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## 1.5 Generation Korean Americans: Consonant and Vowel Production of Two Late Childhood Arrivals

Andrew Cheng, UC Berkeley\*

### 1 Introduction

This project is about the “in-betweeners”. Korean Americans can be grouped according to generational status, beginning with those who were born in Korea and immigrated to the United States (1st generation), and those whose parents were 1st generation and were born in the United States (2nd generation) (Park, 1999; Chun, 2009). Thereafter, successive generations of Korean Americans born and raised in the United States would take on additional numbers (3rd generation, 4th generation, et cetera). However, there is an additional category distinct from the whole number generations: 1.5. Between first and second.

Demographically, the categorization is not set in stone. Early to middle adolescence (some definitions specifying a range of 11 to 16 years old Park (1999) or 6 to 15 (Lee, 2000) is generally accepted as the period during which a Korean immigrant may come to be classified as 1.5, but younger childhood immigrants sometimes do identify as 1.5. Nevertheless, this is the go-to criterion for most Korean Americans when asked whether a person might fall into the 1.5 rather than 2nd generation. The second generation has to be born here, while 1.5 generation comes when they are young. First generation is less often confused with 1.5, mostly because “first generation”, from the perspective of young Korean Americans, generally refers to their parents.

However, while the age criterion is the most oft-cited deciding factor for generational category, the fact that 1.5 generation Korean Americans are also socioculturally distinct from their second generation counterparts is inescapable. Park notes that the 1.5 generation, as children, have enough linguistic and cultural experience in Korea that they can act as cultural brokers or intermediaries between their families or Korean immigrant communities and the majority American community, in a way that second generation children (who lack sufficient experience in Korea) cannot. An individual’s own sense of belonging to a not-very-well-defined “Korean community” may also influence whether they view themselves as 2nd generation or 1.5 generation. Among Park’s interviewees are many Korean Americans who consider themselves to be culturally 1.5, though demographically they may have been born in the United States (and thus would be classified as 2nd generation).

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There is strong support for the idea that a bicultural Korean American identity – that is, the ability of a Korean American individual to identify with both their ethnic Korean culture and with the majority American culture they live in, and to behave accordingly in different situations at different times – is the most important deciding factor in 1.5 generation membership (see also Lee (2002); He (2006)).

Park's work, however, glosses over the linguistic component of identity construction. It is well understood that for Korean Americans, the ability to speak and understand the Korean language is very important to their sense of belonging to the broad idea of a Korean community (Cho et al., 1997; Lee, 2002; Shin, 2005; Jeon, 2008). Yet language ability among Korean Americans of any generation is highly variable. Many Korean American children undergo the familiar pattern: only speaking Korean at home with their families until entering an American school, at which point it takes only a few years for their English to catch up and then surpass their rapidly dwindling Korean skills. Some are successful in maintaining proficiency in Korean. Others retain only a smattering of household terms in their vocabulary. Thus, it is impossible to make any sweeping generalizations about the linguistic skills of young Korean Americans. Yet as we shall see, the 1.5 identity may carry with it a greater sense of agency or responsibility for maintaining the Korean language than the second generation identity.

Lastly, Park was writing twenty years ago, enough time for the 1.5 generation in that study to grow up and have third generation children. But Koreans have continued to immigrate in much the same way as they have since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, which is to say that there are still many children arriving in the US and building a unique Korean American identity. The question is whether the 1.5 identity is the same now, in 2018, than it was in the nineties. In this study, I find that the notion of 1.5 generation has changed somewhat. Although Korean Americans who consider themselves “in between” first and second still identify with the nebulous category, Park's idea of the intermediary 1.5 Korean American youth did not emerge. It was more common for the Millennial (and below?) Korean Americans in these interviews to be unsure of what the 1.5 category really was than for them to identify with it in terms of cultural equidistance. A healthy sense of biculturality existed among both 1.5 and second generation Korean Americans, as did the common refrains of discomfort and lack of belonging. The designation of being 1.5 or second generation appeared to be more demographically defined.

## **2 Past studies of Asian American English**

Now, the generational categorizations of Korean Americans are in fact applicable to immigrants from any country. There is a growing body of literature that focuses on second and third generation Asian Americans whose backgrounds range from Chinese to Filipino to Laotian, most of it concerned either with the speakers' bilingual acquisition (e.g., learning Tagalog and English to varying degrees of success) or with the phonetic characteristics of the speakers' English (e.g., whether they have a discernible accent).

Mendoza-Denton and Iwai (1993) were the first to identify the possibility that an accent derived from a non-English L1 (in this case, Japanese), might be “inherited” in successive generations—not genetically or as a consequence of the speakers' race, of course, but due to community-level linguistic formation of Japanese American identity and the changes therein over generations.

More recently, a series of studies on the English spoken by Chinese Americans of multiple generations demonstrates the variable ways in which they participate in the sound changes that have been documented in majority white neighborhoods. For example, Wong (2007) studied the use of two sociolinguistic variables native to New York: /ɔ/-raising and /æ/-tensing in several American-born Chinese, and found the back vowel raising present in all speech, but front vowel raising in none. A more detailed analysis revealed that the strength of a speakers' non-Chinese social networks increased their participation in this ongoing vowel shift.

Hall-Lew (2009) and Wong and Hall-Lew (2014) examined similar shifts in San Francisco, finding a related effect: that Chinese Americans in the historically heavily Chinese neighborhood of the Sunset actually led some aspects of the California Vowel Shift, with farther fronted vowels than their same-age White counterparts. This was hypothesized to be due in part to the community being so homogeneously Chinese: not at all due to influence from Mandarin phonology or any kind of assimilatory process, but because the majority ethnic group had adopted the vowel shift stylistically to index their distinctive social identity (Fought, 2006).

For 1.5 and second generation Korean Americans specifically, Lee (2000) examined use of phonetic variables typical of Philadelphia English, but only determined that there was an effect of age of acquisition of English on word-medial /t/-flapping and that none of the participants exhibited use of the Philly "short /æ/" (similar to /æ/-tensing in New York City). They conclude that "the speakers are either not aware that the pronunciation of /a/ is variable and is tensed in certain contexts or if they are aware that they consciously acquire what they perceive to be a non-regional form of English" (Lee, 2000:124).

What Lee fails to do in detail, however, is examine the possibility of phonological transfer from Korean into the English. Schirra (2012) and Lindemann (2003) have identified the phonological characteristics of what may be called Korean-accented English, which is derived mostly from comparisons of native standard American English speakers and L1-Korean, L2 learners of English. These include monophthongization of /ɔʊ, u/ (to the Korean /o, u/), /æ/-fronting (to /ɛ/), a merger of /i/ and /ɪ/, /ð/-stopping/, lengthened VOT for English voiceless stops (to match Korean aspirated stops), and probabilistic use of English /l/ and /r/.

The idea is that depending on the parameters relevant to the acquisition of two languages during a Korean American child's infancy and childhood (e.g., quality and diversity of input, age of acquisition, or age of fluency (see Shin (2005); Jeon (2008); Au and Oh (2009); Kim (2009); Guion (2005); Yeni-Komshian (2009), and especially Kuhl et al. (2008)), the representation of English in the minds of Korean-English bilinguals may vary such that one speaks with a "strong (perceptible) accent" with the characteristics described above, but another speaks with "no accent" or more subtle use of certain sociophonetic variables.

For 1.5 generation Korean Americans, who are almost all sequential bilinguals who learn Korean to fluency before acquiring English, the effects of phonological transfer cannot be underestimated. And yet, studies routinely find great variability in the extent to which L1 transfer effects are perceptible or even present in the speech of many Korean Americans. This tells us three things: first, that if variability in phonetic production is not an inherent property of 1.5 generation speakers as a group, then at least it ought to be an expected outcome of any macro-level analysis. Second, a 1.5 generation Korean American who speaks English with a less perceptible accent presumably has a command of multiple phonologies (Korean and English). Third, this opens up the possibility that variation on an individual level can be leveraged as part of a person's discursive linguistic

construction of identity.

### 3 Style-Shifting

The amount of accent in a person's voice, whether it is perceptible to themselves and others or not, has been theorized to be a part of a individual's construction of their own identity. In the same way our choice of shirt color on any given day could be seemingly random but does, in fact, reflect some aspect of who we are, our linguistic choices index, or point to, the individual we desire to be in relation to our interlocutor or to society at large.

Eckert (2008a) pioneered this theory with a sociophonetic study that demonstrated how young children varied in their use of /æ/-raising not just to index their race, but also their status in a local social hierarchy. Participation in the regional sound change (the California Vowel Shift) varied, and was variably perceived, in an intersectional way that implicated gender, class, and ethnicity. The important note to take away from Eckert's discussion of ethnolects is that there is, in fact, far more than just ethnicity at play when we want to deeply analyze a person's voice.

The voices of the 1.5 generation Korean Americans will very likely index their ethnicity, but also their generational status, their gender, and much more. In terms of the use of English, for Korean Americans who grow up in California, their participation in the sound change known as the California Vowel Shift may index a regional identity that interacts with their ethnic identity. Of course, a speakers' participation in CVS may not just be assimilation, but its own stylistic move (see Podesva (2011); Podesva et al. (2015)); it may index social ranking, divergence from the parental generation, Americanization, or even something not explicitly social, such as a pragmatic hedge or hesitance. These multiple dimensions along which a small set of sociolinguistic variables can represent social identities are called the indexical field (Eckert, 2008b).

