

Language Investment of White Native English-Speaking Wives in Transnational Marriages in Korea

DOI: 10.26379/IL2020001_004

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Abstract

With the ever-increasing demand for English language education around the world comes an increase in the transnational mobility of individuals from English-speaking countries who choose to teach abroad. During their stay, some sojourning teachers have met and married locals becoming long-term residents. English being a language of cultural capital often implies that families want English to be passed on intergenerationally. Thus, family language policies privilege English, yet this choice can often come at the expense of the transnational English-speaking spouses' investment in the local language. In this study, the narratives of two North American women married to South Korean nationals residing in South Korea share their experiences in their Korean language investment. Family language policy and Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of investment were utilised to shed light on the language learning experiences of both women. The study found that language investment is not unidirectional; language ideologies affect language investment, practices, and the shifting identity of transnational spouses, while at the same time impact the language ideologies and practices of the home.

Furthermore, investment as a theoretical construct helped to further explain how identity, capital, and ideologies in South Korea intersected on the individual level and influenced the transnational wives' language investment.

Keywords

family language policy, investment, identity, transnational marriage, South Korea