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The Sociocultural Life of Korean Adolescents in the UK Secondary Classroom*

Inyoung Shin, Miyang Cha**
Namseoul University

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This paper examines Korean adolescent students' sociocultural challenges and adaptation in the UK secondary classroom by means of their own perceptions. In order to investigate this issue, qualitative research tools such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were administrated. Various factors such as English proficiency, duration studied in England, personality, aptitudes of subjects, learning styles, and preferences for teaching approaches were intermixed to determine Korean adolescents' cultural adaptation processes in the classroom. Many of the students recognized differences of two classroom cultures and educational systems and developed group affiliation and bicultural identity. The others failed to overcome cultural discords and perceived not to be able to adapt well in the British classroom. This paper discusses the appropriate culture education for Korean adolescents to incorporate intercultural competence, bicultural identity and flexibility in the multicultural classroom.

[Korean adolescents/ sociocultural adaptation/ identity/ 한국 청소년/ 사회문화적 적응/ 정체성]

I. INTRODUCTION

Multicultural and intercultural occurrences in educational settings are common features due to the increase of overseas students studying in foreign countries in the era of globalization. As a result, cross-cultural conflicts and identity negotiation may occur when English as a second language learners (L2) study in English speaking countries. That is,

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** First Author : Inyoung Shin, Corresponding Author: Miyang Cha

how they adapt by means of English in the multicultural and intercultural educational practices and how they negotiate and transform their identities and beliefs are problematic. At the same time, the culture L2 learners bring to the classrooms of English speaking countries has a deep effect on classroom processes because it is a significant factor in how they evaluate each other's roles, identities and classroom performance (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Jin & Cortazzi, 1998).

Previous studies within English Language Teaching (ELT) have not fully emphasized learners' sociocultural behaviours in their learning context (Myles & Cheng, 2003). ELT specialists have just assumed that English is "neutral rather than cultural and social" (Benesch, 2001, p.45). However, in view of the pervasive trend of globalization, ELT field has to be re-examined and re-conceptualized to adapt to the social demands of learners and context. This is because language use cannot be isolated from appropriate sociocultural behaviours in the L2 learning context. This situation has generated a great need for appropriate behaviours as well as linguistic fluency in the use of English for communication in multicultural classroom.

As a result, in the last few decades, the emphasis of the language teaching field has shifted to the focus on L2 learners (Leki, 2006; Oxford, 1998; Tarone & Yule, 1989) and their sociocultural adaptation processes and challenges in educational settings in Anglophone countries (Miyoung Kim, 2010; Krase, 2007; Lee, 2009; Leki, 2006; Myles & Cheng, 2003). In particular, the cultural adaptation for secondary level adolescents has been problematic (Durkin & Conti-Ramsden, 2010; Youngsook Kim, 2006). This is because adolescence is a stage between the world of childhood and that of adulthood, and a period of rapid physical, social and mental development (Ghuman, 1994). All the changes in body, mind and emotions have important implications for the re-formation of personal and social identities. Students' "adolescence cannot be understood as wholly distinct from all that has happened during their previous development, just as this crucial phase of life has in turn implications for their future development,… adjustment and well-being" (Durkin & Conti-Ramsden, 2010, p.106). Additionally, during adolescence some sociocultural aspects such as group affiliation and cultural identity may be acquired (Robinson, 1988).

Nonetheless, in case of L2 adolescents, their sociocultural difficulties in English speaking countries are overwhelming (Youngsook Kim, 2006). In addition to lack of competence in English which can cause frustration, anger and alienation, they need to balance the value systems of their home culture with those of the dominant culture at school. In particular, pointing out problems of Asian ethnic minority adolescents to form their social identity as compared with their peers in English speaking countries, Ghuman (1994) argues that the process of identity formation may lead to L2 adolescents' role confusion; alternatively, the adolescents may successfully synthesize the values of the two

cultures and develop a lifestyle, with the support of their peer group. In other words, they may develop bicultural identity, which integrates and endorses their home culture and the receiving culture (Chen, Benet-Martinez & Bond, 2008).

So far, research on Korean adolescents' cultural challenges and transition in English speaking countries has been rare. Although Youngsook Kim (2006) attempted to examine cultural difficulties of Korean secondary students, her research used a quantitative approach by means of a set of pre-defined categories in questionnaires which is not appropriate for dealing with sociocultural issues in depth (Cooper & Bikowski, 2007). This paper examines Korean adolescent students' sociocultural challenges, adaptation and negotiation in the UK secondary schools by means of a qualitative approach: how they interact with teachers and their colleagues, and construct their sociocultural identities and roles in the institutional and multicultural contexts.

