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**Title:** Chronotopic identities of learners of Korean as a heritage language in Finland : Who decides their language priorities?

**Year:** 2023

**Version:** Published version

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**Please cite the original version:**

Sun, D. (2023). Chronotopic identities of learners of Korean as a heritage language in Finland : Who decides their language priorities?. Apples : Journal of Applied Language Studies, 17(3), 44-62. <https://doi.org/10.47862/apples.115484>

# Chronotopic identities of learners of Korean as a heritage language in Finland: Who decides their language priorities?

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*The noticeable growth of the number of immigrant pupils has led to the growing needs for heritage language education in Finland. However, language studies have tended to be mainly focused on the national languages and English at regular schools. In this article, I attempt to explore the identities of the young heritage language learners based on the learners' personal multilingualism and lived experience. Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, the time-space configuration manifested in the learners' utterances, has served as a key resource for analysing the data of learners' discourses on their language identities. Four distinctive chronotopes have been detected and implicated to frame various identities as language learners; the contemporaneous, the biographical, the social-historical chronotope and the 'adventure time of everyday life.' The findings show how the exploration of these chronotopes about the learners' language repertoires and practices make visible the young learners' playful sense-making process of constructing their identities. It has further led to an implication for language classrooms, where the learners' agency to make sense of the identities from their own lives needs to be respected and encouraged.*

**Keywords:** heritage language learners, identities, chronotopes, heritage language classroom

## 1 Introduction

Finland has long been assumed to be rather monocultural and monolingual (Tervonen, 2014). Since 1990, however, the situation has been changing mainly due to migration (Linderoos, 2016). The proportion of speakers of languages other than the two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, has steadily grown (Tarnanen & Palviainen, 2018): in 1990, the proportion was 0.5%, whereas in 2021 it was 8% and included 150 different languages such as Russian, Estonian, English and Somali, among others (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). This recent phenomenon raises issues related to multilingualism and language education in relation to the integration of migrants in Finland (Bärlund & Kauppinen, 2017).

There has been a visible phenomenon in the increase in the provision for heritage language ('HL' hereafter) education for migrant pupils that encourages them to use their HL as a medium of learning parallel to Finnish (Mustaparta,

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eISSN: 1457-9863

Publisher: University of Jyväskylä, Language Campus

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<https://apples.journal.fi>

<https://doi.org/10.47862/apples.115484>

2015). In fact, Finland is one of the few European countries which has promoted such a progressive curriculum for HL teaching compared to the curricula of other countries including Sweden (Ansó Ros et al., 2021). It has deliberately emphasized the pupils' multicultural identities and language awareness, seemingly indicating positive conditions for HL development. Being better promoted, however, does not necessarily mean better implemented.

As Melo-Pfeifer (2019) pointed out, studies on HL education demonstrate that a monolingual and monoglossic mindset is still prevalent in European school contexts. For example, Laursen and Mogensen (2016) indicated that multilingual children, especially in the immigration context, are often linked to static and dehumanizing notions from ingrained and often negative perceptions of emigration from non-Western countries with their literacy crises, falling GDP and lack of competitiveness, and so forth (see also Holm & Laursen, 2011). In fact, HL in Finland have been usually taught in voluntary or extra-curricular maintenance courses for migrant children as it has been done in many other countries (Ansó Ros et al., 2021). In the mainstream courses, particularly in primary and secondary schools, most pupils learn English in addition to the national languages, Finnish and Swedish at regular schools (Pyykkö, 2017). Pyykkö (2017) indicated the reasons for the one-sidedness of language choices at school contexts have been attributed to a lack of municipal resources and to attitudes in the society. This situation could complicate the HL education as a significant investment in individual learners' multilingualism and as a contribution to the diversification of Finland (Bärlund & Kauppinen, 2017).

