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Multilingual Experiences, Media Consumption, and Transnational Identity in a Double Diasporic Context: The Case of Korean-Chinese in Japan

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With the growing migration and human mobility, diaspora, a dispersed and scattered population from their original home country to another country, is increasing. People's motivation to migrate to another place in search of better opportunities and quality of life makes them move further from the country they had settled once as diaspora to another country, which leads them to become 'double diaspora.' The current study is to explore the relationship between diasporic identity and media consumption of Korean-Chinese which continue to get attention as important diaspora in the East Asia(Asahi Shimbun, 2010, February 13), focusing on their double diasporic and multilingual experiences in Japan. For the purpose of the study, the primary focus of the following literature review is placed on the diasporic experiences and identity of Korean-Chinese and media consumption of diaspora.

Living as Diaspora: Korean-Chinese and Their Diasporic Experiences

Korean-Chinese are descendants of Korean immigrants who have settled down in the Northeast China between the late 1800s and early 1990s. As of November 1, 2010, the population of Korean-Chinese amounts to 1,830,929 according to the 6th National Population Census of the People's Republic of China, a decrease of 4.6 percent from 1,920,597 of the 4th National Population Census in 1990(Inminnet, 2012, July 23). Their ethnic communities are concentrated in the Northeast China, accounting for 87.8 percent of the Korean-Chinese in China(Jilin: 1,040,167; Heilongjiang: 327,806; Liaoning: 239,537, Inminnet, 2012, July 23). Yanbian and Changbai are designated as Autonomous Prefecture and County respectively, and the population of Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture is roughly 800,000 as of 2009(Inminnet, 2012, July 23). In addition, there are hundreds of autonomous townships mainly in three Northeast provinces including Jilin, Heilongjiang, and

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Liaoning.

Korean-Chinese are often viewed as one of the most distinguished ethnicities among the 55 minorities in China with regard to education and economic level (Jin, 2008), and they have a tendency to have a high sense of pride as Korean ethnicity (Lee & Lee, 2014). They have preserved their own language and culture through ethnic education ranging from kindergarten to graduate school. They have also successfully established and developed ethnic media including newspapers, publishing companies, and TV stations, although they are facing challenges from transnational South Korean media and Korean language media running by South Korean immigrants in China.

In terms of diplomatic relations, they maintained a close relationship with North Korea before the normalization of relations between South Korea and China in 1992. Since then, Korean-Chinese society has been experiencing unprecedented Korean boom: a large number of Korean-Chinese have moved to South Korea (382,000 as of May 31, 2010, Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Also, they have settled down in the larger cities within China such as Shandong Province (61,556) and Shanghai (22,257) where South Korean firms and business groups have expanded, due to the recent economic development in China (Inminnet, 2012, July 23). As a result, the population of Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture accounts for 36.7 percent as of 2009, a decrease of more than half from 70.5 percent in 1953 (Inminnet, 2012, July 23).

The largest number of Korean-Chinese outside of China and South Korea is residing in Japan, mainly due to their Japanese proficiency, geographical and cultural proximity, and competitive advantages in future career. Many Korean-Chinese ethnic schools in China have Japanese course as a foreign language because of the proximity and grammatical similarity. It is estimated that 53,000 Korean-Chinese (unofficially 70,000) currently reside in Japan with approximately 33 percent of them holding a study visa, and 27 percent with a work visa (The Hankyoreh, 2011, November 18). They get attention as important diasporic members in East Asia owing to their ethnic resources and language proficiency based on Korean ethnicity and Chinese nationality, which work to their advantage in Japan. Asahi Shimbun also featured Korean-Chinese in Japan focusing on their ethnic resources and multilingual ability in 2010 (Asahi Shimbun, 2010, February 13).