And, intriguingly, linguistic resources are used variably at every moment – that is, they can be used to create temporally-bound identities as a response to an outside stimulus (Bourhis and Giles, 1977). For example, in the Bourhis and Giles study, some English-speaking Welsh participants in the study shifted into perceptibly stronger Welsh accents when their interlocutor had an English accent (compared to when the interlocutor had a French Canadian accent), and one participant code switched completely into the Welsh language when the interlocutor posed face-threatening questions about Welsh identity. More recently, Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) dove deep into a quantitative analysis of topic-influenced style shifting and found that use of certain morphosyntactic variables associated with African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was heavily influenced by addressee and topic (e.g., school and current events versus romantic life, slang, and popular music).

One study of style shifting that pertains to the Asian American experience is Chun (2001), a discourse analytical approach to the lexical choices of a Korean American young adult whose speech is peppered with borrowings from AAVE. Chun demonstrates how this person linguistically negotiates his own ethnic identity and its fluidity in a complex social hierarchy (while not making any claims to whether his speech is at all representative of “Asian American speech”). Several other studies of Asian American youth speech styles also focus on the appropriation of social practices and linguistic features that index African American identity, including Reyes (2005) and Chun (2013). No studies to date have examined linguistic practices of Asian American youth in relation

to the speech patterns of the White majority of a community, or sought to concretize such a thing as “Asian American English”, perhaps for good reason.

According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), social identities are created by linguistic interaction. (This is a reversal from the long-held theory of social identities determining the nature of an individual’s linguistic utterances (Labov, 1966).) That is to say, an individual both consciously uses what they know about existing linguistic stereotypes and subconsciously repeats linguistic habits that are deeply embedded in their everyday interactions to construct, polish, and emphasize a wide range of social identities they may carry, including the fairly fixed categories of gender and race, mutable classifications such as social status, and even short-lived identities in the form of stances (e.g., responding to an utterance with a judgmental tone, or using polite terms of address to index social distance before relaxing into more friendly banter).

Our 1.5 generation Korean Americans’ identities are always being challenged: are they fully American, or fully Korean? Is it possible to be both? They are always negotiating their identities, in two languages, with a diverse set of Others. At the heart of this chapter is an attempt to discover how 1.5 generational identity is indexed, and how the phonetic properties that are linked to any and all of the many situational identities a 1.5 generation Korean American may inhabit differ from those that are indexical only of a “pure ethnolect” (i.e., a Korean accent). To this end, I analyze two out of 22 bilingual interviews with Korean Americans with special attention to instances of perceptible variation in their pronunciation.

## 4 Interviewees

The interviewees participated in a bilingual sociolinguistic interview, conducted by my bilingual research assistants, which lasted up to one hour. During the Korean portion of the interview, they were asked to give a short self-introduction followed by a casual discussion of their life and background, what they studied in school, any hobbies, et cetera. The next portion was a Korean reading portion designed to elicit a standard set of utterances for cross-subject comparison. Finally, the interview switched into English mode, and the discussion turned to matters of language and ethnic identity. Questions included: “Which language do you feel more comfortable speaking?”, “How Korean do you think your family is?”, and “Is it important to be able to speak Korean if you identify as Korean?”. The full questionnaire can be found in A.

Table 1 below summarizes the basic demographics of the interviewees. About half of the interviewees identify as 1.5 generation, and these interviewees will be the focus of this chapter.

Generation	male	female	total	age range of immigration
1.5	2	8	10	5 mo. to 10 yrs
2	3	5	8	–
unsure or both	2	2	4	0 to 9 yrs

Table 1: Sociolinguistic interview participants by generation and gender

Of the interviewees who self identified as 1.5 generation and were born in Korea, the average age of immigration was 6.5 years (ranging, as indicated in the table, from 5 months to 10 years).

They all reported feeling like they were linguistically dominant in English (n=7) or balanced in both English and Korean (n=3), and most often said that they began to feel comfortable speaking in English around middle school (though this question was not asked of every participant). All reported identifying ethnically as either Korean or Korean American, with no particular trend to any generation group to any particular category (and also, as we shall see, a wide variation in the definitions of “Korean American” and even the word “ethnicity”).

However, all of the interviewees spoke to experiences of navigating a kind of betweenness, whether that was being neither fully Korean nor fully American as this second generation female puts it:

CRYSTAL: [It's] hard to say, 'cause, I mean, objectively, it would be, like, Korean American, right? But sometimes, there are a lot of times where I don't really feel like either. (14-893)

Or being both, as this 1.5 generation female remarks:

HANNAH: I think of myself as 1.5, 'cause I'm definitely culturally American. (06-1015)

HANNAH: I'm sort of flexible, like 1.5-ers are sort of flexible with both customs. (06-1055)

Or whether Korean American identity is separate from the other two, as indicated by this 1.5 generation male:

HOWARD: I guess I wanna be seen as Korean American, not one or the other. (11-995)

The betweenness for Korean Americans is something they must navigate every day.

GRACE: If I were to speak in Korean, um, like, I would say... that's when I turn more Korean than American, um, whereas if I were talking in English to a Korean person, I would just be American American. (08-1080)

But for 1.5 generation Korean Americans, their competence in the Korean language seems to be even more crucial for the maintenance of Korean identity, when compared to second generation Korean Americans.

“I think I do [have an accent when speaking Korean], yeah,” says Peter, a 1.5 generation interviewee, “and it does bother me, 'cause I think it's a pride thing.”(02-932)

Later on, he elaborates, “I think I would want [Korean nationals] to think I'm competent enough to, like, speak and express myself, and not be viewed as, like, a stereotypical Korean American that, like, doesn't know how to use [hangul here!] *jondaemal*.” (02-1100)

It is a common misconception that the source of a Korean American child's language insecurities stem from their parents' high expectations for them to retain their Korean language skills while also learning English. In fact, the pressure to maintain viable communication with non-English-speaking

parents is one of the reasons cited in Cho et al. (1997) for the Korean Americans' enrollment in Korean language classes. But in actuality, Korean immigrant parents fall all across the spectrum in terms of how they view their (adult) children's language competences. There were parents who enforced strict home language policies for Korean use, as well as parents who did not seem to care either way.

A much stronger trend, however, emerged between *peer group attitudes* or *societal perceptions* and Korean language competence, for the maintenance of 1.5 generation Korean American identity. That is to say, skillful use of the Korean language was seen as important in order to fit in with Korean nationals or the Korean American "community" (a word loosely defined here as various social networks comprising ethnic Koreans). Consider the thoughts of Howard, a 1.5 generation interviewee:

HOWARD: If you just only speak English, [the Korean community doesn't] really see you as Korean, that you're just a Korean American. But if you can communicate with them fluently in Korean, then it's like you're one of their own. (11-917)

This echoes what Peter said earlier, the notion that a stereotypical (presumably second generation Korean American), from the perspective of a 1.5 generation Korean American, is not fully Korean because of their imperfect command of the Korean language. Hannah, who is 1.5, also clearly explains how her ethnicity has "increased" (which says a lot about the subjectivity of ethnicity) over time and in tandem with an increase in her Korean language use.

AP: So how would you describe the relationship between your identified ethnicity – you said Korean – and your language use?

HANNAH: Mm... I would say that... Let's see. I don't think I would have identified as Korean before I came to college.

AP: Mm

HANNAH: 'Cause I didn't speak as much Korean. But because the community that I primarily hang out with at Berkeley is Korean... I feel like my ethnicity as Korean, and my use of the language, has increased exponentially. (06-1089)

Hannah iterates again later on that she feels "obliged" to use Korean more in her daily life because she is surrounded by many more ethnic Koreans in college compared to where she grew up (Virginia):

HANNAH: ...We didn't have as many Koreans as we could

AP: Mm, right

HANNAH: So it wasn't usually good for you to identify as anything other than, um, American.

AP: Oh... I see. So would you say that influenced your, um, perception of ethnicity when you were there?



HANNAH: Oh yeah

AP: Okay

HANNAH: And it definitely influenced my, uh, use of the language. ‘Cause I wouldn’t use it in public. (06-1136)

And it is these perspectives that reflect the majority of recent studies that tackle Korean language use from a linguistic anthropological angle. For example, Jeon (2008) argues that language ideologies play an important role (if not the most important role) in heritage language maintenance. Crucially, language ideologies are relational: not just held by an individual, but used and shared with others.

In the following case studies, I will embark on a more detailed analysis of the speech of two 1.5 generation Korean Americans, one female and one male, who have different patterns of speech that reflect their 1.5 identity. In the first case study, I will analyze how Jean’s idiolect falls in between that of a native American English speaker with “no foreign accent”<sup>1</sup> and how the variability in her own phonological system can be linked to topics and attitudes regarding her Korean background. In the second case study, I will examine how Peter’s language ideologies affect how he perceives Korean-accented English and creates stereotypes of specific Korean American groups.

## 5 Case study #1: Jean

The first case study comes from an interview with Jean<sup>2</sup>, who normally goes by her Korean name. Jean identifies herself as a 1.5-generation Korean American, although when prompted, needed to clarify for herself what that actually meant. After some thought, she said,

JEAN: I’ve always considered myself 1.5, but

MD: Mhm

JEAN: Now that I think about it... I think second generation would be like

JEAN: K- kids – Korean kids who are born in America

MD: Mm

JEAN: But I came in the middle of my life I guess

MD: Right

JEAN: So I consider that 1.5, yeah.

Jean considers herself fluent in both English and Korean. She was born in Bundang, a large suburb just south of Seoul, to parents who are both from Seoul. At the age of eight (the “middle” of her

<sup>1</sup>I use this term with scare quotes and a footnote because I know that the perception of accents, foreign or not, is highly subjective.

