

Navigating a New Home Using English: An Ethnographic Interview Study on English Language and Filipina Immigrants' Mothering Experiences in Korea

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Abstract

In an ethnographic interview study, I examine the role that the English language plays in the lives of Filipina immigrants in South Korea as they navigate their new home as mothers of young children using the following research question: *What impact does Filipina immigrant mothers' knowledge of the English language have on their mothering experiences and the ways they navigate local communities in Korea?* I examine how Filipina mothers use English as a means of communication with their children, as an asset to pursue employment opportunities, and as a channel through which they establish relationships in Korean society, which has a multi-billion US dollar market for English language education. While language skills are often promoted as a solution for difficulties immigrant mothers face during their time of transition, Filipina immigrant mothers' language skills, their English in particular, help us understand the complexities of relational power dynamics within their homes, workplaces, and local communities.

Keywords : Korea, immigrant mothering, Filipina, English

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Introduction

On a chilly afternoon in December 2019, I sat across from Camila over a cup of tea, a Filipina immigrant teaching English in South Korea (Korea hereafter). She shared about the influence of the English language in her mothering experience:

I keep telling [my daughter] language is power; the more languages you know the more access you have to power and knowledge, and that's a great thing.

In some regards, this excerpt from our conversation reflects the general benefits of being a bi- or multilingual, as it is reasonable to consider that knowing more languages can grant you access to various things. In the Korean context in which this ethnographic interview study took place, however, languages are at the center of social, familial, and other relational dynamics that influence the experiences of Filipina immigrants as a spouse, daughter-in-law, and mother (e.g., Park, 2020; Sohn & Kang, 2021).

In this paper, I examine the role that the English language plays in the lives of Filipina immigrants in Korea as they navigate their new home as mothers of young children using the following research question: *What impact does Filipina immigrant mothers' knowledge of the English language have on their mothering experiences and the ways they navigate local communities in Korea?* While language skills are often promoted as a solution for difficulties immigrant mothers face during the time of transition, I argue that Filipina immigrant mothers' language skills, English specifically, help us understand the complexities of relational power dynamics within their homes, workplaces, and local communities. The stories of Filipina immigrant mothers help examine the intersection between the marginalized status as immigrants and the prestige of the “global language” in Korea (Crystal, 2012). Developing a clearer sense of how Filipina mothers use the English language is important because it illustrates how the immigrant mothers are blurring the boundary of marriage and labor immigration through their language skills (Kim-Bossard, 2017).

Korea has been widely known as a racially, ethnically, and culturally homogeneous country for many years. Yet, this prevalent perception is at odds with the reality of the shifting demographic landscape in the country. During the last three decades, the number of foreign residents in Korea has increased exponentially through various forms of immigration, making

Korea a country of destination, rather than a country of origin (Bélanger et al., 2010). In particular, the number of marriage immigrants has increased over the years. While the number of incoming marriage immigrants has been influenced yearly depending on changing policies towards marriage brokerage agencies (Freeman, 2011), the Korean language proficiency requirements (Statistics Korea, 2020), and the public perception on marriage immigration (e.g., Kim 2009; Yi & Jung 2015), the existing marriage immigrant population and their children have steadily impacted the public discourses about transforming demographics and diversity in the media, literature, and public institutions, including schools.

The Philippines is a country from which one of the largest groups of women come to Korea as a spouse of a Korean national, following China, Vietnam, and Japan (Statistics Korea, 2020). Unlike most marriage immigrants from other East and Southeast Asian countries, Filipina immigrant mothers are situated in a unique position in Korean society due to their language skills, specifically, their knowledge and use of English. In the upcoming section, I provide an overview of the tension around languages marriage immigrants use, situated in the status of English in Korean society.

Literature Review

The English language means much more than a neutral set of language skills in contemporary Korea, as it often translates into enhanced academic performance, better job opportunities, and even higher social standing (Park & Abelman, 2004). The enormous influence of English penetrating Korean society is demonstrated in the 210 million US dollar private English language education market in the form of “English preschools” that provide language immersion experiences for young children (Demick, 2002; Song, 2019). English also accounts for the largest portion—about 30 percent—of the 17 billion US dollar private education market in Korea (Korea National Statistical Office, 2019). When this “English Fever,” rooted in the belief that education is the most powerful and effective means for achieving upward socioeconomic mobility (J.-K. Park, 2009), intersects with circulating discourses about immigrant mothers in contemporary Korea, it illustrates prevalent viewpoints about cultural “others,” important (yet taken for granted) aspects about mothering,

and assumptions about the benefits of the English language.