Reconstruction of Diasporic Identity: Diaspora and the Media Consumption

Language, group consciousness, and media have been considered as significant factors in reproduction and reinforcement of national and cultural identity (e.g., Hall, 1997; Tsagarousianou, 2004). Researches on media consumption in a diasporic context such as Korean immigrants in the United States (Lee, 2004), and Chinese

immigrants in Australia (Sinclair, Yue, Hawkons, Pookong & Fox, 2001), New Zealand (Yin, 2013), and the United States (Shi, 2005) consistently indicated that language and cultural proximity are crucial factors in homeland media use for entertainment and information.

In a study of analyzing media consumption of the Chinese diaspora in the US, Shi (2005) argued that the main motivation for Chinese media consumption among the Chinese diaspora is pastime. Due mainly to the cultural and linguistic barriers in understanding and appreciating the US media contents, English-language media is less enjoyable for her informants, and Chinese media are much more relaxing and entertaining for them.

In addition to entertainment, it is necessary for diasporic members to maintain and reinforce their ethnic resources by consuming ethnic and/or homeland media. Ethnic media play a role as common reference points: diasporic members keep them informed about current events and issues as well as the mentality of people in homeland so that they can interact with people in the home country and other diaspora members in the host country. Media serve as a ground where their national and ethnic identities are reproduced and reconstructed, and provide diasporic members with ethnic resources to compete in the host society as well (Shi, 2005).

Diasporic members have multiple media layers from local ethnic media to transnational media, and changing media environments provide them with easy access to homeland media. In a study of analyzing the Chinese-language cyberspace including homeland and ethnic media, Yin (2013) showed that online homeland media reinforce a sense of 'authentic Chinese' among migrants. They have come to realize strongly Chinese nationality out of China by consuming homeland media.

On the other hand, online ethnic media serve to reconstruct 'Chineseness' as an ethnic group in the host country and assimilate diasporic members into the host society. 'Deterritorialized' ethnic online media in the host country have become significant factors in the reconstruction of diasporic identity, as Yin (2013) pointed out. Ethnic media keep connecting diaspora to the host society (Zhou & Cai, 2002) by serving the needs of the ethnic community, including cultural, political, economic, and everyday needs in the host country (Shi, 2009). By doing so, ethnic online media construct "an identity that is embedded in the local experience specific to a migrant's physical location" (Yin, 2013, p.3). On the other hand, ethnic media also maintain and reinforce ethnic culture and identity among diaspora in the host country (Yin, 2013). In a study of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand, Yin (2013) showed their diasporic identity is negotiated and reconstructed between 'Kiwianness' and 'Chineseness' on the deterritorialized Chinese-language cyberspace.

In this study, we seek to examine the role of multilingual experiences and media consumption in transformation and reconstruction of diasporic identity focusing on double diasporic situation. Korean-Chinese diaspora in Japan is 'double diaspora' who moved not from their home country, but from a place of having been

displaced. Due to the fact, their patterns of media consumption might different from other diasporic members in the previous researches who migrated from their home country and Korean-Chinese return immigrants to Korea as well.

Most Korean-Chinese have a dual identity as Korean ethnicity and Chinese nationality. In regard to Korean-Chinese language ability, many Korean-Chinese are bilingual in Korean and Chinese with different proficiency levels according to their family situation and generation. Korean-Chinese language is quite similar to North Korea due to proximity and relations between China and North Korea, but increasing exchanges with South Korea including South Korean media consumption have influenced Korean-Chinese language, especially among the young generation who has been exposed to Korean television in their childhood. Their media environment is pretty much same as the one of the young generation in South Korea. They are watching South Korean television and visiting Korean portal sites while residing in the Northeast China(Lee & Lee, 2014). Recently, Chinese language education is more emphasized with the growth of China's economy and intermarriage between Han Chinese and Korean-Chinese.

With regard to media consumption, previous researches focus on Korean-Chinese living in Northeast China (e.g., Lee, Yoon & Sohn, 2002) and Korean-Chinese return immigrants to South Korea (e.g., Kim, 2013). Lee, Yoon & Sohn(2002) indicated that main motivation of watching South Korean television lies in cultural proximity in a study of reception of South Korean satellite broadcasting among Korean-Chinese in Yanbian. Media consumption among the Korean-Chinese varies according to their socio-economic status, gender, generation, language ability, ethnic identity, and their cultural relationship with South Korea(Lee, Yoon & Sohn, 2002).