To appreciate the importance of investing in HL education, we need to more thoroughly understand the significance of the HL learning contexts for the individual learners' subjective identity development (Leeman, 2015). I thus step away from such views as 'monolingual-competence measurements', 'comparisons with the native speakers' or a perceived lack of use or command of the domain language, which is Finnish in this study, by the HLLs (Heritage Language Learners; Laursen & Mogensen, 2016, p. 565; Leeman, 2015). I aim rather to explore the identities of the young HLL based on multilingualism in their personal lived experience. This kind of study can thus help us to better understand the role of HL and to justify the need for HL education. Completed in a HL education context, it can also help us to better understand the support that a HL education community can provide for developing processes in identity development.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Definition of Heritage Language (HL) learners

HL education has been conceptualized by various scholars and from various perspectives (Leeman, 2015). Recently, research has underlined HL's 'critical role in the process of pupils' identity formation or transformation' (Nicholls, 2005, p. 164). In line with this focus, increasing number of researchers have begun to conduct empirical research and particularly on the identity of HLLs, and to investigate the relationship between the learners' experiences of HL and their sense of themselves, and the various contexts in which HL learners construct their identities (Leeman, 2015).

This study likewise focuses on individual HLL's subjective learning process and identity construction. In its definition of HL, it relies on the definition use by Dávila (2017). The term HL, in her study, was referred to as a language of one of the ethnolinguistic communities other than national languages such as Swedish (Dávila, 2017). Drawing on her description of HLLs, I refer to them as students whose home language differs from the national languages spoken in Finland, namely Finnish and Swedish.

## 2.2 HL learner identities

Reflecting and theorising on identity within sociocultural understanding of language learning in the last two decades has foregrounded the varied socially constructed learning contexts (Block, 2007; Norton, 2000; Pietikäinen & Dufva, 2006; Val & Vinogradova, 2010), where identity is viewed as dynamic and emergent (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). It is affected and mediated by the learners' language learning and language use (Shi, 2006). Norton (2014) further defines identity as an individual learner's understanding of one's "relationship to the world, how this relationship is constructed in *time and space*" (pp. 60–61).

These definitions of identity form basis for the exploration of HLLs' identity in this study. I aim at viewing the identity of the HL learners, who are bi- or multilingual in Korean, Finnish and other language(s) (He, 2004), as a process of continual emerging and becoming, a process that is visible in what they become and how they manifest themselves in everyday life (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; He, 2004), rather than as a collection of static attributes or as some inner mental properties independent of social contexts. To be more specific, the identity of the HL learners, in this study, will be depicted as a process of identifying in *time and space*. Identities are thus continually being negotiated and transformed (Norton, 2014). In line with this kind of definition of identity, I explore how multiple identity positions manifest themselves and how the participants move between them in different language contexts and in different configurations of time and space (Pietikäinen & Dufva, 2006). To do this, I apply in the analysis of the data the concept of *chronotope* as it is used by the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981).

## 2.3 Chronotopic approach to HL learners' identities

Bakhtin's (1981) notion of the chronotope was adopted to foreground the interplay of *time and space* in the HL learners' utterances manifested in their language learning situations and to explore their shifting identities according to these time-space zones (Brown & Renshaw, 2006). The term *chronotope* was adapted by Bakhtin (1981) in his discussion of time and space in the novel. Bakhtin (1981) discovered that a variety of events in Ancient Greek romances take place in a significantly different framework of time and space, with characters ranging across very different kinds of geographical and social landscapes from in nineteenth-century European novels (Bakhtin, 1981; Woolard, 2013). Bakhtin (1981) defines it as follows: "We will give the name chronotope (literally, 'timespace') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (pp. 84–85). He used this term to point toward the inseparability of time and space in human social action and to the effects of this inseparability on it. Bakhtin (1981) identifies the "literary artistic

chronotope” where “spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole,” so that the chronotope could be seen as “a formally constitutive category of literature” (p. 84). Through chronotopes, Bakhtin (1981) was able to address the co-occurrence of events from different times and places in discourses, the fact that shifts between chronotopes involve shifts of an entire range of human characters and yield unique effects on the characters.