Filipina immigrant mothers bring their language skills as multilinguals to raise their children in Korea, but overall, they have experienced a degree of tension between the desire for the English language in Korean society and the preference for the Korean language both inside and outside of their homes (see Kim, 2019). While some recent studies have recognized Filipina immigrants' plurilingual background as a potential asset that can contribute to English language education for Korean students (e.g., Park, 2015, 2016; Yim, 2021), there exists a limited amount of literature that examines implications of marriage immigrants using their mother tongues with their children and/or others. These studies examined how Chinese, Vietnamese, and/or Japanese marriage immigrants teach their children the mother language (Duong & Park, 2018; Nam & Lee, 2014), what motivates marriage immigrants to do so (Nam & Lee, 2014), and difficulties marriage immigrants experience in the process (Lee & Park, 2018).

Various immigrant support programs have promoted Korean language and Korean customs education as a means through which immigrant mothers can provide "their 'Korean children' with a proper upbringing in Korean society" (Kim, 2018, p. 3). Reflecting such sociocultural desire, the focus of many research studies have been on marriage immigrants' Korean language acquisition. Investigated topics include how marriage immigrants' Korean language skills contribute to or constrain relationships with family members (Kang & Son, 2011), the impact Korean language proficiency has on immigrants adjusting to new cultural environments (Kim & Lee, 2010), and various factors that promote Korean language acquisition (Hwang, 2016), including Korean language textbooks designed for marriage immigrants (Kim, 2007). Park (2020) argues that the Korean language teachers who participated in her study considered a good command in standard Korean to be a crucial skill for immigrant mothers so that they can provide a good education for their children. This emphasis on the Korean language as the language of mothering has contributed to some Filipina mothers feeling that they cannot "raise their children as proper Koreans because they did not speak Korean" (Kim, 2018, p. 2) and/or provide adequate educational support for their children due to their limited Korean language skills and cultural knowledge (Park, 2020).

Moreover, the attitudes of Korean family and community members towards Filipina immigrant mothers have been far from linear. Unlike other immigrants who come from

countries that do not use a language of interest, Filipina immigrants experienced both welcoming hands from people who saw value in their English language skills, as well as discrimination from those who perceived “otherness” from physical appearance, communication difficulties, and cultural differences (Kang et al., 2009). In this sense, Filipina immigrant mothers who are multilinguals have both advantages and challenges as they navigate their daily lives in a culturally unfamiliar terrain within the context of this multifaceted relationship—taking what is beneficial, yet still adhering to the homogeneity national myth.

Theoretical Perspectives

To investigate the complexities of how Filipina immigrant mothers use language, specifically English, to raise their children and orient themselves in Korea, I conceptualize the English language as inescapably subjective, biased, and hegemonic with the assumption that language can function as a major factor in illustrating the sociocultural values of the larger Korean society (Morris, 1995; J. S.-Y. Park, 2009; Tobin, 2000). In other words, language is laden with ideologies and inevitably influenced by social, cultural, political, historical, and relational contexts (Morris, 1995). Language is one of the principal elements through which people maintain, negotiate, and challenge meanings in daily social interactions and engagements, and the role of language needs to be examined within the context of various social and cultural practices that are dynamic and “inherently unstable” (Tusting, 2005, p. 45). This approach assumes that language is not a set of neutral signifiers, but rather it shapes and is shaped by sociocultural practices within local and social communities (Tusting, 2005). For example, an accent is not solely about sound patterns as facts, but it is associated with the social identities of the speaker, deeply situated in relational contexts, and the prior knowledge and experiences of the hearer (Agha, 2003). Following a similar line of thought, some scholars argue that the perception of linguistic competence is a social construction, rather than an objective reflection of how people have mastered a set of language skills (Blommaert et al., 2005).

