



Korean–English bilingual sibling interactions and socialization

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how a pair of Korean–American siblings interact and socialize and how their interactions change over time as the younger sibling starts to go to an English-speaking preschool. A 7-year-old Korean–English bilingual girl and her 3-year-old sister were observed in their home over 23 visits within a year. Their discourse data, including 33 h of audio-recordings, were analyzed from the Language Socialization perspective. The older sibling's authority derived from the age-based Korean family hierarchy inevitably played a role in creating shared benefits in the bilingual sibling relationship. After the younger sibling began to speak English, there were noticeable changes in the power asymmetry and language parallelism—the younger sibling's repetition of older sibling's utterances. This study offers insight into the bidirectionality of sibling socialization processes of sibling interactions in relation to their bilingual and bicultural development.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine Korean–English speaking siblings' interactions in relation to their bilingual and bicultural development. When compared to language socialization research on adult–child or peer interactions, there is little research on bilingual siblings' naturally-occurring interactions. Children's socialization has been frequently studied in the home context (Burdelski, 2010; Kang, 2013; Park, 2006; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1986). When out-of-the-home contexts were studied, peer interactions (Paugh, 2005; Song, 2009) or teacher–child interactions (He, 2011; Lo, 2009) were focused; sibling relationships have received relatively less attention especially those not initiated or mediated by their parents. Although peer and sibling relationships share similarities due to their similar developmental stages, sibling relationships possess some uniqueness. For example, at home, there is a “caregiving hierarchy.” This is a social ranking based on the degree to which kinds of caregivers (e.g., a father vs. an older sibling) have more or less responsibility and authority as caregivers (Ochs, 1988). Children are at a lower caregiving hierarchy than their parents, but among siblings an older sibling has a higher status and authority. Such an ordering impacts their interactional dynamics and roles (Maynard, 2002). Furthermore, a particular culture or ideology of a family or of a community such as Korean's age-based politeness can complicate sibling interactions. In Korean–American

contexts, for example, parents teach hierarchical order in the family and polite behavior by prompting and modeling polite language and honorifics to their young children (Park, 2006). Korean children are explicitly taught appropriate terms for addressing a peer who is just one year older (Song, 2009).

Traditionally, Koreans' belief systems and social structures are influenced by Confucian ideology. This ideology emphasizes hierarchical relationships between the parent and the child, between wife and husband, and between younger and older persons (Kim & Wolpin, 2008). Furthermore, Korean parents in Korea would consider perfect Korean proficiency to be a natural and expected ability (Jeon, 2001) and adults at home and educators at school are conscious about teaching correct use of honorifics (Yoon, 2004). The traditional and conventional Korean discourses in South Korea, however, are often inconsistent with Korean–American metadiscourses as observed at the Korean language school (Lo, 2009), in the three-generation Korean–American home (Park, 2006), and in the Korean–American peer interactions (Song, 2009). This indicates that Korean traditional language and cultural ideologies do not fully capture Korean–American children's interactions and development.

This paper aims to add to the existing research with Korean–American children by demonstrating how Korean–American siblings maintain and modify Korean traditional sibling hierarchical culture over time and how they develop their Korean and English languages and cultures and become competent bilingual and bicultural individuals. To that end, the paper is focused on young Korean–American siblings' interactions for a year. In the course of that year, the younger sibling began attending

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English-speaking preschool, and this impacted the siblings' interactions. This paper illustrates Korean–English speaking bilingual siblings' interactions in which their parents were not engaged. It shows how the siblings collaboratively develop their bilingual and bicultural competencies. The research questions are: (1) What are interactional patterns between Korean–American siblings at home? (2) How do their interactional patterns change over time as a younger sibling begins to speak English? To answer these questions, the researcher observed a 7-year-old Korean–English bilingual girl and her 3-year-old sister in their home.

2. Theoretical framework

How novices are socialized through using language and how they use language to become a competent participant of a social group is the purview of language socialization (LS) (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). For novices, language is viewed as a critical tool with which they can make meaning, to negotiate, and socialize in their culture. LS research examines not only linguistic development, but also the other forms of knowledge that are learned in and through language (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Ochs (1986a) claimed that children and other novices in society acquire tacit knowledge of principles of social order and systems of beliefs through access to and participation in language-mediated interactions. Accordingly, LS focuses more on processes than outcomes, recording and explaining change in and the development of linguistic and cultural competence over time (Duff & Talmy, 2011). That is, LS researchers strive to understand how socialization interactions affect the developmental trajectories of individuals, how they reflect larger systems and cultures, and how they are reproduced and transformed over time (Garrett, 2008).