There has been little research on media consumption and cultural identity in a double diasporic context. In our previous research, we attempted to explore double diasporic experiences and media consumption among Korean-Chinese in Shanghai and Tokyo(Lee & Lee, 2014). The current research seeks to examine the role of double diasporic and multilingual experiences, and media consumption in reconstruction of identity, with an emphasis on the young Korean-Chinese in Japan. Their double diasporic and multilingual experiences as Korean-Chinese in Japan could provide a valuable insight into the study of media consumption, language, and identity in a transnational media environment.

Research Questions and Method

This study posed the following research questions focusing primarily on their language ability and the meaning of each language, media consumption, and diasporic identity based on the previous research and discussions above.

RQ1: How is each language characterized to Korean-Chinese in Japan?

RQ2: What is the pattern and motivation of media consumption among Korean-Chinese in Japan in relation to their multilingual ability and life plan?

RQ3: How do Korean-Chinese in Japan reconstruct their identity through media consumption, multilingual and diasporic experiences?

Many Korean-Chinese in Japan speak Korean, Chinese, and Japanese. Mediascape for Korean-Chinese residing in Japan is rather complex: they have four kinds of media layers including Chinese media (national media), Korean-Chinese media (ethnic media), South Korean media (homeland media), and Japanese media (host country media). Their media consumption is expected to be different according to their ethnic identity, socio-economic status, gender, generation, and language proficiency.

The study consists of an asynchronous online interview with twelve Korean-Chinese, a face-to-face interview with one Korean-Chinese, and an analysis of an online community site for Korean-Chinese residing in Japan. First, we conducted an online interview with twelve Korean-Chinese students currently residing in Tokyo in regard to their media use and diasporic identity. The target group of the interview was middle class young generation of Korean-Chinese who mainly come to Japan for the purpose of studying abroad. Informants consisted of eight females and four males who aged 25 to 27. Their duration of residence in Japan is ranged from 1 to 8 years, mostly 3 to 4 years. Due to the fact that they have come to Japan recently, they could provide their vivid experiences of settling into Japan and their future plans.

The online interview was conducted in Korean language in December 2014 under the consent of informants. The interview questions were open-ended, and informants were asked about their media consumption including Internet usage and multilingual experiences in Japan, focusing particularly on the relationship to their identity. We also conducted a face-to-face interview with one Korean-Chinese focusing on her distinguished multilingual ability. She is a native Korean speaker and speaks Chinese, Japanese, and English fluently through both her education in China and Japan, and her interests in language.

In addition, this study analyzed the user-generated contents of ethnic online media. *Shimto*, one of the most popular Korean-Chinese community sites in Japan, was chosen to examine as to how they express their diasporic experiences and identity on the site. *Shimto* means a place for relaxation in Korean language. The site began in September 2002, and there are more than 500,000 views per day as of 2012(Jilin Xinwen, 2012, October 29). The site has sections such as news, entertainment, job, housing, family and parenting, cooking, online forums and so on. The success of the site led to the establishment of Yabian *Shimto*. We examined each section, and the family and parenting section makes pertinent research data given

that it includes many interesting and important postings and comments showing their experiences in regard to language and identity. It is attempted to investigate cultural identity and perspectives on education of Korean-Chinese diasporic mothers based on explorative and qualitative analysis of family and parenting section during the period from January 2014 to June 2014.