II. CULTURAL THEORIES IN THE CLASSROOM

The research in TESOL over the last several decades has emphasized L2 learners' sociocultural demands related to their attitudes, expectations, norms of interaction, value systems, and cultural characteristics that they bring to classrooms. Tudor (1997) defines classroom culture as a complex term which refers to "attitudes and expectations that shape learners' sociocultural personality in the classroom... The concept certainly incorporates aspects of L2 learners' national or regional cultures, which is also influenced by the social, economic and ideological climate in their home culture and by the peer group sub-culture to which the learners belong" (p.142). Tudor (1997) goes on to argue that sensitivity and flexibility to complex classroom culture are crucial to teaching, and teachers need to adopt different classroom methods in a contextually appropriate manner. This complexity of language classroom culture was outlined by Breen (1985, p.142) who shows the classroom to be a complex social and psychological reality, and Breen (1985) describes eight essential features of the classroom culture: interactive, differentiated, collective, highly normative, asymmetrical, inherently conservative, jointly constructed, and immediately significant.

Given the complexities of classroom culture, Byram (1995), Jin and Cotazzi (1998), and Kramsch (1998) emphasize learners' and teachers' intercultural competence in the language classroom. In our days of frequent border crossings and of multilingual/multicultural foreign language classrooms, the appropriateness of the native speaker norm has outlived its usefulness; Jin and Cortazzi (1998) argue the concept of intercultural competence as follows:

Teachers and students from different cultures need to develop attitudes of being willing

> to learn, understand and appreciate the other's cultures without loss of their own status, role or cultural identity. Mutual understanding and adaptation by choice, rather than assimilation, is stressed, for the latter may cause a psychological barrier and a fear of the loss of L1 identity (p.116).

It seems to be the case that L2 students may become aware of their own culture in the process of learning another language and culture, and hence may be in a better position to develop intercultural competence. Although classroom discourse and dominant culture may disturb the development of intercultural skills, a solution for such difficulties is for participants to become aware of their own cultural presuppositions and those of others, and to develop mutual understanding and flexibility. In doing that, the teacher's role is important to guide learners to learn intercultural skills. Otherwise, they will be in danger of assimilating into the mainstream culture or reducing to build against intercultural competence.

Moreover, Holliday (1999) distinguishes two paradigms of culture: large culture and small culture. The notion of large culture is based on prescribed ethnic, national and international entities and dominates in intercultural issues, and has tended to generalize L2 students, teachers and their educational contexts and make them remote from each other. In contrast, "a small culture paradigm attaches culture to small social groupings of activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour" (p.237), and seems to be based on a non-essentialist and heuristic means in the process of interpreting group behaviours. Holliday gives examples of this with the classroom group where "a small culture will form from scratch when the group first comes together, each member using her/his culture-making ability to form rules and meanings in collaboration with others" (p.248). He argues that the small culture approach is most appropriate for describing classrooms because the world is increasingly multicultural and multinational at every level.

Although the notion of small culture allows us to explain certain features of classroom culture, L2 students and teachers still largely retain their cultural presuppositions and values of home culture, and they continually need cross-cultural communication and intercultural negotiation in our multicultural world. In the multicultural context, the issues of learners' identity and adaptation to the new culture should not be neglected. Thus I will review papers regarding learners' sociocultural identities and cultural adaptation processes in the multicultural classroom next.

III. LEARNERS' SOCIOCULTURAL IDENTITY AND ADAPTATION IN THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

The sociocultural identity of language learners has been considered a crucial element in the multicultural classroom. Duff and Uchida (1997) state that identities of L2 students "depend in large measure upon the institutional and interpersonal contexts in which individuals find themselves, the purposes for their being there, and their personal biographies" (p.452). Therefore sociocultural identities are not static and deterministic constructs that teachers and students bring to the classroom. Rather, in educational practices as in other facets of social life, identities and beliefs are co-constructed, negotiated, and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language. Accordingly, nowadays, identity is viewed on the premise of a social constructivism as a continually emerging and developing process through interaction in the multicultural community.

Fostering the concept of intercultural competence, Jin and Cortazzi (1998) claim not to take 'identity' as a single entity. Rather they suggest identity as a "mosaic sense in which people identify themselves not only in relatively stable terms such as nationality, mother tongue, ethnic group, age and gender, but also in dynamic terms in which aspects of identity are framed, negotiated, confirmed and challenged through communication and contact with others" (p.117-8). Additionally, Pierce (1995) proposes that power relations play a crucial role in social interactions between language learners and target language speakers. He thus argues that social identity of the language learner must be understood with reference to larger and inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction. Moreover, Wenger (1998) states that "the mix of participation and non-participation that shapes our identities has to do with communities in which we become invested, but it also has to do with our ability to shape the meanings that define these communities" (p.188). She thus proposes a dual process of identity formation: identification and negotiability. In sum, the concept of learners' identity can be a process of continual emergence and participatory negotiation which create complex social meanings with power relations depending on social contact with others.