Bakhtin’s idea that different configuration of time and space are linked to different specific forms of personhood (Woolard, 2013) and the construction of specific forms of identity can thus be conditioned by the chronotopes (Blommaert & De Fina, 2017) has been taken up by scholars in the area of discourse studies to shed light on issues such as migration, ideology, history, and identity (Karimzad & Catedral, 2018). For example, Woolard’s (2013) study on the ethnolinguistic identity of working-class Castilian-speaking youth in the Barcelona area analysed their accounts of language and identity using the notion of chronotope and illustrated how different meanings to personal experiences and linguistic practices were developed according to the different chronotopes. She noted that the informants expressed either positive or negative responses to the politicization of language and linguistic ideologies, which have drawn on different chronotopes such as biographical, cosmopolitan or historical. Karimzad and Catedral (2018) made an ethnographic study on the ethnolinguistic identities in Azerbaijani and Uzbek communities and discussed the individual subjectivity, power tensions and dialogue between disparate chronotopes according to the different nations such as Azerbaijani, Uzbek and Russia represented among the participants. These studies did not merely prove the utility of chronotopes for explaining a variety of ideologies and viewpoints on the language practices and identities of the participants; they further illustrated that the complexity of identities can be understood through different chronotopes (Karimzad & Catedral, 2018).

Drawing on these studies, this study seeks to bring together the young HLLs’ accounts of their language repertoires and practices and to explore how the chronotopes can make their various identities and identity construction processes visible in their accounts (Woolard, 2013). It further seeks to investigate how different chronotopes will serve as a useful means to understand the HLLs’ complexity of identities and their development of personal linguistic repertoires as a means of negotiating complex social environments, including the HL classroom (Dávila, 2017).

## 2.4 Chronotope as an identity frame

As mentioned previously, identity of HLLs in this study is signified as dynamic, processual and emergent, and constructed by diverse sociohistorical contexts across different languages and differences in time and space (Pietikäinen & Dufva, 2006), rather than as static, independent of context and possessed as an inner property (Leeman, 2015).

This means, in this study, I seek for the individual learners’ personal bi-/multilingualism in the shape of their subjectivity, lived experiences and complex learning process (Blommaert & De Fina, 2017). To foreground the views on the HLLs’ identities by processes rather than static entities, the concept of *chronotope* will serve as a useful means to frame the learners’ identities (Ritella et al., 2021). Chronotopes will help focus on the learners’ actual dynamic action existing in real

spatial-temporal contexts (Wertsch, 1995, p. 62). They will further help analyse the data to make visible the essential interrelationship between time and space and the learners' identities in segmenting the discourse based on the occurrence of shifts in space-time (see Leander, 2001).

Two interrelated questions have accordingly guided this study: (1) What kind of chronotopes inform the identity construction of the HL learners? (2) What kind of development do these chronotopes promote? Answering these questions will make use of the chronotopes as a way of mapping the external conditions (Where am I?) and internal experiences (Who am I?) of the HL learners in developing their identities.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 *Setting and participants*

As part of a longitudinal ethnographic research project on the learners of Korean as HL, this study was conducted in a weekend Korean heritage language school, which is located in Helsinki, Finland. This school was established and has been run since 2008 by the Overseas Koreans Foundation which comes under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea (Overseas Korean Act, 2015). The school has been partly funded by the Overseas Koreans Foundation and in part the tuition fee which the parents pay for their children. The students (age 4–18) come voluntarily to the school. They are divided into five different classes according to their ages and proficiency in Korean. It has been run every Saturday for two hours from ten o'clock in the morning till noon as a form of a part-time school.

The participants of this study were the four students from the oldest group (age 11–18) in the school. The information about their background was gathered by the initial meeting with the principal of the school and parents when the parents made the applications for the children to join the school. Table 1 shows their different backgrounds in relation to their language uses and practices. Some of the students are from a Korean-Finnish family. The others have only Korean parents. They were either born or have lived in Finland for over 10 years. Their exposure to the Korean language and their levels of proficiency in Korean thus vary as a consequence of their different backgrounds.

I am the researcher of this study and a female native speaker of Korean, and I am also one of the Korean language instructors in the school, and my primary duty was to teach the Korean language to the oldest group which the participants of this study belong to. Prior to the data collection, I informed the school, all the students (the participants and other students in the group) and their parents about the purpose of my research and obtained their agreement to participate. During the data collection procedure, I shared the plans and directions for my study, and sometimes sought their input to clarify and interpret certain events and situations in relation to this study. The participants were told that their participation in any research-related activities in class would be voluntary. All the names reported in this study, as given in Table 1, are pseudonyms.

