpful for him since he already spoke Korean quite fluently, and that his parents made him go in order to avoid his idleness. However, he does think it is an important instance for Korean Chilean children, though he thinks it would be a lot more effective if they constantly studied Korean and their parents were more involved in the learning process. Min Jeong, on the other hand, did not attend the school because she lived in Southern Chile until after graduating from high school: she moved to Santiago to study in the Catholic University. Still, she does think the Korean School is a necessary institution, though not as important as families involved in their children's education.

When asked about what if they considered learning Korean necessary for them, both of them said yes, because the language is part of their culture. There was not a specific moment of realization of this necessity for them, they answered that they always spoke Korean, and ever since they arrived in Chile they have continued speaking it.

About national identity, curiously enough neither of them answered immediately Chilean or Korean, not even a mixture of both nationalities. At first, Min Jeong said she

considered herself as “a part of the Universe,” and Seoung Ha a “human being.” When asked what made them feel that way, both of them developed their answer more, and said they were a product of a mixture of cultures. Min Jeong, for example, said that she even had influences of the German culture because of her school, and having lived in Germany as an exchange student. This “makes me see the bigger picture, it makes me more liberal, and it makes me feel not from just one place.” Seoung Ha felt that there was no reason not to include himself in both cultures, since he was born in Korea but raised in Chile; and had family in one country, but friends in the other.

About the link between language and cultural identity and how it is manifested in their daily lives, Min Jeong said that she thought there was a link, and that it was manifested in her necessity to speak Korean. She said that there are “certain emotional situations in which one thinks in a certain language, they are thought best in one language or another.” She added that even though she does not live with her parents anymore, she still feels the need to speak Korean when she is at home, especially because she speaks Spanish at work. Seoung Ha said something similar: “Basically, outside of my house I speak Spanish the whole day. At home I speak Korean. I live in a boarding house, but with more Koreans.”

Outside of the frame of the interview, both students agreed on the same point: the Korean School is a necessary institution, though not as important as families involved in their children’s education. Their opinion was that one of the failures in transmitting the Korean heritage is that generally parents work the whole day, and children are left at the care of Spanish speaking nannies.

In the case of Andres Ha, a student of Business at PUC, born in Temuco, southern part of Chile and lived there until entering the university. He currently lives in Santiago with his parents and his younger brother. who grew in Temuco, southern part of Chile, he has never been with Korean friends except his family. When we talked about their Korean born in Chile, he told us that he feels conflict without any doubt when defining his Chilean nationality and Chilean passport. As he was born and raised here, he is Chilean. But he also is Korean, because his parents are immigrants born in Korea and they sent him a clear Korean values and customs. So he feels Korean and Chilean at once and can not deny that sometimes does not fit completely into any of those two cultures. Andres started systematic learning of the Korean language while he was in 6th at the elementary school after he knew a Korean Chilean friend who spoke fluent Korean. He felt that he was not making it to honor his legacy by not knowing the language so he decided to learn it. His main language is Spanish, which he learned by his nanny. His father has a good level of Spanish, and his mother has improved over the years. At present, Andres spoke Korean but he is still studying and hopes to handle it completely. The interviews were conducted by me and Natalia Droguett.

Juan Pablo Kim who is attending medical school at PUC took Korean Culture and Language classes I and II with me in the year 2008. The interview was conducted by me during the class. He went to Korean School for some years when he was a child. He mainly speaks Korean with his parents but confessed that he just nod his head or say “yes” or “no” in Korean. When he is with his Korean Chilean siblings and peers, he mainly speaks Spanish. He studies Korean to establish conversation with native Korean and to get closer to his Korean side. Regarding Korean School, he thinks that there is a lack of qualified teachers and places for teaching and learning and Korean School, the only place which offers Korean language education is focused primarily on children. When I asked him “how do you feel

about being Korean Chilean?”, and “in what sense it affects your identity and your daily life”, he said, “Chile is a country as ethnically different from Korea. It is difficult to feel completely Chilean. On the other hand, I am not Korean nor as my way of thinking and my habits are not completely resemble that of a native Korean.” In question “How to be Korean is manifested in other words your “Korean” in your personality and how you speak Korean?”, he answered, “Something very remarkable is the respect I have for the elder people, generally Chileans don’t have, and the negative thing is that I am so materialistic. I don’t understand it relates to the way that I speak Korean.” In many ways and many times he felt discriminated but he thinks that it is mainly due to ignorance. He said, “On the street you see a lot of comments to ‘orientals’ in general. There are many people distrust Koreans.” His everyday meal is primarily Korean and sometimes watches Korean TV programs and listen to the Korean music but rarely has contact with Korean Chilean friends and never read books in Korean. He thinks that one day he should live there for a while. Unlike many other Korean Chileans, he doesn’t go to the church at the Korean Community.

- Conclusion

Through this research, I found that we can not unconditionally force Korean Chilean children to be Korean. When the kids are younger, they feel themselves as Korean depending on the force but try to find their own identity as they grow up. But as they grow up, they have to encountered the real situation.

Juan Pablo Kim told that he never understand why his parents still insist that he is Korean as he was born and raised in Chile. “I am Chilean when I am with my friends. But when I meet a person who doesn’t know me, everytime they say that “You speak Spanish very well. Where are you from?” so I feel very confused. As my parents don’t speak Spanish very well, still they use many terms and vocabularies in Spanish. But I can’t have a deep conversation with them because they don’t understand my Spanish and I don’t understand their Korean.”, he continued. “I don’t use very well the formal way like 존댓말, and the friends of my father as we call them 아저씨들 criticize, so I lose motivation to tell and understate.” He continued, “I know very well that I can not be a Chilean Chilean so I decided to take the Korean Culture and Language classes.”

Estefanía, a Chilean student at the Korean Culture and Language class, whose major is Law, has perceived that many Asian students choose Medicine or Law as their careers. She thinks that probably they do so in order to go back to their countries and work there as doctors and lawyers.

Some conclusions through this research are:

1. The students’ will to learn Korean language depends on the place of the last destination of their parents.
2. Most of the Kindergarden and Elementary School students do not feel the necessity of learning Korean language because they want to be Chileans.
3. Even though they are a minority in the Chilean society the students don’t feel discriminated because most of them are surrounded by Koreans, for example, in churches or other religious places and schools where many Asians go.
4. The Korean school’s role is not as much as we assumed it was to promote Korean

identity and Korean-ness. The students go to the Korean School because, in most cases, their parents make them go. Even they feel the necessity of learning Korean language and of finding their own identity after entering the university.

5. But still, the Korean School is important to maintain their Korean identity in the Korean community because it is the only place where they have to contact and communicate with each other through the Korean language.

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