<sup>2</sup>Pseudonyms are used.

life), Jean immigrated with her parents to a city in Orange County, CA, that had a large Korean immigrant population, and lived there until moving to Northern California for college.

As a child, she and her sister spoke with their parents solely in Korean, but she would speak with her sister in English. Outside of the family, Jean would not use Korean very much, since she went to a school with not many Koreans and attended the English-language services at a local Korean church. Knowing very little English when she arrived, Jean began to feel equally comfortable speaking in English and Korean when she attended high school. (Alternatively, this could be considered when she no longer felt more comfortable speaking in Korean compared to English.) Today, Jean feels that her use of both languages is a little bit contextualized.

JEAN: I think speaking-wise, Korean might be more articulate; like it sounds more logical, um, but writing-wise, I'm more comfortable in English expressing myself.

She continues to use Korean with her family and has attempted to speak in Korean with Korean international students on the college campus by attending the meetings of a Korean student association. However, to her disappointment, there was a slight social language barrier.

JEAN: I chose to join a Korean club, because I wanted to go, like, belong to a larger Korean community.

MD: Mhm.

JEAN: But at the same time, when I was there, I was like, "Oh, I get to talk to these people, like Koreans," but I felt, like, slightly out of it too [...]

JEAN: I think it's 'cause they're mostly international students, they're very up to date with, like, Korean trends and... just the way they... talk. [...] I thought I was, like, *fluent* in Korean.

MD: Right.

JEAN: I think I am, but even then it feels a little different.

When discussing the nature of accents with her peers and friends, Jean has noted that her friends do think she speaks English with a "slight accent that they can tell if they talk to [her] for a long time". And as noted above, she believes that the way she speaks Korean is different from that of the Korean international students. However, her parents have never worried too much, according to her, about whether their daughter's Korean language skills were lacking due to use of English outside of the home.

MD: What do [your parents] think about, like, how good your English is? Do they sorta see it as— in competition with your Korean skills, that sorta thing?

JEAN: I think they think it's good enough that I can survive in American society, but it's not worrying them to the point where they're like, "Oh no, what if she loses her Korean identity."

The notion that language ability, ethnic identity, and Americanization are all closely linked comes out clearly here, even through an aside. Although Jean was aware that the overarching subject of the interview was language and identity, in this exchange, the interviewer, MD, did not explicitly mention identity. Yet Jean’s response to the question straightforwardly links English skills with success in American society, and then loss of Korean skills with loss of Korean identity.

## 5.1 Consonants

Although Jean has demonstrable confidence in her language skills, there are aspects of her voice that are not characteristic of a native American English speaker, some of which were easier to discern from just the audio data, and others of which required some acoustic measurements.

The first aspect of note is the articulation of /ð/ and /θ/, the voiced and voiceless interdental fricatives. In American English, these are articulated with the tongue between or just behind the front teeth, and with a duration comparable to that of other fricatives (such as /s/ and /z/).

Native Korean speakers who learn English as a second language are known to have difficulty articulating these two sounds, since they do not exist in the Korean phonological system. In English loanwords into Korean, /θ/ may be substituted with /s/ or /t/, as in “Black Panther” ([hangul here!][pʌllɛk.pʰɛnsʌ]) or “Thor” ([hangul here!][tʰoɾu]). Its voiced counterpart is usually substituted with /d/, as in “Mother” ([hangul here!][mʌdʌ]). All of these sounds, in American English phonology, are categorized as alveolar sounds, which is a more posterior place of articulation. Hence, the commonly identified marker of Asian-accented English:

JEAN: They can’t do the R’s and L’s, and they can’t do the *thh* sound.

Jean admits that some aspects of Korean-accented English (specifically Korean, as opposed to a more general “Asian accent”) are unknowable to her, as someone who demonstrates some markers of it herself but only realized it when it was pointed out to her. It is telling that in her English speech, the voiceless interdental fricative /θ/ is indeed articulated in between the teeth in the American way, and that is the phone she identified as being a point of difficulty for others.

On the other hand, Jean’s articulation of the voiced interdental fricative /ð/ varies wildly, and is always at least partially stopped, or pronounced similar to a /d/. The best example of this arises when Jean discusses her childhood language use with her parents.

JEAN: Sometimes I would just say stuff in, like, random English, and my parents would just be like, “Oh, okay.” But **they** would talk to me in Korean. (07-638)

The /ð/ in the word “they”, at approximately 98 seconds in the spectrogram in Fig. 1<sup>3</sup>, is much shorter in duration than an American English fricative would normally be, which is evidence of stopping.

<sup>3</sup>Play sound sample 98\_theywouldtalk.wav.

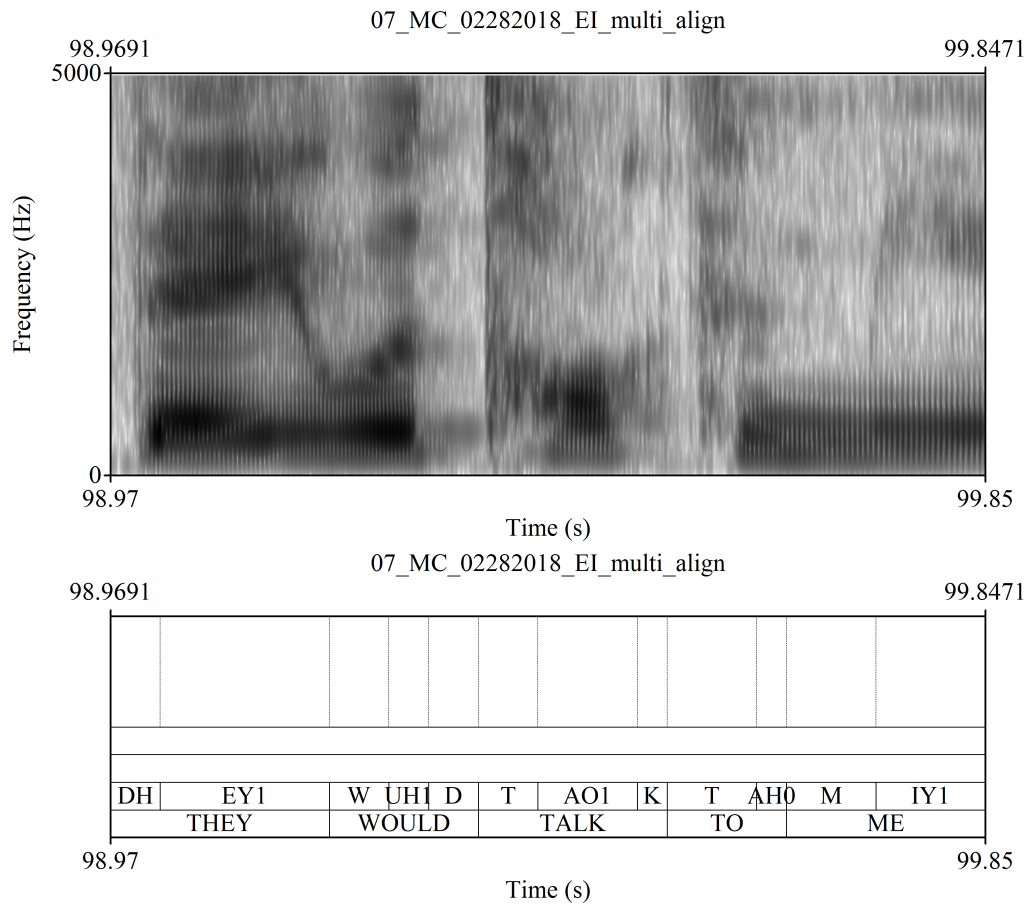


Figure 1: Jean’s “they would talk”, with characteristic short fricative at the onset of “they” (coded here as DH).

Other interesting observations about the coronal consonants in Jean’s idiolect include longer-than-average Voice Onset Time for onset /t/, as in “hard **to** **tell**”, as well as frequent /t/-deletion in complex clusters, such as the word “approximately” in Figure 2. While /t/-deletion is a common phonological process for native American English speakers, it is usually replaced with a glottal stop. In Jean’s token of the word “approximately”, the /t/ is dropped wholesale, without any glottal stop or really any closure of any kind.

## 5.2 Vowels

The second highly salient aspect of Jean’s voice is in her use of vowels. In general, her inventory of vowels in English is somewhere between that of what might be considered White Californian English, or the standard of Orange County, CA, and the standard Korean vowel inventory.