**Table 1.** Background information for the participants (at the time of data collection)

No.	Pseudonym	Gender (F/M)	Age range	Period of stay in Finland	Parents' first language		Dominant Language	
					Mother	Father	At home	At (regular Finnish) school
1	Wonhyo (WH)	M	16~18	Born	Korean	Finnish	Finnish, Korean	Finnish
2	Gyumyeong (GM)	F		Born	Korean	Korean	Korean, Finnish	Finnish
3	Seungjae (SJ)	M	12~14	11 yrs	Korean	Korean	Korean, Finnish	Finnish
4	Yooyeon (YY)	F		Born	Korean	Korean	Korean, Finnish	Finnish
5	Teacher	F	40~45	2 yrs	Korean	Korean	Korean	N/A

### 3.2 Data collection

This study draws on data from a longitudinal classroom case research on the Korean heritage language classroom (February, 2018 ~ August, 2019). To collect the data from some parts of the activities I performed with the students in the classroom, I positioned myself as what Edwards and Burns (2016) referred as a ‘teacher-researcher’ (p. 736). I assigned myself the roles of language teacher who aimed at improving their Korean language proficiency and of ethnographer who aimed at exploring HLLs’ identities in the light of their multilingual repertoires and lived experience (Edwards & Burns, 2016). My dual role afforded the opportunity to draw on both theory in academia and practice in the onsite classroom (Nolen & Putten, 2007). The strong links between academia and the actual practice setting helped improve the connection between theory and practice, with my tacit knowledge of the teaching profession and following the educational changes in the school in real time (Nikkanen, 2019). However, drawing on Macfarlane’s (2009) advice on the positionality of a teacher-researcher as a moral agent when conducting this kind of participatory ethnography, I was cautious to avoid imposing personal bias in the data and also to avoid my research agenda affecting the students’ learning in the classroom. Being ‘a double agent’ (Macfarlane, 2009, p. 59) in developing the position of a teacher-researcher has brought research-based agenda to classroom practice and in turn practice-based information from the classroom to research, and in that dual process I strove to maintain ethical honesty and respect when deciding which practices were to be taught and researched and how to act within these practices both as a teacher and a researcher (TENK, 2009, p. 8).

The data for this study include the excerpts from the teacher diary, transcribed audio- or video-recordings of the classroom interaction and the participants’ portfolio gathered from the language-related activities they did in class. To begin with, I had the research aim to explore their language identities while I was leading the classroom. In observing their acts and accounts about their language repertoires and practices while they were engaged in an activity, called ‘My own lecture’, I paid attention to the moments when they were explaining about their language identities and provided time for them to discuss these matters. I then kept record of those moments in the teaching diary after the classes. I further

engaged them with another activity I had designed that I call ‘Language Timeline’, with the aim of listening to their in-depth thoughts about identities. The other activity, called ‘Making a Korean language newspaper’, was further designed and done with the participants so as to *deepen and expand* their thoughts about language identities. The participants’ portfolio of drawings and journals produced through these activities were collected, translated or transcribed as data. All the meaningful conversation among the participants and myself and the activities were video- or audio-recorded and transcribed as data later. Table 2 below illustrates how the class activities and related activities for research have created data for this study.

**Table 2.** Data produced through the activities

Activities in class	Data collection	Data
<b>My own lecture:</b> students gave a talk in front of the class and after this the topics were discussed together in class	Video-/ audio recording, Teaching diary	Transcribed excerpts of classroom interaction
<b>Language Timeline:</b> students drew their language timeline and discussed it in class	Video-/ audio recording, Students’ portfolios	Transcribed excerpts of classroom interaction, journals, drawings
<b>Making Korean language Newspaper:</b> students made a newspaper together	Students’ portfolios	Journals, drawings

### 3.3 Data analysis

The analysis was partly integrated into the data collection process. The observations and the notes from the teaching diary provided me with initial ideas about the participants’ identities and with inspiration to design and to implement other activities. The three class activities were thus designed as an iterative progression with the aim of deepening and expanding their thoughts about their language identities (see Table 2). To make their identities and language practices and repertoires visible, my data comprised transcribed excerpts depicting the participants’ interactions, and their portfolios such as drawings in addition to the journal articles. The data analysis has focused on the descriptions of how different chronotopic relations come into contact, compete and form dialogic relations with each other in ongoing social interaction and on how various opportunities or tensions are sometimes created in relation to their identity construction (Brown & Renshaw, 2006; Agha, 2007). All in all, the analysis process has been grounded in the dialogical nature of chronotope initiated by Bakhtin (Ritella et al., 2021). This dialogic analysis has thus allowed generating insights on the role that space-time relations play in making the participants’ various identities visible and illustrating how the multiplicity of those chronotopes are related to their dynamic identity construction in the individual stories about their lived reality (Brown & Renshaw, 2006).