Adaptation is defined as a process for an individual to suspend or change his or her native culture to learn and accommodate some of the new cultural norms (Myles & Cheng, 2003). Cultural adaptation in the classroom can be seen as a process of adjustment or modification of learners' identity. Chen, et al. (2008) divide individuals' cultural adaptation into 4 categories: "assimilation (identification mostly with the receiving culture), integration (high identification with both cultures), separation (identification mostly with the culture of origin), or marginalization (low identification with both cultures)" (p.804-5). When learners adopt the integration strategy, they may incline toward biculturalism, which has "a positive impact on intellectual development and subjective well-being" (p.805).

Clearly, adaptation is not a deterministic term; it is a continual emergence through classroom interaction and learners' development. For the L2 learner, cultural adaptation does not mean assimilation into the mainstream culture. Rather it means understanding the other culture, behaving appropriately in the other cultural environment without losing one's original cultural identity. To do that, as Jin and Cortazzi (1998) put it, participants need to be aware of their own culture of learning and communication and be able to explain them to others, and be willing to understand the values and behaviours of people from another culture. Preferably, they should be able to communicate to discuss the differences of two cultures, and negotiate a way both sides accept. What is more, L2 learners' desire to participate appropriately in various social situations and willingness to converse with peers and teachers of other nationalities are requirements for adapting well to the culture (Myles & Cheng, 2003).

The classroom culture in the UK by and large reflects the Anglophone and Western-European cultures (Ghuman, 1994), and Asian youngsters like Korean adolescents in the UK mostly live with two cultures in this study: one of the home and the other of the school. This paper aims to examine the views of Korean adolescents who have been educated in the UK but who are still influenced by the families' traditions and values, in the process of cultural adaptation and identity negotiation in the British classroom. My research questions for this study were as follows:

(1) How do Korean adolescents perceive their sociocultural adaptation and challenges in the British classroom?
(2) How do they view their identities in the classroom?

In doing this research, I will consider the classroom culture in the UK as a whole, rather than limit my analysis to the language learning context.

IV. METHOD

1. Participants

The participants of this study were eight Korean adolescents (4 males and 4 females), aged thirteen to sixteen. For this study, I asked a group of Korean students who were attending a Korean church at a town in the outskirts of London to be volunteers of my study in January, 2010. Eight students volunteered to participate in my research. All students had prior experience studying in Korea, and came to the UK with their parents as immigrants or expatriates. They have studied for about 1 to 7 years in secondary schools at

the town. I requested they write personal details of their previous schools and current schools to identify their school history (see Table 1 for their profiles).

Table 1
The Profile of Korean Adolescent Participants

Name	Age	Sex	Years of studying in the UK	Previous years of studying in other countries outside the UK
Junehwan	16	m	2 years	US 4 years, Korea 5 years
Eunsoo	16	f	6 years	Korea 6 years
Sookyung[1]	15	f	3 years	Korea 8 years
Jaein	15	m	7 years	Korea 4 years
Youngjae	15	m	4 years	Korea 7 years
Younghwa	15	m	3 years	Korea 8 years
Narae	14	f	5 years	Korea 5 years
Sooyoun	13	f	1 year	Korea 8 years

2. Instruments

For the purposes of this research, I used qualitative approaches such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion as instruments. This was important to elicit in depth discussions and insights of the nature of Korean adolescents' sociocultural challenges and adaptation, the process of identity formation, and the reasons of their responses from the views of the participants themselves (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) in the UK classroom. Semi-structured interviews were administered to with specific questions prepared in advance and at the same time there was flexibility as the interviews progressed between an interviewer and interviewees. Focus group discussion was also useful because in its "contrived setting, bringing together specifically chosen population to discuss a particular issue" it enables to "produce a large amount of data in a short period of time" (Cohen, et al., 2000, p.288). This open discussion provided additional benefits to stimulate responses among individuals sharing similar experiences, and to triangulate interview data. In order to investigate research questions, I asked the interview questions (Appendix) individually to informants and let them freely have focus group discussion based on the same topics.

[1] Sookyung lived in the US for 3 years during infancy, before attending formal schools in Korea.