Table1: Demographic Characteristics of Informants*

	Gender	Age	Occupation	Hometown	Place of Residence	Duration of residence in Japan	Language skills
A	M	26	Graduate student	Yanbian	Tokyo	3 years	Jp = Cn
B	M	27	Graduate student	Yanbian	Tukuba	3 years	Jp < Cn
C	M	27	Company employee	Yanbian	Fukuoka	8 years	Jp > Cn
D	M	27	Graduate student	Yanbian	Hyogo	4 years	Jp < Cn
E	F	27	Graduate student	Wangqing	Tokyo	4 years	Jp = Cn
F	F	27	Company employee	Yanbian	Tokyo	4 years	Jp > Cn
G	F	25	Part time worker	Liaoning	Kanagawa	1 year	Jp < Cn
H	F	26	Graduate student	Yanbian	Hyogo	4 years	Jp < Cn
I	F	27	Graduate student	Yanbian	Wakayama	4 years	Jp < Cn
J	F	26	Undergraduate student	Jilin	Toyama	3 years	Jp > Cn
K	F	25	College student	Yanbian	Saitama	3 years	Jp < Cn
L	F	26	Undergraduate student	Yanbian	Osaka	6 years	Jp > Cn
M	F	25	Graduate student	Jilin	Tokyo	4 years	Cn, Jp, Eng

* We interviewed with A~L using an online form and conducted a face-to-face interview with M.

Living in Japan: Interviews with Korean-Chinese

Many informants (D, E, F, H, I, K) mentioned that they came to Japan to continue their study and to learn Japanese. Most of them went to ethnic school where provided Japanese course as a foreign language. B attended Japanese language class at university and F majored in Japanese language at university. Our previous interview research (Lee & Lee, 2014) also indicated that informants of young generation came to Japan because they think that their multilingual ability becomes essential resources for their carrier considering extremely competitive situation in China. With regard to language proficiency, many informants said that they are rather weak at Chinese, which is common among their generation. M is proud of Chinese proficiency of her family and herself compared to the same generation of Korean-Chinese who has been educated in the ethnic school.

Most informants mentioned that they used to watch South Korean television

including dramas and variety shows in their childhood. F said that she was eager to keep updated with information about Korea. E, G, J, K, and L are still watching Korean television, mostly drama and variety shows. E mentioned that she does not watch Chinese television because it is in low quality, and Japanese television is less enjoyable due to the linguistic and cultural differences. Korean television is most entertaining for her. A is watching Korean news to keep him informed about current affairs in Korea. The informant I relied on Daum, Korean portal site, for information about beauty and fashion. G emphasized the role of ethnic online media, *Shimto*, mentioning that she can get useful information there. When it comes to Internet usage, many informants use the same portal sites and SNS service as young generation in Korea, such as Daum and Naver Korea, and Kakao Talk. They also use Chinese sites and SNS service to communicate with Korean-Chinese and Chinese friends.

As for M, she is fluent in four languages including Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and English, which led her to have a cosmopolitan outlook. However, her unpleasant memories when visiting Seoul got her to have a strong negative feeling toward Korea. She said that she avoids watching Korean television due to the experiences:

“I used to watch Korean television in my school days, and wanted to visit Korea so eagerly, especially downtown and stylish places that I always saw on television. I was looking forward to visiting Seoul as a member of students’ group. However, a clerk’s bad attitude shocked me when I said to her that I’m Korean-Chinese. My unpleasant memories of being discriminated in Seoul changed everything. I stopped watching Korean television, which I liked so much”(M).

However, she admitted the value of knowledge about Korea as her ethnic resource because she is going to work at a Japanese trade company. Her company expects her to contribute to trade with Korea, so she needs to keep informed on current affairs and information about Korea not for pastime but for her work.

F expressed interesting opinion as follows in regard to her identity:

“Japanese people recognize me as a Korean rather than a Chinese often. However, I am Chinese and I am strongly conscious of my Chinese indentity because I was born and raised in China with strong influences from Chinese society and culture. I absolutely do not change my nationality, but I want to live in Tokyo with my Han Chinese husband for the time being as long as our work and life are stable here”(F).