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Language identities in four chronotopes



Based upon the idea that different chronotopes make different identity constructions visible (Agha, 2007; Bakhtin, 1981; Woolard, 2013), I found four distinctive chronotopes to illustrate the way in which space and time are implicated in the participants' utterances: *the contemporaneous chronotope*, *the biographical chronotope*, *the social-historical chronotope*, and *the adventure time in everyday life* (Bakhtin, 1981; see Table 3). The term, 'contemporaneous chronotope' has been invented by myself during the data analysis and the other three chronotopes have been imported from Woolard's (2013) study.

**Table 3.** Four chronotopes manifested in the participants' identity negotiation

	Contemporaneous chronotope	Biographical chronotope	Social- historical chronotope	The adventure time in everyday life
Gyumyeong (GM)	O		O	
Yooyeon (YY)	O	O		O
Seungjae (SJ)			O	
Wonhyo (WH)	O		O	O

#### 4.1.1 Contemporaneous chronotope

To explain these chronotopes in detail, I will first present three data segments, which are extracted from the discussion among the participants while they were reflecting on Yooyeon's (YY) speech during the activity 'My own lecture.' YY was supposed to bring her own chosen topic in relations to any language(s) she has been interested in and to give a presentation about the topic in Korean. She explained some basic knowledge about the French language such as the difference between 'Salut' and 'Bonjour.'

**Extract 1.** A discussion about French, Korean and Finnish language

- 1 GM: I like her presentation because its structure was quite PROFESSIONAL. =
- 2 T: = Good comment, Gyumyeong.
- 3 GM: (...) However, I have a question for you. ((Turning to Yooyeon)) We live in Finland now. (umm...) **BUT** it seems as if French is more important than Finnish (to Yooyeon).
- 4 T: (.) Yooyeon, what do you think about it (GM's comment)?
- 5 YY: (umm...) French is the number-one language (in my life). Then Korean is the second.
- 6 T: Then in which place is Finnish (in your mind)?
- 7 YY: (.) I think Finnish could be (umm...) either the third or the fourth.
- 8 GM: (With a doubtful tone) ↑ [Is that so?
- 9 YY: [That is so. I think so

The conversation between GM, YY and myself presents how we share and discuss each other's ideas about the priorities of the languages YY has mentioned during her presentation (Extract 1). The first chronotope detected from the data is the 'contemporaneous chronotope', which refers to the current time and space when a majority language is spoken or learnt. It represented itself in the exploration of time and space embedded in Gyumyeong's (GM) utterance about language identity as a speaker of Finnish, a majority language spoken in

contemporaneous time in Finland. In his question for YY after her presentation, GM problematized YY's priorities on her personal language repertoire, which ignited a further discussion among the students.

In line 3, by his saying, 'We live in Finland now,' we can see that GM suggests a shared identity for himself and YY in a same physical place and time, Finland, where Finnish is spoken *contemporaneously*. GM's doubt derives from his premise that Finnish should be the first-place language among the students (Line 8). According to this chronotope, GM and YY can be placed in the category of *contemporaneous Finnish speakers*.

YY's answer is, however, at odds with GM's view of language. In line 5, she places French as her first language, and Korean as the second according to her own subjective language repertoires. Apparently, Finnish is not her priority as she puts the language in either third or fourth place. In line 6 and 7, GM's doubtful tone and YY's response confirming her previous statement illustrate that there is a clear discrepancy between two of them in terms of how they evaluate the language priorities. I then decided to delve into the discrepancy between GM's and YY's opinions about language priorities.