These sociocultural implications are exemplified in how English is perceived within the

Korean context. The values and attitudes towards languages have been deeply influenced by the strong American presence in the country, through various channels including government, academia, religious institutions, military, business, and media (Kim, 2006; Lo & Kim, 2011; J. S.-Y. Park, 2009). Moreover, the English language is uniquely positioned in Korea and carries multiple meanings as it has significant implications for accomplishments in school and work, as well as success in seeking employment opportunities (Park & Abelman, 2004). A command of the language also presents Koreans with the (actualizable or imaginary) prospect of studying and working abroad along with a sense of being a cosmopolitan citizen of the world. It is also seen as a valuable asset that can help individuals, as well as the nations, putting them in an advantageous position in the midst of fervent global competitions (J. S.-Y. Park, 2009). As being able to speak English is generally seen as “good,” the implication of the language in Filipina immigrants’ experiences as a mother is left without critical examination.

Recognizing that people in Korea pursue English earnestly “at all levels of society,” J. S.-Y. Park (2009) also argues that the prevailing self-imposed belief that Korean people are incompetent with the language, contributes to people in Korea subordinating within the power dynamics of the global society (p. 4). Due to this imperialist implication, English is still seen as a language of other in a monolingual society, providing a justification of resisting English and perceiving it as not aligned with the local and national identity (J. S.-Y. Park, 2009).

Methodological and Analytic Frameworks

This paper is based on ethnographic interviews I conducted with Filipina immigrants in Korea between December 2019 and January 2020. Ethnographic interviews play an important role in anthropological studies that have a long-term field component because they provide researchers with opportunities to learn about the ways informants see and interpret their worlds (De Fina, 2019; Heyl, 2001; Spradley, 1979). In particular, rapport building is a key element in conducting ethnographic interviews as it allows for establishing contexts in which cultural insiders’ experiences and knowledge are elicited (Spradley, 1979). The set of

interviews examined in this paper is an extension of an ethnographic interview study I started in 2013, exploring the intersection between mothering and marriage-labor immigration in Korea.

I interviewed informants who are part of local Filipina immigrant communities in or in the vicinity of two urban cities in the southeast of Korea. My interview approach was informed by the friendship model of interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) and go along interviews (Kusenbach, 2003), engaging Filipina immigrants in mutual conversational exchanges using semi-structured ethnographic questions (Heyl, 2001; Spradley, 1979). This approach to interviewing considers building rapport with informants as one of the key factors that influence the interviewer and the interviewees because having a relationship allows for dialogic exchanges to take place during interviews. The following are examples of semi-structured ethnographic questions posed during the interviews:

- How would you describe your life since you moved to Korea?
- In what ways has English influenced your life in Korea?
- In what ways has your knowledge of English helped you as a parent, if any?

Additional follow-up questions were asked based on informants' responses, as well as what emerged during the interview process.

Among the 15 Filipina women I interviewed, the number of years living in Korea ranged from 5 years to 28 years. This provided insights into how the transforming contexts within contemporary Korea played a role in the degree to which the immigrants could utilize the English language to navigate local communities as mothers. A little more than a half of the Filipina women (8 out of 15) were either teaching English at the time of the interview or have taught English in various capacities, including in public and private schools, as a tutor, and as a language partner. Some Filipina mothers were stay home moms, but there are also small business owners, a social worker, and former factory workers. I met the informants at churches, community events, local cafes, and at the small business an immigrant owned and ran. While there were some shorter and longer interviews, they typically lasted about 45 minutes. Some interviews were conducted individually and others were in small groups of 2-3 people, depending on the informant availability and their relationships with each other. The interviews were conducted in English with occasional uses of Korean words. Besides the

interviews with 15 Filipina immigrants, I also included in the analysis an interview with Camila conducted during the 2015 fieldwork as this interview served as an impetus for the current study.