3. Procedures

Firstly, I interviewed volunteers individually for about 15 minutes per student, and then asked them to have focus group discussion for 30 minutes in the same room, while recording their voices. I asked the questions to them both in Korean and English for interviews and focus group discussion, and students were allowed to choose to reply and discuss either in English or Korean. In doing the interviews and focus group discussion, I realized that students were somewhat stiff and not fully involved in the discussion. Although they took part in interviews and discussion, the result was unsatisfactory for my research. My analysis of the problem was that because we had met before only once, during the previous week, we did not know each other well. Students considered me an outsider of their peer group and did not want to share their problems and feelings with me. What is more, they were embarrassed by taking part in interviews and discussion in the formal setting. To gather additional data, I decided to interview them again in more informal settings. Then I met the interviewees individually or in groups of two or three in a quiet snack bar, and I interviewed them by recording their speech. In the second interview, students seemed to be more relaxed and comfortable, and were able to discuss freely their sociocultural problems and lives in their classroom.

4. Data Analysis

I transcribed or translated the participants' words into English for citation and further data analysis. Firstly I organized my raw data according to what was found from the interviews and focus group discussion. Then I attempted to take the data holistically in view of my research questions and rearranged and categorized them under the major themes that occurred repetitively. Data analysis is not simply a description of the data, but a process in which the researcher interpret the data (Pawney & Watt, 1987 in Li, 1998, p.685). Therefore my own interpretation of data was integrated in the final analysis and discussion of data.

V. RESULTS

1. Sociocultural Adaptation

1) Participation in the UK Classroom

The degrees of participation of Korean adolescents may indicate the extent to which they

adapt in the UK classroom. They perceived that their participation depended on various factors such as English proficiency, periods of staying in England, personality, and preferences for teaching approaches. English competence was shown as the one of the crucial elements for Korean students' participation in class. If they were confident of speaking English, they noted that they participated in discussions and questioning in the same degree as British students:

> When I came here first, I didn't have any friends in my classroom, so I didn't like being in the classroom with friends, but I liked the lessons. I didn't take part in discussions much and ask questions except when it was absolutely compulsory. Then when I became more confident, I realized I could speak English quite well, and I kept on asking questions. Now I ask as many questions as British people do, and sometimes British people want to ask me questions. (Younghwa, January, 2010, interview)

Also the duration of study in the UK classroom affected the degree of students' participation. Jaein told us that he kept quiet, because he was still not used to the new environment. This is because cross-cultural understanding and cultural adaptation does not happen suddenly (Robinson, 1988), and it will take time for students to participate in class with appropriate classroom rules and discourse.

> I tend to be quiet and silent in classrooms, because I've been in this new school only for several months. It's getting better. (Jaein, January, 2010, interview)

Depending on personalities, if students are active and willing to participate in the class, they replied that they asked questions a lot and discussed actively in class. Internal motivation and intellectual curiosity encouraged Eunsoo to participate in questioning actively.

> In fact, I ask too many questions, because that's my personality. I can't stand if there's something I don't know, although it's a tiny thing. I continually ask teachers questions. I think teachers quite like that. They like enthusiastic students. (Eunsoo, January, 2010, interview)

It can be said that teachers' positive feedback for Eunsoo also facilitated her participation in the class. By the same token, Korean adolescents' learning styles and preferences for teaching approaches influenced their participation in activities and practices in the class.

2) Relationships with Colleagues and Teachers in the UK Classroom

When Korean students were talented and capable of study subjects, arts or sports, they perceived that they maintained good relationships with peers of other nationalities and gained popularity in the classroom regardless of nationalities.

> Basically, I think there is no difference between friends of other nationality and me. If someone is kind, plays sports well or studies hard, then he can easily find friends. Among teachers and students, Korean students are popular because we are good at math and science. (Jaein, January, 2010, interview)

In addition, Korean adolescents were likely to have fairly good relationships with teachers in the UK. They indicated that teachers' attitudes are friendly and fair, that teachers treat students equally, not showing any favoritism or racism among students. Teachers were even shown to be considerate of language problems of L2 students. Youngjae thus preferred the relationship between students and teachers in the UK to that in Korea.

> We speak friendly and easily with teachers… I think this relationship between teachers and students is better than in Korea. Teachers don't show racism, and value us equally. Sometimes when some foreign students can't speak English, teachers consider them more than other students. (Youngjae, January, 2010, interview)

Participants in the class did not seem to take racial or national differences seriously, and in terms of class activities there might be no differences among nations. This is probably because the British classroom is already multicultural; many students come from diverse cultures.