It appears that her marriage with Han Chinese might affect her identity as a Chinese as well. Similarly, H is planning to go back to China after working in Japan

for a while. She thinks China's economy will continue to expand. K also has a plan to stay in Japan for about five years and will go to the cities in China other than her hometown. Nationality is not important for her, but she said she does not hope to change her nationality. Likewise, L mentioned that she likes Japan and hopes to live in Japan but go back to China in the future.

The informant I has different opinions from the informants mentioned above saying:

“People could choose their nationality if the nation cannot meet people's needs. Even though the hometown is the most comfortable for me, I want to work in Japan due to Japan's high level of social security and infrastructure”(I).

‘Deterritorialized’ Ethnic Online Media: Analysis of Korean-Chinese Community Site in Japan*

The study also investigated as to how identity is manifested on Korean-Chinese ethnic online media in Japan by analyzing family and parenting section of Shimto.

China and Korea: ‘Two Nations’ for Korean-Chinese in Japan

Firstly, we examined their relations with China as a Chinese citizen and Korea as a Korean descendant. In many postings, they identify their nationality as a Chinese citizen: for example, some postings mentioned that they get offended by Japanese negative evaluation of China, such as criticisms on the low quality of Chinese products. Another user of Shimto replied to the posting below by expressing their bad feelings.

“I read a negative posting saying a Japanese consumer bought some products without knowing they are made in China and he or she would have not got them if he or she had known of that.”

On the other hand, they do not have strong ties with China due to different language and ethnic background as Korean descendants. It appears that there exists a dual relationship with China among Korean-Chinese. In particular, Korean-Chinese people seem to feel less emotional attachment to their nationality. While maintaining relations with the two nations, China and Korea, and ethnic culture as Korean-Chinese, many site users were seeking advice for getting Japanese citizenship. Nationality seems to be only a tool to get a better life condition for some

* An earlier version of this section was presented at the 6th International Conference on Language and Communication, National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok, August 21-22, 2014.

of them. In addition, there are numerous postings and comments showing no reluctance of changing nationality. The following is an example of interesting comments showing their thoughts of nationality and ethnicity:

“It is obvious that our nationality is China while the notion of homeland remains unclear for many of us. However, our ethnic consciousness as Korean-Chinese is much stronger than the one of Han Chinese.”

In comparison, the following posting denies the idea of importance of preserving their ethnic identity as Korean-Chinese, showing transnational identity and cosmopolitan outlook:

“If we wish to preserve our ethnicity, we had better live in Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture in China. We live away Yanbian because we didn’t like our life there, so I don’t like the idea of maintaining our ethnic identity. Anybody can settle into the new land in search of better life.”

Likewise, another posting expressed that nationality is of no importance for him or her mentioning:

“Nationality is not important at all. There was no such thing as a nation at the beginning of the world... I hope our children to play an active role in the world regardless of nationality.”

As for the relations with Korea, they showed a dual attitude toward Korea. Postings often show that they have a strong negative feeling to Korean people due to the discrimination in Korea, same as the case of M in the interview mentioned above. On the other hand, when Korea confronted difficult problems, for instance the ferry disaster happened recently, they expressed deep empathy with Korean people as the same ethnic members. There was also a posting expressing concerns about the future of Korean-Chinese children in terms of identity:

“We used to admire Korea, but became more connected to China since the rise of national power, and many children go to Chinese school. Will they have more confidence if they live as Chinese in China or will they become more global human resources if they live as the second generation of Chinese and the fourth of Korean in Japan?”

One Shimto user opposed to the expression of the fourth generation of Korean, mentioning that “we are not Korean descendants, but just *Joseon-jok* (Korean-Chinese in Korean).” Also a posting mentioned that “anywhere can be home once

you get used to it, and children could handle properly their multiple identities as long as parents hold stable attitudes toward their identities.”

Another posting mentioned that he or she could answer nationality as Chinese without any hesitation, but when it comes to homeland, it remains unclear and it is hard to answer among Korean-Chinese; Nevertheless, Korean-Chinese have a strong sense of ethnicity compared to Han Chinese.