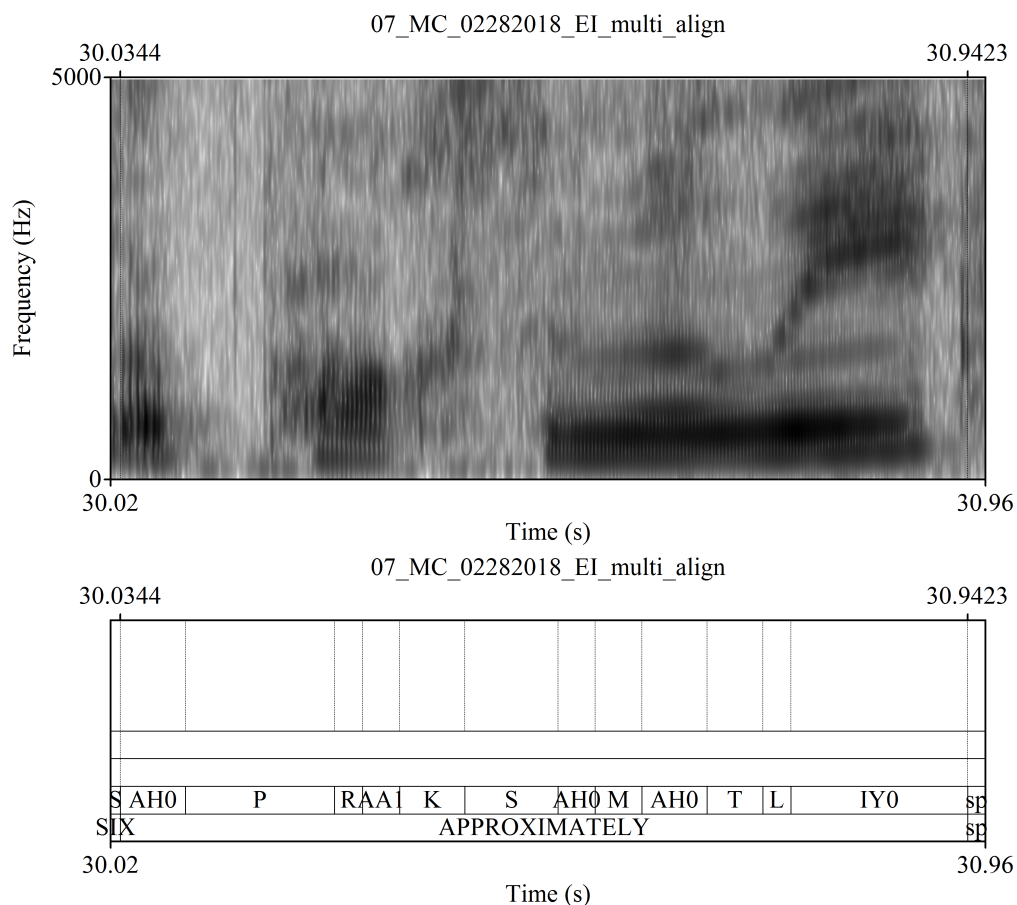


Figure 2: “approximately”, highlighting /t/-deletion.

One example is in the vowel /aʊ/, as in “out” or “about”. In Californian English, this diphthong is raised and tense in the beginning (/a/), then quickly moves toward the mid-back vowel (/ʊ/). One characteristic of Korean-accented English is that because there are no diphthongs in the Korean vowel inventory, diphthongs are realized as two vowels in hiatus. This means that they will be slightly longer in duration than an English diphthong. In addition, the Korean vowel inventory has an /a/ that is farther back than the American English /a/ to begin with, and it does not have /ʊ/ at all. So, in pronouncing /aʊ/, a Korean-speaking learner of English may have a longer, backed vowel overall: [a:ʊ].

In Jean’s speech, we do find noticeably backed /a/, /æ/, and /aʊ/<sup>4</sup>. In particular, her pronunciation of the filler word “yeah” has the most instances of a backed /æ/ vowel. But it is also highly variable.

Variability in the acoustic measurements of a vowel is, of course, expected. Even monolingual

<sup>4</sup>This is most evident in words like “at”; play sound file 625\_athome.wav, “talk”; play sound file 98\_theywouldtalk.wav; “yeah”; and “about”.

American English speakers will produce lots of variability over the course of a dialogue for all of their vowels. But the variability is also a gold mine for analysis.

In particular I would like to focus on the realization of the high back diphthong /oʊ/, as in “go” or “so” in Jean’s speech. As a person from Southern California, it is expected that her realizations of /oʊ/, as well as the high back vowel /u/ (as in “two”), will be fronted, as part of the ongoing California Vowel Shift.

To test for the quality of Jean’s /oʊ/ vowels, I extracted sixteen tokens of the vowel in monosyllabic words with either no coda or a bilabial consonant coda. The formant values were taken at each diphthong’s midpoint and then plotted on an F1×F2 plot (Figure 3). Each token was coded for the word it was taken from, the context in which the word was used, and whether it sounded (based on my own judgment) like a typical fronted Californian /oʊ/.

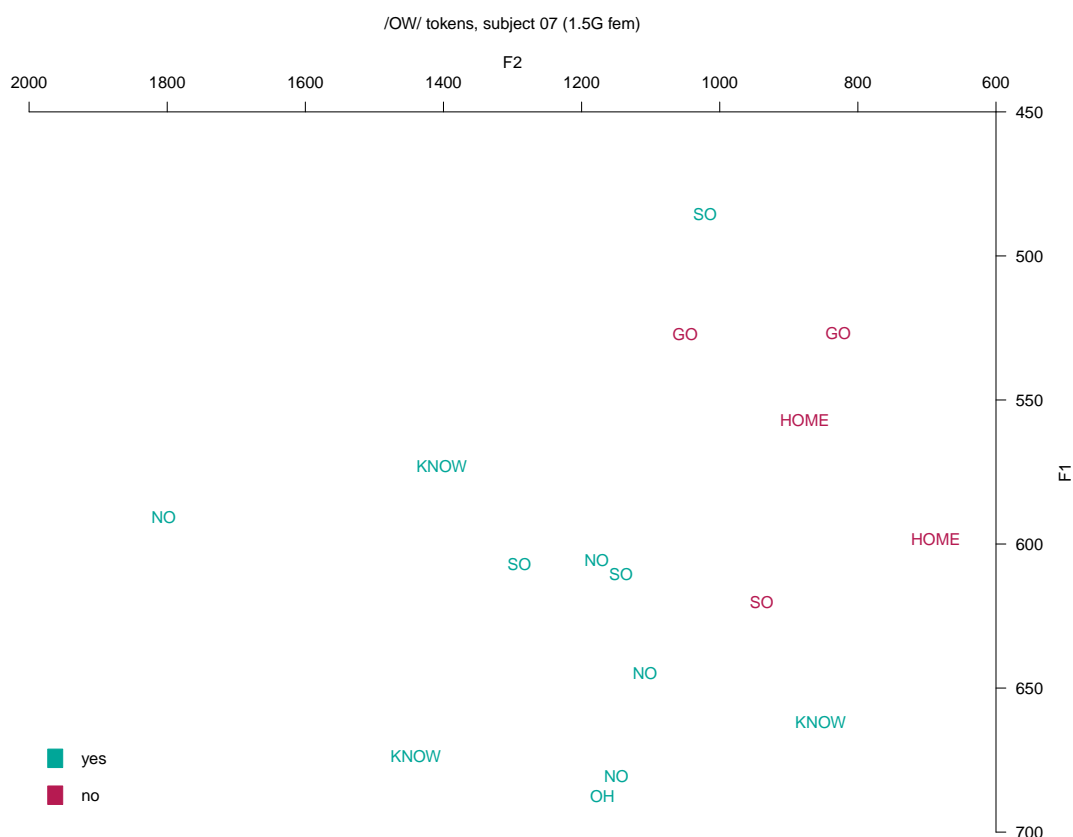


Figure 3: Tokens of /oʊ/ from Jean’s interview, with audibly fronted tokens in blue and audibly backed tokens in red.

Indeed, it was found that /oʊ/ was quite variable in Jean’s speech. But some tokens were easily identifiable as being backed (rather than fronted, per the California Vowel Shift). Indeed, when plotted in 3, the five backed tokens had the lowest F2 values, indicating backness. These tokens

were also monophthongized, which is to say that they surfaced as closer to the Korean /o/ vowel than an American English /oʊ/.

The best example of this is in the word “home”, when Jean is describing the Korean cuisine she ate while growing up.

MD: What sort of food did you grow up eating?

JEAN: **At home** mostly Korean food.

The token of “home” in the excerpt above has an F2 value of 870 Hz, which places it far to the back of Jean’s vowel space. Other backed /oʊ/ tokens occur in the word “go”, uttered in the context of joining a Korean student association: “I chose to join a Korean club because I wanted **go**, like, belong to a larger Korean community.” (820 Hz), and discussion of Korean American immigrant communities on the East Coast: “You could almost be like, live here [...] without speaking English pretty much, but like, if you **go** to more suburban regions, I think, then your English is probably gonna get better. Like you’ll be more Americanized.” (1040 Hz).

These tokens are among the audibly backed instances of /oʊ/ in Jean’s speech, which was, again, generally very backed for an American English speaker. This must be due to the influence of Korean phonology in her speech, having been raised in Korea for the first half of her life. That said, Jean is capable of producing /oʊ/ tokens that are shifted in the California style.

In two instances of the word “know”, Jean produces very audibly fronted vowels. The first, with an F2 of 1440 Hz, occurs in a discussion of her parents’ perception of their daughter’s English:

MD: What about English?

JEAN: I think they think my English is p- \*laughter\*

MD: \*laughter\*

JEAN: They probably won’t **know**, but I think they think my English is good.

MD: Yeah

The second, with an F2 of 1400 Hz, occurs when Jean talks about loving the diversity of cuisines in the United States.

JEAN: But I was really happy when I came to America ‘cause I love, like, other country  
foo-

MD: Right

JEAN: I didn’t **know**, but –

MD: Right, right

JEAN: obviously – but when I grew up, I was like, “Oh man, I love Mexican food,” so, yeah.

A third token of “know” is not as far fronted as the other two, with an F2 of 850 Hz, but it also happens to be lowered, with an F1 of 660 Hz. This still serves to differentiate it from a monophthongal /oʊ/ in two dimensions (F1 and F2). This final token occurs when Jean is asked what Korean-accented English would sound like, and she says, “I actually wouldn’t **know**, ‘cause, um, I’ve heard that I have them!”

By far the most salient example of the fronted /oʊ/ is the token of “no” that is has the highest F2 value, at around 1800 Hz. This long, drawn-out vowel<sup>5</sup> was uttered in response to the interviewer’s question of whether she spoke English at her church in Orange County. Consider the exchange:

MD: Was it a Korean church?