For data analysis, I read through and manually coded the transcripts thematically, highlighting shared themes across the interviews that pertained to my research question. During the initial read through, I noted and organized recurring themes and key terms as a set of analytic codes. Developing this list of codes was a dialogic process where I went back and forth between the transcripts and the code table in a conversational manner to identify interview data that corresponded with analytic codes and also recognized emerging themes that were not already reflected in the list of identified codes. While there were a lot of recurring themes of importance related to Filipina mothers, including ethnicity, citizenship, and social status, I will focus on parts that bring out the intersection between the English language and mothering with an emphasis on the accounts of Filipina mothers with young children to highlight how languages are influenced by sociocultural contexts (Morris, 1995; Tusting, 2005).

Table 1. *Participant Profiles*

	Name (Pseudonym)	Length or residence in Korea	Current occupation
1	Camila	21 years	English teacher
2	Lily	25 years	Stay home mom
3	Sharon	21 years	English teacher
4	Grace	5 years	Stay home mom
5	Diane	21 years	Social worker & English teacher
6	Sophie	7 years	Stay home mom
7	Charlotte	5 years	Stay home mom
8	Olivia	28 years	Small business owner & English teacher
9	Jenni	10 years	English teacher
10	Johanna	19 years	Small business owner
11	Hannah	23 years	Stay home mom
12	Olivia	24 years	Stay home mom
13	Madison	13 years	English teacher
14	Aria	19 years	Stay home mom
15	Abigail	10 years	English teacher

As a U.S. based researcher who grew up in Korea, my positionality consists of both emic and etic perspectives in relation to the informants for this study. While I am an outsider to the overarching Filipino culture, as well as Filipina immigrant communities in Korea, I am familiar with Korean cultural beliefs and practices, experiences of English language learners, and challenges immigrants face in a country of destination. These intersecting perspectives helped me build rapport and pursue my inquiry by purposefully asking and repeating questions (Spradley, 1979).

Findings & Discussion

The “English Craze” (Yoon, 2016) in Korean society, which reflects the power of English as a language of dominance and people’s desire to use the linguistic asset to gain upward social mobility and achieve economic prosperity, is a prominent theme that emerged throughout the data analysis process. Not only does the intersection between the English language and marriage immigration in Korea reveal the complexity of the attitudes towards “others” in Korean society, but it also plays essential roles in establishing, reifying, and/or undermining the relationships within households, local communities, and the family back in the Philippines.

The English Language as a Coveted Asset: Situating Oneself in Local Communities

With the desire to improve their English language proficiency, many people in the Filipina immigrants’ lives, including the immigrant mothers’ Korean family members, neighbors, and parents of their children’s classmates, sought out Filipina mothers for their English language skills. Filipina mothers quickly learned that many Korean people wanted to practice their English or have their children learn English from them. For instance, Sophie, a mother of a three-year-old and a six-year-old, had people randomly approaching her on the street: “They always say, ‘Hi! Where are you from?’” Olivia, a small business owner who also tutored elementary school students, said that mothers in the neighborhood wanted to become friends with her and other Filipina mothers so that their children can learn English. For this reason,

Jenni, a mother of a second grader and also a teacher at a private English academy that she runs with her husband, experienced that English worked as a tool for her to network and socialize in her local community:

If I talk in Korean, like a child, they will not entertain you. I gained a lot of friends by using [my] English skills ... My husband told me that the only power you have is English, so that you are not underestimated by other people.

As Olivia shared, the level of interest and power associated with English attests that the language is not a neutral means for daily living, but it is deeply rooted in social, cultural, and relational contexts and the history that precedes the circumstances in which the language is used (Morris, 1995).

Korean people taking note of Filipina mothers' English language skills has been a clear pattern, which has emerged in interviews conducted in previous years. Camila, who teaches English at a local university, shared in a 2015 interview that one of her previous Korean neighbors sent her children to Camila, the "English speaking neighbor," every weekend without Camila necessarily agreeing to care for the children. Even though individual examples should not be generalized, these examples point to the value of English in the larger Korean social context. The English language often helped Filipina immigrants find a place in the local community as a means of initiating social relationships between Korean locals and Filipina immigrants. These examples also resonate with the literature that has recognized Filipina immigrants' English skills as an asset for improving Korean students' English language skills (Park, 2015; Yim, 2021).