Some parents were also concerned about their children’s school life in terms of their name. A mother expressed her concerns about her child’s name before going to school. She was worried about being discriminated because her child is Chinese considering recent relations between Japan and China. Another mother advised her that there is no need to worry, but she could change the name into Japanese style and it is also needed to consider where to study in the future. There was also a posting mentioning that she has changed her child’s name due to the concerns over the interaction with classmates. A woman mentioned that her husband prefers Korean-Chinese name to Korean one due to his strong ethnic consciousness. Another posting manifested clearly that naming children depends on their identity, future plan as to where to study and live.

Multilingual Experiences of Korean-Chinese in Japan

In regard to language, they are proud of Korean-Chinese as multilingual speaker, and often show pride over Han Chinese in terms of Japanese proficiency:

“We have two newly hired employees recently, Han Chinese and Korean-Chinese, and Korean-Chinese employee is much better in Japanese language and the way he or she works. I guess we Korean-Chinese are distinguished ethnicity.”

There are also some postings about their children’s language learning, such as seeking advice for children’s Korean, Chinese, and English learning and childcare that provides multilingual schooling. However, even though they have multilingual ability, they have accents in Korean language, rather weak in Chinese, and non-native Japanese speaker. Some postings were interesting that they enhance their self-esteem by changing their language depending on the situation:

“I speak Japanese to Korean people as if I am a foreigner when visiting Korea so as not to be discriminated.”

“Sometimes I speak Japanese to Chinese people in Japan because I’m weak in Chinese, and I can feel superior by using Japanese.”

There were also postings on popular Korean television dramas and on how to

watch them. However, there were not obvious remarks on relations between their drama watching and identity.

Discussion

The current research examined double diasporic and multilingual experiences, and media consumption of the Korean-Chinese currently living in Japan.

In regard to language, Korean-Chinese in Japan are able to speak at least three languages including Korean used in the Northeast China and/or Seoul Korea, Chinese, and Japanese. One of the reasons for coming to Japan is to learn a foreign language, which serves as a crucial resource in the future. The importance of language depends on their identity and future plan, and language is their resource to compete in the host society and a tool for 'self-enhancement' sometimes as mentioned above. Even though they have multilingual ability, many Korean-Chinese have accents in Korean language, weak in Chinese, and non-native Japanese speaker, which might lead to 'marginalization' of Korean-Chinese in Korea, China, and Japan altogether in a sense.

Korean media, especially entertainment contents, are consumed much regardless of their multilingual proficiency and life plan. They are emotionally and hedonically motivated in consuming media, and Korean media satisfy them. It appears that some Korean-Chinese develop close ties with Korea by consuming Korean media and making Korean friends in Japan. From personal communication with a female Korean-Chinese, she feels so relaxing while watching Korean television at the end of the day after spending the whole day using Japanese. However, it is unclear that their Korean media consumption strengthens their identity as a Korean descendent.

This study showed that identity is reproduced and reconstructed through multilingual and diasporic experiences among Korean-Chinese in Japan as a double diaspora. Their multilingual and diasporic experiences, and multiple identities might lead to their 'marginalization' in the three countries, but at the same time change them to competitive 'hybrid transnational citizen' (Slade, 2014). As Thompson(2002) pointed out, "the idea of a single, nation-state based identity is giving way to a more fragmented and hybridized spectrum of cultural identities" (p.418). Single identity as Korean, Korean-Chinese or Chinese do not work to their advantage. Rather, "floating" in between 'Chineseness' and 'Koreaness' with cosmopolitan outlook by adding 'Japaneseness' are important resources for them. The meanings of 'being Korean-Chinese' in Japan will continuously change by negotiating and reconstructing their multiple identities in a double diasporic and deterritorialized context.

This study focused on the young generation of Korean-Chinese in Japan, and examined user-created texts by analyzing family and parenting section on ethnic

online media. In future studies, it is necessary to further analyze family factor more dynamically through in-depth interviews considering the media usage patterns within the family and a strong relationship between parents and children in the process of reproducing and reconstructing identity.

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