3) Differences between Korean and British Educational Systems

Korean students clearly distinguished between the educational systems of Korea and the UK. They pointed out that the British classroom is preferred in terms of the understanding-based learning, the degree of freedom to speak out, choices of preferred subjects, changing classrooms depending on subjects, and the smaller number of students in the class.

> I think the classroom here is better than schools in Korea. I can speak more freely and there are more chances to speak out in the classroom because the number of students is smaller. (Youngjae, January, 2010, interview)

> In Korea, I had to study all subjects equally well, but here, I can choose my favorite subjects and it's enough if I study those subjects only to take GCSE. I think, in that sense, it's easier here. (Eunsoo, January, 2010, interview)

As a result, many Korean students seemed to enjoy and be satisfied in British classrooms. British classrooms were perceived to be less pressured, efficient and enjoyable, and Korean students appeared to get along with peers of other nationalities well. They had the same degree of satisfaction in the British school as in the Korean school.

> Studying itself is very good and I like the classroom environment here. I especially like Science experiments, and enjoy it with little pressure. I like the British school, because it's fun, it's the same as the Korean school. I like my friends and they like me. (Youngwha, January, 2010, interview)

This signals that Youngwha adapted well and felt relatively comfortable in the UK classroom, which might also facilitate his intellectual learning and cognitive development.

2. Sociocultural Difficulties

1) Perceived Sociocultural Challenges

Nonetheless, some respondents mentioned some sociocultural difficulties mostly in relation to the lack of English proficiency in the early years. English proficiency was considered the most critical aspect of adapting to peer group activities. With his difficulties of English, Youngjae cautiously considered the situation as racial discrimination, noticing power relationships between competent English users and non-users.

> At the start, I felt a kind of racism. At first I couldn't speak English, so they didn't allow me to be in the football team. I think English is the biggest matter in the classroom. (Youngjae, January, 2010, interview)

Additionally, Younghwa and Sooyoun pointed out difficulties when they faced new subjects, sport activities and types of tests that they had not experienced before.

> At first, I was embarrassed because I had to do everything in English, and it was very difficult to choose subjects because I hadn't learned those subjects in Korea... Also I was embarrassed when I couldn't understand how to play cricket at all. (Younghwa, January, 2010, interview)

When I took a test[2], British students knew how to present it well, but I couldn't get any idea how to do it and I was embarrassed. (Sooyoun, January, 2010, interview)

Besides the difficulties due to language incompetence and differences of educational systems, Korean adolescents had sociocultural discords due to different expectations and behaviours from those of teachers. Sooyoun expected teachers to take the initiative and did not want to bother the teacher, but the teacher was annoyed with Sooyoun's passive attitude.

I think, sometimes, teachers tell me off without any reason, and I feel upset and angry. Once my friend returned a book to my teacher during my absence, and I waited until the teacher gave it to me because I didn't want to bother him, but the teacher told me off because I didn't ask him to give it to me. (Sooyoun, January, 2010, interview)

In reality, it can be said that Sooyoun's attitude was not passive or introverted. Rather, she attempted to be polite to the teacher and believed that not bothering the teacher was more appropriate in that situation according to the classroom norm in Korea. Sooyoun was embarrassed and even upset, because of different expectations between the prior classroom culture of Korea and the current culture in the UK.

2) Strategies

To overcome their sociocultural difficulties and adapt to the new classroom culture, some Korean adolescents attempted to adopt strategies such as acculturation, humanistic approaches, use of capabilities in subjects or sports, willingness to speak with others, and positive and outgoing attitudes. Youngjae, for example, attempted to copy the attitudes and modes of language use of British people, and negotiate cultural differences by engaging in the same hobbies among peers of other nationalities. Moreover his capability in math or other subjects helped him gain confidence and overcome cultural isolation in the class.

I like rugby, and if we have the same hobby, it makes us to be more friendly toward each other... To overcome English difficulties, I asked friends or teachers when I couldn't understand and copied their way of speech and manner. Soon they realized I was good at math, and I became to get along with them. (Youngjae, January, 2010, interview)

Youngwha attempted to take a humanistic approach, being considerate, friendly, tolerant

[2] In the British secondary class, most tests are based on open-ended and subjective questions.

and humorous towards others.

> I think personalities like to be friendly, funny, not bad-tempered, helpful and humorous towards others are important to be popular in the UK classroom. (Youngwha, January, 2010, focus group discussion)

Jaein also made efforts to interact with his classmates, and have positive and active attitudes towards them with an open mind. This helped him to manage the social and cultural discord in the classroom.