JEAN: Yeah, it was a Korean church.

MD: Kay. Would you say that, mostly, you would speak in Korean there?

JEAN: ...**Nooo**

MD: No?

JEAN: Yeah, i-, ‘cause I was in the youth ministry and we spoke English.

Jean’s long “no” was uttered after a slight pause for thought, and was itself elongated, with large amounts of creaky voicing, to demonstrate hesitation (see Figure 4). It was not exaggerated in order to emphasize the denial, nor was it overtly used for social affect. However, it is relevant that the frame of reference for Jean’s speech act here was the use of English in a supposedly Korean environment. Compare it to the other tokens of “no” in the same interview. The following was taken from earlier, when Jean describes speaking in Korean with her parents even after moving to California:

MD: Then after you came to America, like, um, with your family, did you start speaking in English to them?

JEAN: **No**, I think I continued speaking Korean to them **at home**.

The “no” token here is far less fronted, with an F2 of about 1100 Hz. In addition, the token of “home” is extremely backed with an F2 of about 690 Hz. When Jean talks about feeling like she was always an a minority ethnic group growing up, her “no” has an F2 of about 1150 Hz, and when she alludes to talking with her friends about her accented language, her “no” has an F2 of about 1180 Hz.

Though we are drawing from only a handful of tokens, it is striking that so far, the instances in which we find the less-fronted versions of Jean’s /oʊ/ vowel are when she negotiates her identity as

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<sup>5</sup>Play sound file 209\_noyeah.wav.



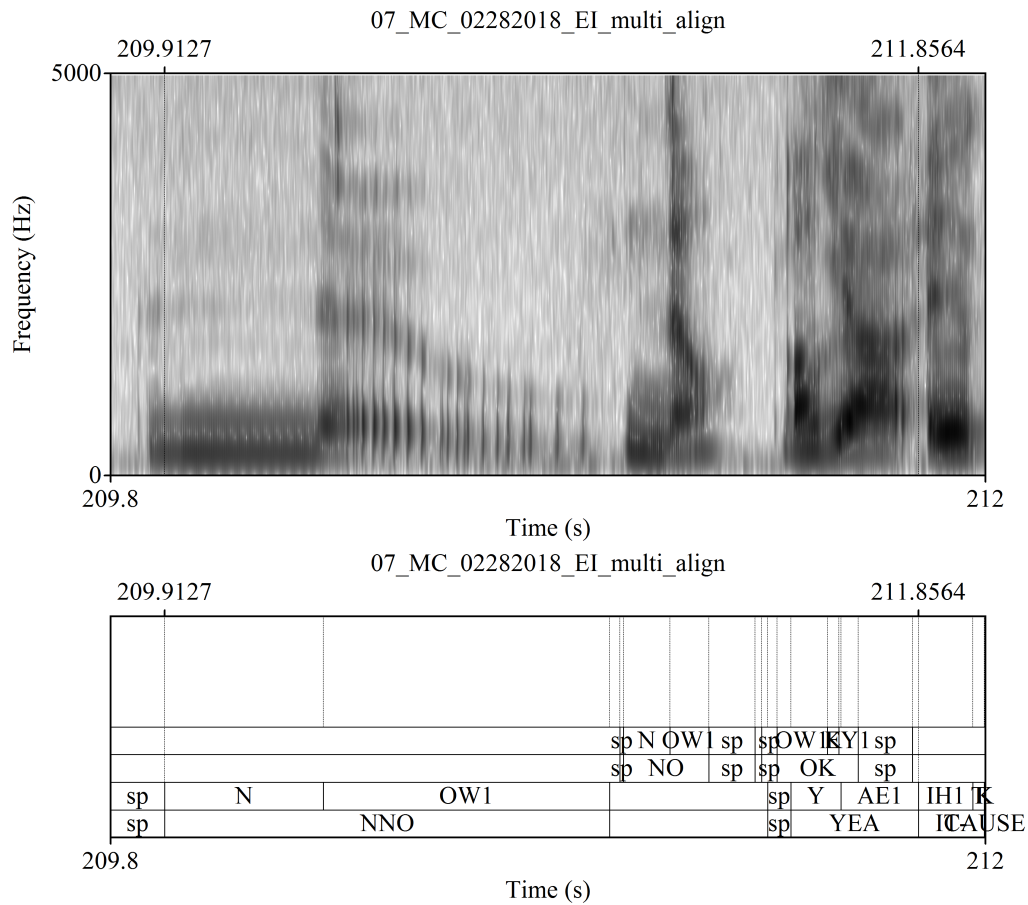


Figure 4: “Nooo... yeah.”

a Korean and the use of the Korean language, whereas the most fronted instances of /oʊ/ occurs in defense of the use of English or appreciation of American culture. It is consistent with the concept of accent divergence (Bourhis and Giles, 1977), which “can be used to emphasize one’s ethnic identity and allow an in-group speaker to feel psychologically distinct from an out-group member” (1977:129).

These findings are also similar to Chun (2001), which analyzed one Korean American male’s variable use of syntactic and phonological markers of African American Vernacular English as a means of negotiating his Asian American identity.

## 6 Case study #2: Peter

Our second case study comes from a 1.5 generation male, aged twenty-one, whom I will call Peter. He was born in Seoul and immigrated to Northern California with his parents at the age of nine. Although Peter studied English only cursorily while in school in Korea (as part of a standard national curriculum), he had only two years of English courses before moving to the United States and did not consider himself fluent when he arrived. However, Peter does claim that he became comfortable using English at around age ten or eleven, and soon thereafter became dominant in English.

CJ: So which, um, language are you most comfortable with right now?

PETER: English... yeah

CJ: And when you think, do you think in English?

PETER: Yeah, I think so. I think only time I use Korean when I think is when I count, like small numbers (02-496)

A development time from receptive to productive bilingualism of only one or two years is surprisingly quick for a Korean child immigrant like Peter, who used Korean at home with monolingual parents and grandparents. It was faster, for example, compared to Jean, who did not feel comfortable with English until high school, and to other 1.5 generation interviewees who generally cited middle school as the age of onset of comfort in speaking in English (this happens to be the most commonly cited age at which 2nd generation Korean Americans report they began to lose their Korean ability).

Early studies in phonological acquisition of L2 English speakers indicate that the age of acquisition of English is the most significant predictive factor in amount of accent (Flege et al., 1999), although it is acknowledged that it is more accurate to consider “age of L2 learning” (including AOA and the age “at which [participants] could first speak English comfortably” (1999:92), see also Jia et al. (2006); Flege (2007) for a discussion of confounding variables and Luk and Bialystok (2013) for what the authors call “age of onset of active bilingualism”). In Yeni-Komshian (2009), Korean American participants were broadly categorized as Korean-dominant, English-dominant, or roughly balanced in their language competence, and it was found that the English-dominant group, on average, arrived at age 6 and reported feeling comfortable in English around age 7. The balanced group, on average, arrived at age 11 and reported feeling comfortable in English around age 12. So it is not surprising, given past research, that Peter’s acquisition of English was fairly quick, but he happens to be ahead of the curve compared to other participants in the current study.

Peter has a clear personal definition of what it means to be Korean American of a particular generation.

PETER: I think I’m 1.5, or second, yeah

CJ: How would you define 1.5?

PETER: I think it’s people like me who are... born in Korea, but most of their growth

and, like, childhood is marked by their American side [...] (02-836)

CJ: And second gen?

PETER: It'll be like, yeah. So like when you're either born in America or you come at such an early age that you have almost no memory or background of your, like, home country, but mostly just in America, yeah. (02-872)

Although he initially says “1.5 or second” in self-identification, the definitions he later gives plant him squarely in the 1.5 category (“people like me”). Peter makes a few additional remarks that distance himself from the two other categories, first gen and second gen. In one instance, he is describing how the ethnically Korean community he has here, including friends at a largely Korean American local church, is not especially marked by use of the Korean language. That is to say, he does not speak in Korean to the other Korean Americans he knows. However:

CJ: Do you speak Korean with any of, like, [your church's] people or...?

PETER: Sometimes... like there's like one girl who's like, from Korea, so sometimes I help her out in Korean, but... no, it's mostly in English. (02-748)

With emphasis placed on how this fellow congregant is “from Korea”, Peter implies that he is not from Korea, even though he was born in Seoul and lived there until age nine. This utterance distances himself from first generation Korean Americans.

He also comments on second generation Korean Americans, not necessarily creating opposition between himself and the second generation Korean Americans he knows, but casting doubt on the legitimacy of their language skills. As context, Peter was given Korean language lessons from his mother, who is a Korean literature teacher, and today he believes that it is important to retain his Korean speaking skills.

CJ: So is it important to you to, like, speak Korean like a native speaker?

PETER: Personally? Um, I personally think it is important to retain your, like, mother tongue, um. I don't know if you need to speak like a native, but I think you should be conversational (02-907)

The fact that he has been told (by his parents and others) that he speaks Korean with an accent does bother him (“I think it's a pride thing”), although he's not too concerned as long as he can communicate. But soon after, he highlights the existing stereotype of Korean Americans with poor command of Korean (implied to be second generation Korean Americans):

CJ: Then when you speak Korean, do you want people to think of you as like native Korean speaker?

PETER: ... Yeah, I think I would want them to think I'm competent enough to, like, speak

and express myself and not be viewed as like a stereotypical Korean American that, like, doesn't know how to use, like, *jondaemal*<sup>6</sup> or hahaha, things like that but yeah I think... yeah. Again, I think that's in most contexts, especially in like churches, or like, in families, like, I don't wanna sound like a baby. Yeah. (02-1100)

Here, he frames the stereotypical Korean American as someone who does not know how to express their thoughts and who speaks Korean like a baby.