Facing the Language Barriers: "I Don't Know How to be a Mom in Korea"

All the Filipina immigrants I interviewed were multilinguals who spoke more than Korean and English. There are approximately 130 languages in the Philippines (Pelagio, 2018), and depending on where the immigrants were from and what language(s) they learned in school, Filipinas mothers spoke different languages. For example, for Grace, Korean was the fourth language, and for Camila, it was the fifth language she learned.

Unlike other immigrant mothers that came from a country that spoke one language, Filipina immigrants were often able to use English to orient themselves in the new

environment to varying degrees. At the same time, some Filipina immigrants felt that continuing to use English to navigate the local communities was a deterrent to building new relationships because they lived on the outskirts of a city with less access to people who spoke English and less resources. Some of the interviewees expressed that their familiarity with English kept them from opportunities to learn and practice Korean.

Even though there are currently support programs available for immigrants to study the Korean language and culture, some Filipina mothers still felt uncertain, ostracized, and unequipped as the language difference functioned as a barrier between them and their child(ren), Korean family members, and/or members of local communities. For instance, an expecting Filipina immigrant mother, Charlotte, was concerned that she “[did] not know how to be a mother” in Korea because she did not speak Korean. Her Korean family members were unyielding about her speaking Korean to the baby girl who was to be born, and this left her feeling unsettled and concerned about how she could communicate with her baby:

I don't know how to speak [Korean]; I don't know how to raise my daughter ... my mother-in-law [and] my husband [say], “we need to speak in Korean” [even though] I don't know how to speak in Korean. I want to be a good mother, not only to speak in Korean [to my daughter].

Charlotte felt like she was not able to share her love for her daughter adequately, understand and be understood by her child, and bring in her own linguistic and cultural assets in the mothering process as her Korean family strongly voiced which language needs to be spoken at home. As her Korean family members expected Charlotte to be integrated into the family using Korean, she felt more unsure if she could take on the role of a mother in Korea. This example reflects how language is associated with particular characteristics and/or stereotypes about a speaker, which could manifest itself as a sense of linguistic insecurity (Agha, 2003, p. 241). She also shared that she planned to teach her child English in spite of her Korean family's wish, so that she could have more influence on her daughter.

Multilingual Mothers, Multilingual Children

Filipina immigrant mothers in Korea were aware that others perceive English as an asset, especially when it came to the child(ren)'s education. Some Filipina mothers who incorporated more English when interacting with their children did not necessarily maintain

the same approach if they had more than one child. There are multiple possible factors that influenced this decision, including the overall family dynamics and pressure from Korean household members, such as a mother-in-law or the father who wants the dominant language in the household to be Korean (Kim, 2019). Nam and Lee (2014) also argue that marriage immigrants are discouraged from speaking their mother tongue(s) because there is no one who can understand and/or communicate with them in a language other than Korean. Sophie, a mother of two young boys, recounted her experience during the interview:

Actually, with my first-born son, we speak Korean, but [with] my second [son, the main language] is English... With my second-born, I do my own... My second son talks to me in English, but he understands Korean.

The process of teaching their children English, however, was not as smooth as what Korean people typically expected. Even though many of the informants who participated in the interviews taught English professionally, it was not necessarily easy to teach their children English because some children were “resistant” to their efforts to teach them English. Madison, an English teacher at a private academy, expressed mixed emotions regarding her decision to send her son to a language school and others’ presumptions about her son’s English skills:

When he was young, like a toddler, I was trying my best to communicate with him in English, but as he [grew] up, especially when he [went] to elementary school, he [didn’t] want me to talk in English ... A lot of people thought “Oh, you’re an English teacher? So, your son probably could speak English well and is very good at English!” Oh, come on... I also spend money for him to learn ABC’s.

Aria, a mother of four children, had a similar experience with her children as she tried to expose her children to English:

They don’t learn English from me. When I start speaking English, they are all like, “Oh, mom ... Don’t make it difficult to understand you. Speak Korean.” So, we speak Korean at home.

While there could be multiple explanations about why this may be the case, some of the Filipina mothers who participated in the interviews explained that this was because their children did not want to be seen as “different” by others. When children from Filipina

immigrant families got older, they became more conscious of how they and their family were perceived in public and by their peers (see Kim & Yang, 2012). The children believed that using Korean with their mothers attracted less attention to themselves, and this contributed to their language preference. While there are many studies that discuss benefits of children learning multiple languages, marriage immigrants are often hesitant to teach their children their mother tongue(s) because they believe that learning another language may interfere with learning Korean and deter their academic achievement, in addition to facing opposition from Korean family members (Nam & Lee, 2014).