> I tried to open my mind to them and I started to speak to them friendly first before they spoke to me. Sometimes I've tried to be chatty and ask questions to classmates. (Jaein, January, 2010, interview)

With the sociocultural difficulties, students had developed strategies of how to manage tensions of the multicultural classroom and continually negotiated the situation. Moreover, whereas most Korean students perceived the British educational system to be easier than the Korean educational system and adapted well, Junhwan and Sookyung demonstrated that they were not properly adapted to the British education. Although they had stayed in the UK for about 2 and 3 years respectively, they still felt as outsiders and were not able to participate well in the British classroom.

> I haven't adapted completely in the British classroom. I want to go back to Korea because it is boring to study here, and in Korea there are more interesting things than here. (Junhwan, January, 2010, interview)

> I still think myself as a visitor in England and haven't gotten myself fully involved in my class yet. So although I play with British friends, I cannot take part in class well. Sometimes, I feel left out and upset. (Sookyung, January, 2010, interview)

These students seemed to be emotionally isolated and unable to participate in practices in the British classroom. Their adaptation seems to have failed and they identified themselves as visitors or outsiders in the British classroom and wished to retreat to the prior classroom in Korea.

3. Perceived Sociocultural Lives outside of the UK Classroom and Identity

Korean participants were well aware of cultural differences of their lives from those of students of other nationalities outside the classroom. Jaein noticed different lifestyles, life

patterns, interests and ways of thinking between Korean students and British classmates.

> Whereas British students talk about night clubs, pubs, parties, the amount they drank last night and so on, Korean students usually chat about TV stars and computer games. We talk more privately and deeply with Korean friends... There is a difference in lifestyles and the way to spend time after school between Korean and British students, but at school we are the same. (Jaein, January, 2010, interview)

Furthermore, most students replied that among Koreans they felt more bonds and close relationships no matter how long they had stayed in England. They seemed to have stronger social emotional identity as Koreans.

> Korean people are more kind to each other and know more about each other. Korean friends laugh more and talk about funny things and we do kinds of laugh each other as well, but in England we are more conservative, and respect each other, I think. I enjoy more with Korean friends, because I don't need to hide anything. When I meet British friends, they are talking about yesterday dinner and eating steak, but I can hardly say about eating rice and Gimchi, so I have to hide myself. With Korean friends, I can be myself more. (Narae, January, 2010, focus group discussion)

Korean students appeared to have closer relationships and psychological bonds with Korean peers than students of other nationalities. This is because they share emotional traits, cultural norms and life patterns with other Korean friends. Nevertheless, in the UK classroom they hardly recognized differences between Koreans and students of other nationalities, and participated well in the class activities with students of other nationalities. At the same time, Korean adolescents enjoyed attending the Korean school during weekends, and demonstrated interest and curiosity in their home culture and nation. However, some of the students like Junwhan considered it a burden to pursue both Korean and British educational curricula.

> I found it fun, and if I didn't go to the Korean school, I couldn't really know about Korea. I think it's really good that I know about my country and people. (Narae, January, 2010, focus group discussion)
> The Korean school on Saturdays itself is very useful, I think, but, sometimes, I feel that I want to live like British students on weekends. They can play cricket or enjoy their lives during resting time. (Junhwan, January, 2010, focus group discussion)

Korean participants thus perceived that the Korean school on weekends was useful and

interesting, and were well aware of the importance of knowing about their home country and people, probably because they identified themselves clearly as Koreans.

VI. DISCUSSION

The degrees of satisfaction and participation of learners indicate the extent to which they adapt to the classroom. Many Korean adolescents in this study seemed to enjoy, feel comfortable and adapt well in the British educational system and classroom culture. Depending on English proficiency, length of stay in England, learner's personality, aptitude in subjects or sports, learning styles, and preferences for teaching approaches, they participated in the classroom practices to different degrees. Given Lee (2009) also identified factors that influence Korean graduate students' oral participation in the US class: English proficiency, different sociocultural values and academic practices, individual differences, and classroom environment.

Firstly, English competence and communication skills were one of the most important factors for Korean adolescents to participate in the class activities and affiliate with colleagues of other nationalities, and as a result, language difficulties at the early period at the British school had caused a range of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; Durkin and Conti-Ramsden (2010) stress the demands of communicational skills for adolescents' school lives. Myles and Cheng (2003) also note that L2 graduate students' communication through English is pivotal to the intercultural adaptation processes at the Canadian university. With the difficulties of English, Youngjae recognized power relationships between competent English users and incompetent users, as he could not join group activities or gain recognition among peers. The lack of English competence may negatively impact his adaptation processes in the class. Despite the fact that, little attention is often paid to L2 adolescents' special language background and needs in secondary schools in English speaking countries (Enright, 2010), and effective ESL programmes are required especially for L2 adolescents to develop English communication skills.