A similar kind of blanket judgment is echoed in Peter's casual descriptions of the differences between Koreans who are from Northern California (NorCal) and Southern California (SoCal). He admits that having grown up in Northern California, he has a bias for his home turf.

PETER: Haha – I think it's like a personal low opinion 'cause I'm from NorCal. I think NorCal Koreans are a little less like ... bad? Or like ha, I feel like they're less, like, cliquy and less um ... like, dramatic? And less social, too, also. I think SoCal Koreans are a lot more, like, social together, a lot of them know each other and because of that, like, there's always, like... stories and rumors going around. That's, like, my perception of SoCal Koreans... yeah. (02-1438)

Overall, SoCal Koreans are viewed rather negatively in Peter's eyes. However, when asked to describe any linguistic differences, he also deems them as generally better in their Korean skills compared to NorCal Koreans.

CJ: Do you think there's any differences when they speak Korean?

PETER: Yeah, I I've noticed that, um, SoCal Korean American like Koreans are, like, a little stronger. They're, like, faster, and they're a lot more, like, slangier. Whereas – and I think more of them, like, are good with hearing and, like, understanding – but then like NorCal Koreans, like, in general have less... like less Korean abilities, and then they're also, like, they use more Konglish<sup>7</sup> and stuff, and yeah.

CJ: What do you mean by, like, "stronger"?

PETER: It's like a very general stereotype but – ahah – and I think it's just... It's like you know how there's like the Valley Girl accent in SoCal, it's like, it's like, it's not like a *saturi*<sup>8</sup> in Korean but they're just like... Yeah, just like, I've I I hear a lot of them using, like, certain Korean words very, like, loudly or, like, in an elongated way, or stuff like that yeah haha

CJ: Ha... okay... Do you have any opinions on–

PETER: I'm so bad, it's so stereotypical, yeah

CJ: Haha, it's okay, um, do you have any opinions on, like, Koreatown Koreans?

<sup>6</sup>A form of polite address that is part of Korean morphosyntax, and it has nothing to do with accent or phonology.

PETER: Ye– that’s I think mostly what I’m basing off of, like K-town Koreans, yeah, or like Torrance Koreans, yeah. (02-1511)

Clearly, Peter holds fairly strong language and ethnic ideologies, and does not shy away from casting implicit or even explicit judgments on specific groups of people. There is slight judgment of SoCal Koreans for being loud, shallow, and perhaps unrefined, and he places himself squarely in opposition to them. At the same time, NorCal Koreans tend to be worse at Korean, which aligns with the negative stereotype he cited earlier for second generation Korean Americans, another group he categorizes himself in opposition to.

## 6.1 Word-final stop release

Peter’s explicit ideologies for English language skills are similar: he believes that it is important to have a good command of English, especially in the context of his academic community, since it is the lingua franca. We can turn now to an analysis of Peter’s English. Having been told by many that he speaks English with an accent, Peter strives to “be eloquent” and to speak as naturally as he can.

In fact, when Peter says the word “eloquent”, he pronounces the word-final /nt/ cluster with a heightened /t/-release. In the entire phrase, he uses clear word-final stop release several times<sup>9</sup>:

PETER: Think [k<sup>ɿ</sup>] sometimes I do, yeah. I d- I don’t want them to be thinking about my **accent** [t<sup>h</sup>]... or anything, but rather what I’m saying, so I think [k<sup>h</sup>] ... Yeah. I try to be **eloquent** [t<sup>h</sup>] and I think [k<sup>h</sup>] I try to... speak [k] as naturally as I can. (02-1044)

(His speech here is also marked by more hesitations, a fronted /u/, lowered pitch and frequent creaky voice.) A quick survey of every word-final /nt/ cluster in Peter’s speech throughout the interview, pared down to only instances of words that did not occur before a homorganic consonant (e.g., excluding “important that”, “want to”), found five instances of heightened /t/-release, as well as five instances in which /t/ could have been released but was not.

There is variability in Peter’s word-final /t/-release. Most of the time, he does use an audible release at a word boundary, which from a purely phonological level is evidence of transfer from Korean. Because Korean does not allow complex codas such as /nt/, a word such as “accent” will be broken into three syllables: [ɛk.sen.t<sup>h</sup>u], with an epenthetic vowel at the end. This could account for the aspirated /t/-release words in Table 2. However, there are other instances of phonologically similar words that do not have a released /t/.

Thus, I examine the semantic context in which Peter utters each of these words to see if there could be some pattern to the variation beyond a purely phonological explanation. Peter releases /t/

<sup>8</sup>Korean mixed with English, or English words transferred into the Korean phonological system.

<sup>9</sup>One of several recognized regional dialects of Korean that clearly marks the speaker as being from anywhere but Seoul.

<sup>9</sup>Play sound file 1044\_eloquent.wav.

released		
word	context	time
count	“[the] only time I use Korean when I think is when I <b>count</b> , like...”	02-496
content	“[if] I can fully express myself [in Korean] [...] I’m <b>content</b> with it”	02-939
accent	“I don’t want them to be thinking about my <b>accent</b> [in English], or...”	02-1044
eloquent	“I try to be <b>eloquent</b> , and...”	02-1044
accent	“there’s like the Valley Girl <b>accent</b> in SoCal”	02-1543
unreleased		
competent	“I would want them to think I’m <b>competent</b> enough [in Korean]”	02-1100
accent	“I think it does build up to be part of an Asian <b>accent</b> , but...”	02-1778
accent	“Asian <b>accent</b> is such a broad term”	02-1783
accent	“especially when it’s, like, Chinese or Taiwanese acce- <b>accent</b> , it’s...”	02-1783
different	“it’s, like, very <b>different</b> from Korean accents”	02-1783

Table 2: Variable release in world-final /nt/ clusters for Subject 02.

when he is discussing both his Korean language skills (e.g., counting, expressing himself) and his English language skills (e.g., his accent and his eloquence); he does not release /t/ when discussing his Korean language skills and the nature of different kinds of Asian-accented English. There is no evidence to suggest that the mere topic of one language or the other motivates the variation.

However, the released /t/ words all occur during a portion of Peter’s interview during which he is considering his own speech carefully, regardless of language, with the exception of one instance in which he mentions the Valley Girl accent. This is important, because /t/-release has been shown to index hypercorrectness and care in speech as stances, even as it co-indexes specific personae such as nerd girl or orthodox Jew (Bucholtz, 2001; Eckert, 2008b).

The unreleased /t/ words, in contrast, all occur within a specific interval of time, at the very end of Peter’s interview, during which he discusses accented English<sup>10</sup>, with the exception of one instance of describing his motivations for speaking Korean fluently. For the majority of the twenty-five seconds of deliberation aloud, Peter speaks fairly quickly, and does not release /t/ in any words. (Out of six words with final /k/, such as “think” and “like”, he releases /k/ twice). In this case, the lack of /t/ release can be justified phonetically by greater speech speed, but I argue that it also indexes here a lack of care in speech that is indicative of when Peter talks about any group that he construes as an Other.

In other words, when he discusses his own speech, he takes great care to be eloquent and releases /t/. But when the topic is non-Korean Asian Americans who speak with accents, his rate of /t/ release decreases, and when the topic is Korean Americans from Southern California, another group he distances himself from, his rate of /k/ release also suddenly drops.

PETER: Yeah, I I’ve noticed **that** [t̚], um, SoCal Korean American **like** [k̚] Koreans are, **like** [k̚], a little stronger. They’re, **like** [k̚], faster, and they’re a lot more, **like** [k̚], slangier. Whereas – and I **think** [k<sup>h</sup>] more of them, **like** [k<sup>h</sup>], are good with

<sup>10</sup>Play sound file 1783\_accent.wav

hearing and, **like** [k<sup>l</sup>], understanding – but then **like** [k<sup>ʔ</sup>] NorCal Koreans, **like** [k<sup>h</sup>], in general have less... **like** [k] less Korean abilities, and then they're also, **like** [k<sup>ʔ</sup>]...

Like all social users of language, Peter makes use of the variation that his dual phonological system allows (unreleased word-final consonants are available in both English and Korean) to index certain traits and stances. On one end of the spectrum is hypercorrect, clear English, which he uses to discuss his own language use (identity: articulate, educated English speaker, good communicator; stance: careful, thoughtful), and on the other is faster English, with less release, which he uses to discuss groups and individuals who are distinct from or in opposition to himself (identity: *not* 1st or 2nd gen, *not* from SoCal; stance: patronizing, knowledgeable).

## 6.2 /ð/-stopping

When asked about the specific acoustic characteristics of Korean-accented English, Peter cites trouble with /l/ and /r/ (as did most interviewees), and breaking of diphthongs (e.g., “sky” as [ska.i]). He also notes that Koreans have “a lot of troubles with [...] the theta sound, the T-H sound”.

It is perhaps possible that, as Peter’s own pronunciation of theta, or /θ/, is generally free from such “troubles”, he is once again establishing an opposition of himself versus “Koreans”, here comprising presumably L1 Korean speakers or first generation Korean Americans, rather than all ethnic Koreans. Note the use of third person pronouns and other underlined keywords in his descriptions below:

PETER: Think um, Koreans like, because each, like- it’s so- the language itself is so, like, syllable-ized, I think they don’t get, like, they’re not good at pronouncing, like... [...]

PETER: I hear a lot of people like, *again* [əgɛn], they say like *a-gain* [ə.gem], or stuff like that. (02-1607)

That said, Peter did not explicitly mention another strong and common effect of phonological transfer for Korean L1 learners of English, and one that he happens to display with very high consistency: fortition of the voiced interdental fricative, or /ð/-stopping.