Still, Filipina mothers were aware of the benefits of speaking English or other languages fluently as their children grew up in Korean society. Whether or not Filipina mothers use a different language intentionally around their children, children were immersed in the environment with opportunities to access various languages as Filipina immigrant mothers communicated with their families in the Philippines and used “language(s) closer to the heart” while parenting. For example, Madison shared, “When I am emotional, [Cebuano] comes out.” Similarly, Camila shared that her daughter “didn’t speak Tagalog when she was growing up, but we spoke Tagalog around her.”

The English Language as a Relational Bridge

The English language played a much more significant role in the lives of the Filipina immigrant mothers than simply functioning as a key to success in school and society. English revealed some tension around the issue of emotionally connecting with their children, as the language did not necessarily guarantee that this much needed communication within the household would occur. Some Filipina mothers who participated in the interviews experienced communication challenges with their children first hand and witnessed similar circumstances second hand. Sharon, a mother of two and an English teacher at a local middle school, recollected about her experience raising her children:

It’s really hard for us [Filipina immigrant mothers] raising kids here in Korea, especially [since] we don’t speak the language. If I was there in America and I speak English, it’s easier... But here in Korea, we don’t speak the language, so how can we raise our kids? My husband even told me, don’t speak English, just [use] Korean, so you can also speak Korean easily ... He’s forcing me to speak, but I don’t have time to study. How can I say anything if I don’t know anything? So, when I was

raising my kids, most of the time my language was limited. It's just like "Don't do this! Don't do that!"

Sharon was asked to use Korean with the prospect of improving her language skills, but she felt that she didn't have adequate time to make herself familiar with the language. As she made efforts to use Korean phrases she knew, she still felt constrained in how she could communicate with her children. She believed that this held back her children's learning.

In addition, she deeply regretted not teaching her children a language that she could use to relate to him and "talk to [them] heart to heart." Even though she mentioned that her children's grade for English at school was better than other subjects, it still was not enough for her and her children to have a heartfelt connection. She believed that this emotional disconnect due to the lack of a common language made her son feel alone:

So one of my mistakes is, I didn't talk to him in my own language, even my Philippine language. Even in English! ... He feels like he's alone because I can't even relate to him... How can I try to console him when he's angry or scared with his friends.

This language barrier could be easily observed in the community. Camila, who teaches English at a local university, saw another Filipina mother struggling to talk with her daughter on the street. The language barrier she witnessed was an apparent obstacle for the mother and the daughter to communicate with each other, and this led to an emotional disconnect. This hindrance in building a relationship also undermined the Filipina's role as a mother:

There's this kid arguing with her mother who speaks broken Korean and who would try to speak in English, and the child does not understand, so she would get frustrated... The kid doesn't pay attention because [English] is kind of like an alien language. It sinks in right away if you say something in Korean... You don't understand what they're saying, [then] they ignore you.

Camila had a different experience mothering her daughter because her family decided to use both Korean and English in the household. She explicitly used English around her daughter, while her husband spoke Korean. Since Camila had a language in common with her daughter, she felt that she could have deeper conversations with her daughter that she would not have been able to have in Korean:

We can talk about certain things [because Camila and her daughter speak English]. I was able to

teach her the values of life in English, because I could not do it in the same depth in Korean ... I think that was the most important thing for me, because I was able to get to know my daughter and talk to her.

The English language allowed Camila to build a quality relationship with her daughter and share stories from her life experiences. Camila was also able to introduce her to a wider breath of children's stories. Through this mutual experience, they noted some cross-cultural variations together and drew connections across different stories: "When she was a kid, we would talk about English fairy tales, how the bad animal is always the dog, always the wolf, whereas in Korean fairy tales it's always the cat figure."