Next, Korean adolescents in my study indicated that duration of studying in the UK had influenced the degree of their adaptation and participation. It may well be explained by the fact that learners' sociocultural adaptation, identities and roles in the classroom are continual emerging and becoming processes (Duff & Uchita, 1997). Therefore these processes needs time to modify and adjust until students achieve harmonious relationships with peers and environment, and participate confidently in the multicultural classroom. This result contradicts Korean graduates' cultural difficulties in the classroom regardless of the length of study in the US (Given Lee, 2009). This is possibly because, although it takes time, adaptation and cultural mixing more effectively take place during adolescence

(Robinson, 1988) than adulthood. Moreover, L2 graduates learn about host culture mostly through students with similar cultural and linguistic background and hardly contact English native language peers (Myles & Cheng, 2003). As a result, compared to L2 adolescents, L2 graduates' cultural adaptation rarely occurs although they study in English speaking countries for a long time.

Additionally, Korean adolescents' personality, learning styles, preferences to teaching approaches, and capabilities in sports, arts or subjects were also associated with cultural adaptation in the classroom. Eunsoo had an active personality and enough curiosity for knowledge and school subjects, and participated a lot in questioning in class. When Eunsoo had positive feedback and encouragement from teachers, he became more enthusiastic about class activities and learning in the British classroom. Thus teachers' reactions to students' questions have a crucial impact on their future participation (Given Lee, 2009). Learners' learning styles and preferences to teaching approaches are also important factors in the classroom cultural adaptation. If students' learning styles are harmonious with the instructional methods, students are likely to perform well, feel confident, and experience low anxiety (Oxford, 2001).

Students perceived that they maintained fair relationships or friendships with British classmates, and that there was no difference between themselves and British friends in the classroom. This shows that, during adolescence, group affiliation and cross-cultural understanding emerge relatively easily compared with other life periods (Robinson, 1988). Students, no matter what their nationalities are, came to share their own cohesive groupism in the classroom. With the distinctive tendency of group affiliation and cultural unification of adolescence, they might develop perspectives of British classroom culture and understanding of others (Youngsook Kim, 2006). Therefore, adolescents are in a better position to understand different cultures and to collaborate with peers of other nationalities.

Moreover, participants were able to recognize differences between their home and British classrooms, in terms of educational systems, sociocultural attitudes, beliefs, roles of teachers and students, modes of communication, and academic styles in classroom conditions. That is, they have more room to develop mutual understanding and intercultural competence, not losing their own identity in the multicultural classroom. Most students replied that the British educational system is more efficient and comfortable, and easier compared with the Korean classroom. Korean classroom culture has been shown to be formal and hierarchical in the relationships between teachers and students, and students tend to be quiet and rarely ask questions in the classroom (Given Lee, 2009). When they were in the British classroom, they perceived liberal environments of speaking and discussing with teachers and allowance to study only their favorite subjects, and they felt the experience was easier and more manageable than that of the Korean classroom.

Nonetheless, several Korean students experienced various sociocultural challenges in the

UK classroom mostly at the beginning of their stay in UK. With different appropriateness and norms between Korean and British classrooms, Sooyoun was just confused and felt angry due to the teacher's perceived unfair treatment of her. In the multicultural classroom, however, she felt embarrassed and had not learned how to negotiate the tension between two cultures and participate constructively and creatively in student-teacher interaction in the classroom. She did not attempt to find a way to explain her presuppositions and different modes of politeness to the teacher. The teacher might expect Korean students to behave actively and creatively rather than just relying on teachers, and feel frustrated by students' introverted attitudes, judging students from other cultures according to his/her own cultural values and behaviours. Nevertheless his/her hasty demonstration of dissatisfaction with students' behaviours may not be helpful for students, because this can lead to communication barriers which "can lead to misunderstandings and potentially insulting remarks and behaviours" (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p.252) between students and teachers. Teachers need to understand the gaps between students' home culture and teachers' expectations and be positive and open-minded about students' cultural differences. Therefore, with the cultural discords in the multicultural setting, the crucial point is whether both L2 learners and teachers can manage the problems constructively, build intercultural competence and collaborate.

In the classroom, Korean students had to continually negotiate between their home cultural norms and the classroom rules (Given Lee, 2009). With cultural difficulties, they attempted to take various strategies: positive and active attitudes, and 'culture-making ability' (Holliday, 1999) with others, the same hobbies, decent attitudes towards others, and showing up their talents in subjects and sports.