The Korean consonant system does not possess any interdental fricatives (in fact, English is rather unique in having them), but it does have alveolar stops that tend to become dental and are called denti-alveolar in Cho et al. (2002). Thus, /ð/ in English words such as “this” often surfaces as [d̪]. Examples of this abound in Peter’s speech. In Figure 5, you can see relatively short duration of the fricative in “they”, especially compared to the longer, un-stopped [θ] in “both”<sup>11</sup>.

It is possible that the variance in /ð/-stopping is due in part to coarticulation, or is at least phonologically conditioned, especially since the variance we see in Peter’s speech is relatively low (especially

<sup>11</sup>Play sound file 732.theyboth.wav; another example can be found in 951.theythey.wav.

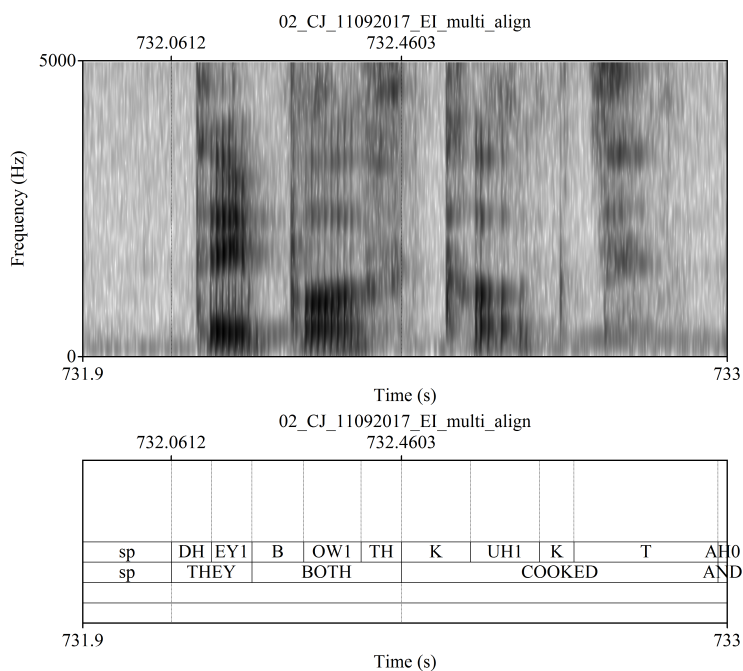


Figure 5: “They both cooked.”

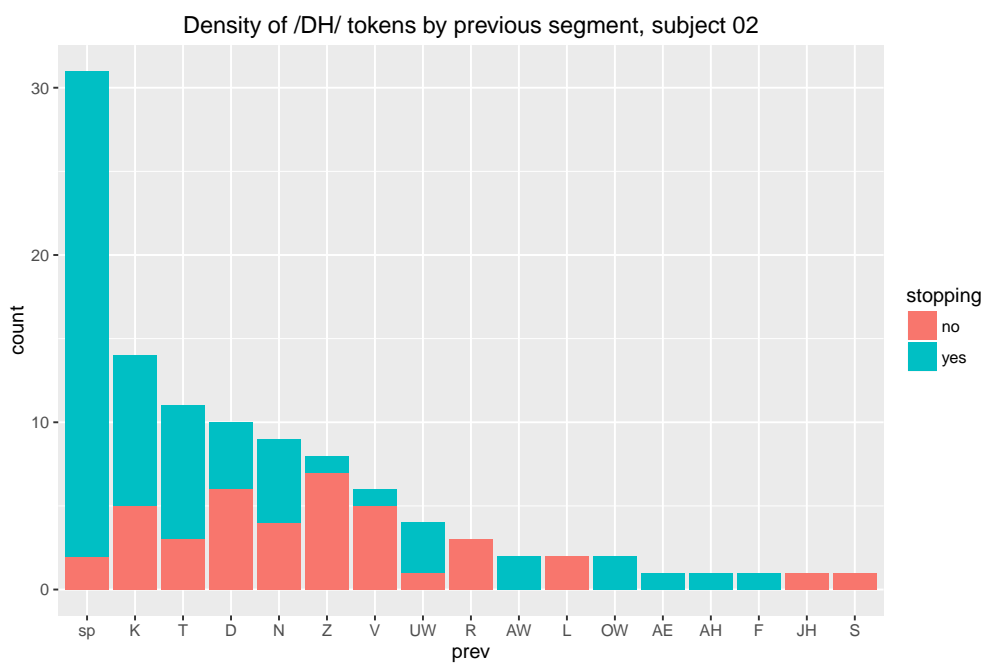


Figure 6: Instances of /ð/-stopping seemed to occur only following certain phonological contexts, such as after a pause or after a vowel.



compared to Jean). For example, when Peter discusses the definition of the word *diphthong*, he says “even though they’re together”<sup>12</sup>, and of the three underlying /ð/ phones in that phrase, only the second one (in “they’re”) is stopped. The first one is word-initial, following a word-final nasal; the third one occurs intervocally.

I took duration measurements from every instance of a word-initial /ð/ in Peter’s speech throughout the entire English portion of the interview. This resulted in about one hundred tokens, all of which were function words (e.g., *this*, *that*, *those*, *there*, *the*, *they*, *though*). Tokens were also coded for their topic, the previous segment (whether a space or the final phone of the previous word), and whether there was audible stopping. Figure 6 organizes the tokens by previous segment and audible stopping.

It is clear to see from the colors of each bar that certain phonological contexts, such as a preceding fricative or affricate (/s, z, v, dʒ/) or a preceding liquid (/r, l/), discourage fortition. However, because these segments were manually coded, it is possible that compensation for coarticulation is at play here. For a more objective measurement, I examined phone duration. For un-stopped /ð/, this meant measuring the duration in seconds (from the onset of frication until the onset of the subsequent vowel), and for completely stopped /ð/, surfacing as something closer to [d], the measurement was of burst duration (from burst onset until vowel onset). It was hypothesized that the stopped /ð/ tokens would have shorter durations.

The results are given below in Figure 7.

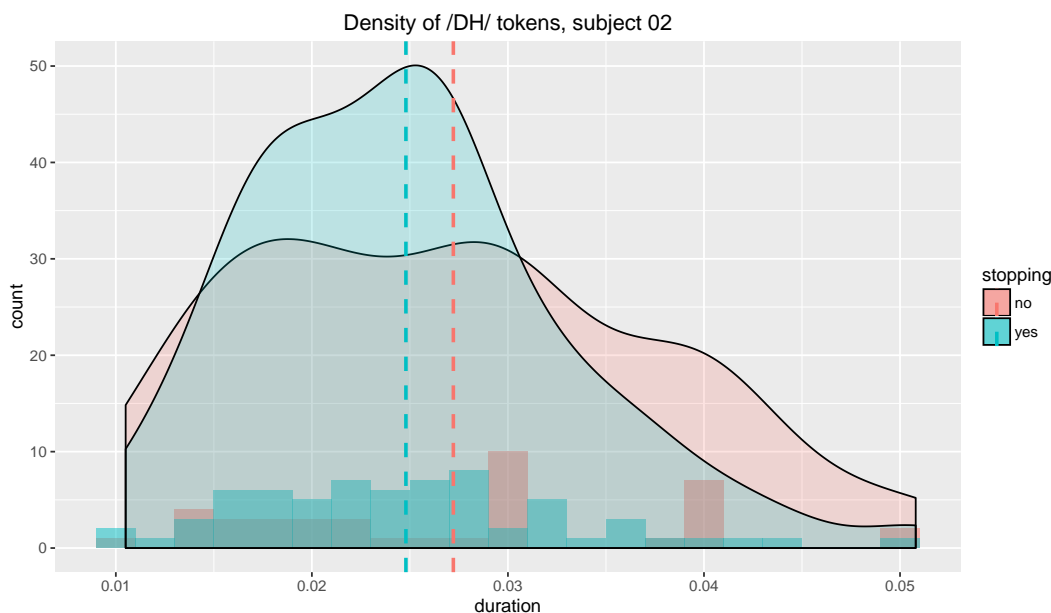


Figure 7: Tokens of /ð/ coded as being stopped or not stopped had virtually indistinguishable mean durations, p=0.21

<sup>12</sup>Play sound file 1225\_eventhough.wav.

The stopped tokens, in blue, have a slightly shorter duration than the un-stopped tokens; it is clear that the presence of a few outliers pulls the average up a bit. But an independent t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the the unstopped (mean=0.027) and stopped (mean=0.025) groups ( $t=1.26$ ,  $p=0.21$ ).

This supports the hypothesis that /ð/-stopping could be simply phonological: an /ð/ following a /z/ is discouraged from undergoing fortition. But it is not an inviolable rule: from Figure 6 we can see exceptions, such as the one instance in which /ð/ following /z/ was stopped, or a few instances in which /ð/ following a pause was not. As we did for Jean's /oʊ/ tokens in the first case study, we will now turn to these outliers or exceptional cases.

The tokens of /ð/ that follow /v/ and /z/ are not stopped in most cases, but there is one exception for each context. One instance occurs when /ð/ follows the /z/ in “because”

PETER: There's [ð] always, like... stories and rumors going around (*laughter*), that's, like, my perception of SoCal Koreans, yeah (*laughter*)

CJ: Do you mean that as in, like, like, here? Rumors and stuff?