While Filipina mothers could not always make autonomous decisions regarding which language they would speak with their children, the English language had the potential to function as a bridge between the immigrant mother and her child(ren), the children and a wealth of different stories, and the children and the maternal family. Sophie considered the English as a bridge that would connect her children with families and friends back in the Philippines: "Actually it's given to learn Korean for my children, because we are here in Korea. I think we must teach them in English, so if we go out to our country, we can communicate with others." This example resonates with how Filipina marriage immigrants maintain transnational connections between Korea and the Philippines, and the important role that English can play in the process as one of the official languages in the Philippines and as a language of interest in Korean society (Kim, 2010). Other mothers, like Aria, felt differently in that she thought she could play the role of an interpreter instead of her children becoming fluent English speakers to communicate with her relatives. Still, the English language was the main means through which the interactions would take place and upon which relationships could be established.

Conclusion

The dialogues with Filipina immigrants in Korea made it clear that English was not only a gateway that led to more knowledge sources and experiences, but also a social and cultural

tool for survival for Filipina mothers in Korean society. English is recognized as a language of prestige in Korean society as a greater number of people can acknowledge it than can speak it competently, which makes it a valuable social asset (Agha, 2003). While marriage immigrant mothers are often portrayed as passive victims of racism, discrimination, and violence in the academic literature (Yi & Jung, 2015), this study demonstrates that Filipina immigrant mothers are resourceful and make the most of the language skills they have in self-directed ways. In the accounts of Filipina immigrants, English was frequently described as an instrument that can empower them as an individual, a professional, and a mother.

While the benefits of the language were clearly demonstrated by the many informants' stories, English did not always provide a definite solution for culturally nuanced beliefs and practices regarding mothering in the lifeworlds of Filipina immigrant mothers. Within an environment where the English language is generally welcomed, desired, and even coveted, Filipina immigrants still faced the stereotypes about non-Korean "others" who were to raise "Korean" children. As a means of negotiating everyday experiences, English simultaneously provided Filipina mothers with barriers and a potential tool to address those barriers, with the looming benefits of bi- or multilingualism for their children and Korean society.

Korean family members had strong preferences for the Korean language as the main means of communication at home, even though the English language was permitted or even promoted in social and professional settings. Some mothers associated Korean language fluency with how to be a mother in Korea and how they navigated the communities. Some mothers expressed concerns about their children's language skills and orientation in Korean society. Considering the country's history of focusing on a sense of unity and the national discourse of a homogenous nation, it is not surprising that mothering experiences of Filipina immigrant women have been challenged by stigmas, stereotypes, and misunderstandings, even if their language skills could serve as an asset in their experience of raising young children.

Filipina immigrants who participated in this study had a varying degree of English proficiency, and this limitation can be addressed by conducting interviews in Tagalog or other regional languages the immigrants speak with the help of a translator. Expanding the number of research participants could help reveal some additional insights regarding marriage immigrants navigating sociocultural power dynamics of languages in Korean society. For

future studies, Filipina immigrants' experiences could be compared with experiences of marriage immigrants from different countries of origin that speak one mother tongue or languages other than English. The ways in which the English language is situated in Korea is unique, but the intersection between mothering and language is an area of interest for immigrant mothering in various cross-cultural contexts.

The individual voices from Filipina immigrant mothers in Korea cannot and should not be generalized to the entire marriage immigrant population in contemporary Korean society. Still, it is important to note that not all language skills and knowledge the immigrants bring with them are respected or highly regarded. Understanding how the languages marriage immigrants speak are encouraged and/or restrained in contemporary Korea can influence the ways in which we approach the roles of languages in mothering practices for marriage immigrant families. Various existing and anticipated needs in marriage immigrant families can be addressed by highlighting the value of languages beyond linguistic fluency, supporting cross-cultural dialogues, and recognizing the power dynamics that influence decisions immigrant mothers make on a daily basis. This also means defying the beliefs that being able to speak a language fluently is irrefutably good or reinforcing a particular language as the home language will raise children who conform to a set of cultural norms.

Filipina immigrants' mothering experiences facilitated through English reflect various sociocultural, emotional, and relational connections they attempt to maintain in the midst of long-held beliefs and values that strive for seamless cultural integration. As Filipina mothers raise a new generation of children within the context of transforming demographics, their voices illustrate the crucial roles that a language plays in relation to immigrant mothering in Korea.

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