While Korean students shared common groupism and formed a community with the same cultural attitudes in the British classroom, at the same time they retained their home cultures mostly outside the classroom. Most students felt stronger psychological and emotional bonds and closer relationships with their Korean friends. Moreover, recognizing benefits of attending the Korean school during weekends, Korean adolescents showed strong affection towards their home culture and nation, which matches the findings of Youngsook Kim (2006). Chinese graduate students also felt more comfortable with spending their leisure time with students' from similar ethnic backgrounds (Myles & Cheng, 2003). Although students from different cultural backgrounds have their distinctive preferences and patterns of their social lives, they at the same time shared classroom culture and participated in the academic practices in the UK. Therefore most Korean students seemed to effectively develop bicultural identity, behaving flexibly both in the British classroom and outside of the classroom. On the other hand, Junwhan and Sookyung could not adapt well and wished to return to the home classroom culture. They were not able to participate in the classroom practices with peers and could not negotiate meanings

in the British classroom. They even wanted to be separated from the British classroom culture and identified themselves as visitors or outsiders. This may negatively impact those students, because they may lose invaluable opportunities to learn cross-cultural understanding and identity negotiation. Their constructive participation and open-mindedness toward other cultures are essential requirements to develop bicultural identity, which has a positive impact on their emotional and mental development in order to manage their school lives successfully and eventually lead to their whole learning, as Chen, et al. (2008) proclaim.

VII. CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to examine Korean adolescents' cultural adaptation and identity negotiation in the UK classroom from their points of view. Although the samples were small, the qualitative research tools of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion contributed to our understanding of Korean learners' adaptation and cultural challenges, because they freely reflected and talked about their sociocultural lives in the UK secondary classroom. Also as all adolescent participants were volunteers in a region, I may have failed to select the appropriate samples for my research. This may have caused a biased result and over-generalized perceptions of all Korean adolescents' lives in the UK.

Nonetheless this study has had a positive outcome. This study firstly has demonstrated that factors of English proficiency, duration of stay in the UK, personality, learning styles, aptitudes in subjects, and preferences for particular teaching approaches were interwoven to determine Korean adolescents' cultural adaptation processes in the classroom. Secondly, Korean students were in a good position to recognize differences of two classroom cultures and educational systems, and develop group affiliation, intercultural skills and bicultural identity. Alternatively, Korean adolescents could be in danger of separating from the British culture and unable to adapt to the multicultural classroom, which may lead to cultural isolation, anxiety and harmful effects on their academic and emotional development. To avoid cultural discords and to be a good learner in the multicultural classroom, communication and interaction with peers and teachers of other nationalities, intercultural competence, flexibility and identity negotiation are important issues especially during the developmental stage of adolescence for Korean students.

As an increasing number of Korean adolescents go to Anglophone countries to study (Youngsook Kim, 2006), it is crucial that English educators need to employ programmes of teaching which are appropriate to sociocultural norms in Korea and elsewhere. The teaching should incorporate an awareness of students' cross-cultural communication, intercultural competence, and the flexibility and bicultural identity which may be crucially

required in the multicultural context. In addition, given that the culture education based on the 7th National Curriculum in Korea was not shown to be helpful for Korean adolescents (Youngsook Kim, 2006), the culture education should be strengthened and adjusted for the needs of Korean secondary level learners in the diversifying world of the 21st century.

As one's cultural adaptation and identity formation do not lie only in the way one talks or perceives about oneself (Wenger, 1998), further study of British or other ethnic minority students' or teachers' views on Korean students' lives in multicultural classrooms can provide additional information on the characteristics of complex classroom culture. Classrooms can thus be viewed as a vehicle for improving sociocultural relations and communication among diverse cultural groups in the society of globalization.

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APPENDIX

Questions for Interviews and Focus Group Discussion

(1) Do you enjoy your lessons and being in a classroom with your friends and teachers?
(2) Do you ask questions or have discussions in class?
(3) Have you ever noticed a difference between you and your British classmates in the way you think/ talk/ behave?
(4) Do you enjoy going to the Korean school on weekends? Why?
(5) What are differences between a Korean classroom/education and a British classroom?
(6) Have you ever had difficulties in the British school? What have you done to overcome the difficulties?

Inyoung Shin
Department of General Education
Namseoul University
21 Maejuri, Seonghwan-eup, Cheonan-si, Choongnam, 330-707
Tel: (041) 580-2129 / H.P.: 010-9115-3776
Email: iyyoo@hotmail.com

Miyang Cha
Department of General Education
Namseoul University
21 Maejuri, Seonghwan-eup, Cheonan-si, Choongnam, 330-707
Tel: (041) 580-2558 / H.P.: 010-5533-9634
Email: miyangcha@nsu.ac.kr

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