LS holds that children, being creative and constructive in their socialization processes, have agency (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). Agency in general is understood as children having the capacity to act, to react, to interact, and to influence their life. From the sociocultural perspective, agency is “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112) and is “constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with society at large” (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 148). Agency develops in relation to social groups and through active collaboration with other actors (Deters, Gao, Miller, & Vitanova, 2015). Such a perspective suggests that interaction has an indispensable relationship with agency (Deters et al., 2015; Said & Zhu, 2017). Children learn social norms and rules not only through imitating adults and using available resources but also through creatively using cultural resources and contributing to the culture (Fogle & King, 2013; Gaskins, Miller, & Corsaro, 1992). Children have the autonomy and ability to make meaning and understand their environment. Thus, their socialization is promoted, not determined, by experts (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). Accordingly, outcomes of a novice's language socialization are not necessarily the duplication of what the expert taught but can be hybrid practices—the incomplete or partial appropriation, or rejection of target norms and practices (Duff, 2007; Paugh, 2005).

Taking the Neo-Vygotskian sociocultural perspective, LS researchers understand that culture is local, contextual, and flexible. Furthermore, LS acknowledges the role played by interlocutors (e.g., caregivers, teachers, peers) in helping novices learn the target norms and practices by means of scaffolding or guided participation (Duff, 2007). Although first language (L1) LS research has tended to focus on how novices are apprenticed to linguistic and cultural norms, second language socialization (SLS) research has tended to be more unpredictable, collaborative, co-constructed, and multi-/bidirectional (Bongartz & Schneider, 2003; Duff & Talmy, 2011; Fogle, 2012; Lo, 2009; Schecter & Bayley, 2004; Talmy, 2008). Such

mutual engagement and bidirectionality of language socialization between the expert and novice can lead to the learning opportunity and both benefit from it. While older children teach younger siblings, they can develop their own learning at the same time. Also, older children might act as a cognitive facilitator and younger siblings might act as a prompter and trigger (Gregory, 2001). Gregory (2001) argued that by highlighting the equality of roles between siblings, learning could go beyond definitions of scaffolding, such as unidirectional learning from a more experienced person to one less so and collaborative learning.

3. Literature review

3.1. Sibling influences and roles in language and behavior development

Young children are more likely to imitate, ask more questions of, and request help from their older siblings than older peers; similarly, older siblings are more likely than older peers to spontaneously provide them more guidance (Azmitia & Hesser, 1993). When first-born children start formal schooling, they bring the language and culture learned from the school into their home. Accordingly, younger siblings in bilingual homes have opportunities to learn the language and culture to be learned in school (Stevens & Ishizawa, 2007; Yamamoto, 2001). Studies have shown that older siblings considerably impact their younger siblings' language production and use. In de la Piedra and Romo (2003), older siblings helped their 18-month old sister, L, participate in the collective literacy practices in their Spanish–English speaking home by adopting various pedagogical strategies (e.g., school games, notebooks, gestures, pretend play, etc.) and teaching English vocabulary. Older siblings were active agents, important mediators, collaborators, and mutual helpers in L's socialization process. According to Kibler, Palacios, and Simpson-Baird (2014), a strong predictor of a bilingual Latin@ child's oral language production was the number of older siblings; having no impact were family income, maternal education, gender, and country of origin. Another important factor was whether older siblings were school-aged or not. Bridges and Hoff (2014) found that the toddlers with older, school-aged siblings in English–Spanish bilingual homes used more English than Spanish and the toddlers had significantly higher English vocabulary scores than those without older siblings. This suggests that, in bilingual homes, older siblings are an important source of English language exposure for young children and that they have a significant influence on their younger siblings' English language development.

Research on interactions between siblings have shown that older siblings often approved or sanctioned their younger siblings' language and behaviors and used terms that could make the hierarchical relationship evident. In teaching language and culture to their younger siblings, older siblings often utilize their authority and expertise (Kibler, Palacios, Simpson-Baird, Bergey, & Yoder, 2016; Smith, 2014). In Nilep's (2009) study, the older sibling Otoe displayed linguistic authority to her younger siblings. In this Japanese–American family, Otoe used codeswitching and disapproved of certain language and behavioral acts of her younger sister and brother. Otoe tried to teach her younger siblings what kinds of language use and behaviors were appropriate or inappropriate within the family. In a Chinese–English bilingual home, Chris keenly switched languages to maximize his power over his younger brother (Zhu, 2010). Chris would shift to Chinese from English and address himself as *gege* (older brother). Autonomously using his understanding of social value and power, Chris thus demonstrated his higher position in the family to convince his younger brother, who used only English, of his authority. Both older and younger

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