PETER: Or, like, just **because their** [ð] community is like tighter and denser, like, things just happen more, I think, yeah. I think they're [ð] a lot more emotional, too. (02-1577)

All three instances of /ð/ are stopped in this short excerpt, but the exception is in the post-fricative context, where we would not expect stopping to occur. In another instance, /ð/ following /v/ is stopped, but this occurs when Peter is talking about what it means to be 1.5: “I think it's people like me who are... born in Korea, but most **of their** growth and, like, childhood is marked by their American side.”

So far, there doesn't seem to be a pattern. If we examine the inverse exceptions, however, we find that while /ð/ after a pause usually results in stopping, the two instances of fully fricated /ð/ occur when Peter discusses the importance of using English in his current environment:

PETER: ...I find it important that [ð] I am able to express myself and understand others, um, fully, um. And I think especially being in [this school], like, the [ð] academic language has, like... it's it is **important that** [ð] language is, it's just that [ð] way that [ð] communication is carried out, in, **like, the major form** [ð], so. Yeah, but I, again, don't think speaking *like* a native is a requisite, yeah.

For reference, all tokens of /ð/-initial words in a three-minute window around the excerpt above, and their segment durations, were plotted over time in Figure 8. The dashed lines indicate where the excerpt begins and ends. For context, the subsequent one seconds are also included in Figure 8, during which Peter discusses his own accent in English and then moves on to the stereotype of Korean Americans with poor Korean skills that was covered earlier.

Indeed, the longest durations of the /ð/ segment, whether perceived to be stopped or not, occur towards the end of the excerpt, when Peter is describing how crucial it is to speak English for the

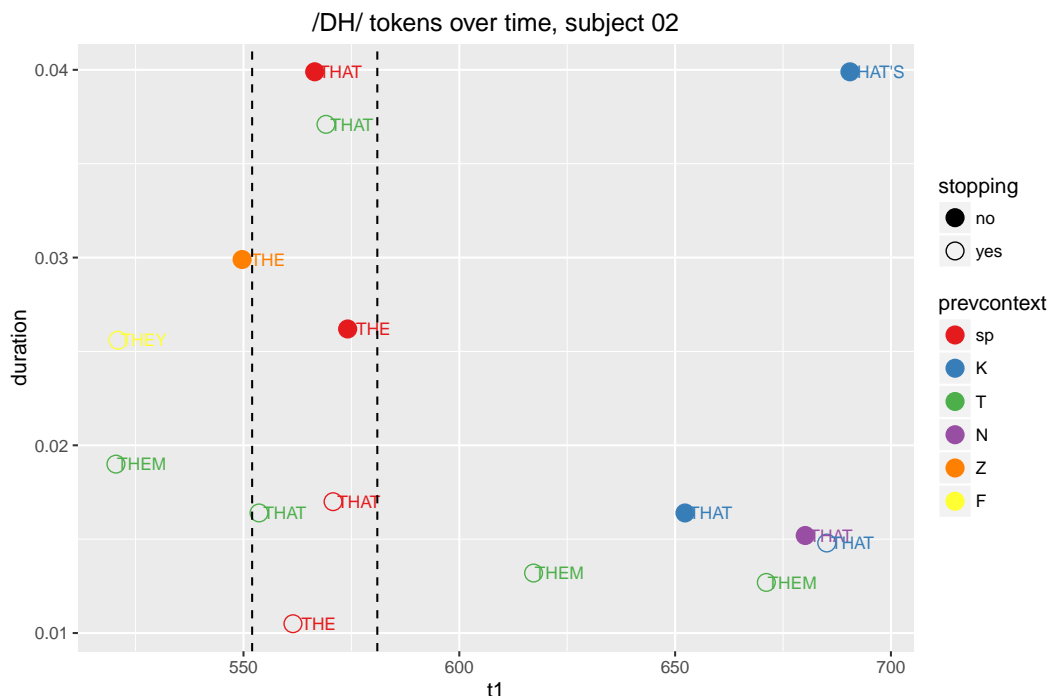


Figure 8: Tokens of /ð/ over time (during interview) and by previous phone.

purposes of successful communication. These durations also fall around 1.5 standard deviations above the mean duration or greater. Of course, he hedges on an explicit judgment of accented English by saying he does not believe native-like fluency is required. Stating an implicit valuation (or lack thereof), however, does not necessarily mean that implicit biases can't come through in some way (Campbell-Kibler, 2012).

I argue that because Peter takes great care with his speech when giving his metalinguistic commentary on English, the acoustic consequences – longer /ð/ duration and less frequent stopping, and slower speech speed overall – index his stance of privileging English and of being a thoughtful and intellectually-minded individual. This is linked to his identity as a 1.5 generation Korean American, one who does not use Korean all that much in his daily life apart from speaking to his parents. He is a 1.5 generation Korean American, not “from Korea” like the woman from his church. Peter positions himself in opposition to other groups whose language use he freely challenges, such as first generation immigrants with their accented English or Southern Californian Korean Americans whose slang is fast and loud.

One of the central theses in Fought (2006) is that ethnicity, as a social construct, is always created oppositionally, in an us-vs.-them (or me-vs.-them) mentality. Evidence from the content of Peter's interview shows that generational category for Korean Americans can also be created oppositionally. Furthermore, the stances he takes or identities he assumes by reifying generational category are further emphasized in the minute acoustic details of his accent. Peter's projection of his 1.5

generation identity through his speech is a revealing explanation for the variation.

## 7 Conclusion

Park writes: “The process of identity formation about [1.5 generation] Korean Americans is situational and complex, and yet contradictory and compartmentalized” (1999:158). Not only is their identity formation complex, even self-identification is complex. From the aggregate responses of twenty-two Korean Americans, it seemed as if the idea of a generational category in between first and second was both fuzzy and contested, or at the very least, different from how Park wrote about it. Our 1.5 generation interviewees mostly cited demographic justification for their self-identification and did not appear to act as “cultural brokers” any more or less than the second generation interviewees.

As for the sociolinguistic findings, there was consistency with Lee (2002) and Park (1999), in that overall, our Korean Americans strongly associate Korean language use with Korean identity. But within the 1.5 generation group, an individual’s language use (command of Korean, level of non-native phonological features in English, etc.) will vary widely. We have seen how several sociolinguistic variables in an individual’s speech can be linked to utterances that semantically or pragmatically demonstrate stance toward or away from Korean identity.

The limitations of this study are that it draws on only a handful of case studies. The 1.5 generation Korean Americans are a diverse group. Almost by definition, they don’t “fit in” to any categories that we may want to create. Thus, linguistically, we cannot (maybe should not) draw any conclusions about them as a whole, but keep in mind for future studies that the neat first-gen second-gen split will erase the experiences of many individuals.

Future work will look at the phonetic variables in the Korean speech of the analyzed individuals and compare it to the results of their English speech. I will also soon begin interviews of Korean Americans who do not speak or read Korean (to the level of fluency required for the past year of interviews), in order to get a fuller picture – knowing of course that it will still be difficult or inadvisable to make generalizations.

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## **A Korean American Ethnographic Survey**

### PART 1: Korean Interview (15 min.)

- Interviewer Introduction
- Subject Introduction
- Random Questions: Light, simple questions such as “What did you do over the weekend?” or “What do you like to do in your free time?”
- Location History: If the following questions have not been answered yet...
- “Where were you born?”
- “Where have you lived?” (All cities/states/countries, and duration of stay)
- “Where are your parents from?” (As specific as possible; important if from Seoul/Gyeonggi-do)
- “What year were your parents born, and when did they come to the US?”

### PART 2: Korean Reading (5 min.)

### PART 3: IRB Forms (English) (5 min.)

### PART 4: English Interview (25 min.)

#### Language Input and Use

- What language did you start speaking first? (even if not most proficient language now)
- What language(s) did you speak growing up?
- When did you start speaking English/Korean?
- When did you start (and/or stop) feeling comfortable speaking English/Korean?
- What do you hear at home?
- What do you speak at home?
- ...with your parents?
- ...with your older siblings? (if any)
- ...with your younger siblings? (if any)
- What language did you use and hear in your neighborhood?
- What about with friends in school?
- If you lived in Korean enclave/community, how much did you interact with them?
- How many years of formal education have you had in each of the languages? (Includes weekend Korean school, primary school in Korea, university-level Korean classes)
- What language do you use when you talk to yourself or count?



Identity

- What ethnicity do you consider yourself?
- Do you consider yourself to be the 1st, 1.5, or 2nd generation, if at all?
- How do you define these terms?
- “How would you describe the relationship between your identified ethnicity and your language use?”
- Do you feel like yourself when you speak English/Korean?
- Is it important to you to speak English/Korean like a native speaker?
- Do you want others to think of you as a native English/Korean speaker?
- What was the racial/ethnic makeup of the area (city/neighborhood) in which you grew up?
- Do you self-identify as belonging to the majority group, or otherwise?
- Do you actively use Korean outside of home?
- Do you actively try to improve your Korean?
- Do you tend to order in Korean at Korean restaurants?
- What kind of food did you grow up eating? Did you grow up with Korean food?
- Do you attend church?
- Does your church primarily serve the Korean community?
- What language is used at church? What language do you use with church friends?
- Do you watch Korean media?
- How often? What genre? (Variety shows, music, dramas, news)
- Do you use (English) subtitles?
- How ‘Korean’ do you think your family is?

Perceptions about Language

- What do your parents think of your Korean/English skills?
- What do your Korean-American peers think of your Korean/English skills?
- What do your non-Korean peers think of your Korean/English skills?
- Are there any differences between NorCal vs SoCal Koreans?
- Behaviorally?
- When they speak Korean?
- How would you characterize the features of “Korean-accented English”? How about “Asian-accented English”? (no right or wrong answer)
- Are there distinctions (geographic, social, racial) within this group?