#### 4.1.2 Biographical chronotope

##### Extract 2. YY's personal language priorities

(Translation)

- 1 T: Why has Finnish got a lower place than the other languages, although you live in Finland and speak Finnish most?
- 2 YY: = (umm...) I like playing the piano and some piano musicians (.) such as Chopin. I think my interest (in piano music) got connected to the language. (.) So French is important to me.
- 3 The next is (umm...) Korean. It is the language that I share with my family, so it gives me warmth. (hahaha) =
- 4 T: = Then how do you feel about Finnish?
- 5 YY: (umm...) Finnish is (.) I don't have any feelings about it (neither positive nor negative). So I said so. (.) However, this doesn't mean I hate Finnish (at all).

Extract 2 concerns YY's language repertoires and how she prioritizes them according to her own standards. The biographical chronotope was manifested in YY's *odd* answer according to the contemporaneous chronotope which is induced from GM's discourse. Compared to the contemporaneous chronotope, YY's criteria for evaluating her language priority rely on an *individual and subjective* level; for example, her personal interest in music and emotions related to her family.

When she places a neutral stance toward Finnish, we can see that she does not completely deny the Finnish language for herself as a contemporaneous Finnish speaker (Line 5). She partially negotiated her identity based on the contemporaneous chronotope. However, her language identity is mainly constructed on a *personal and subjective* basis, based on the biographical chronotope. Rather than the standardization of language from a national needs or practicality, she confirms that multilingualism is *an individual choice* that makes her personal world enriched. Another data segment extracted from her portfolio shows that YY negotiated her language identity based on her personal interests or growth as an individual (see Figure 1 & Extract 3).

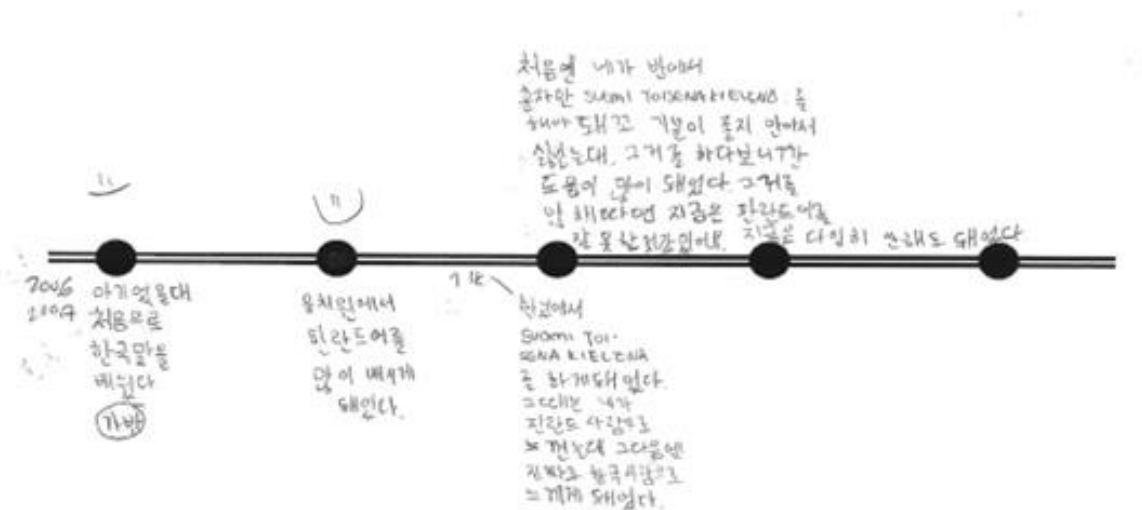


Figure 1. YY's language timeline

Extract 3. YY's language timeline  
(Translation)

- 2006 – 2007 (a smiley emoticon): When I made my very first cry as a newborn baby, I started to learn Korean.
- 2009 (a smiley emoticon): I started to learn Finnish language in the kindergarten.
- 7 (years old) / 1K (a first grader in a primary school): When I became 1K, I started to learn 'Suomi toisena kielenä' (Finnish as a second language) at school. Before it happened, I had thought of me as a (complete) Finnish person. It was the first time I started to consider me as a real Korean. At first, I did not like the fact that I was the only one who learnt 'Suomi toisena kielenä' in my class. I felt bad about it. However, (as time went by), I have realized the course has helped me improve my Finnish. If I hadn't studied Finnish hard at that time, my Finnish wouldn't be as good as now. Fortunately, I don't need to take the course anymore.

The above data has been produced from an activity called 'Language timeline' through which YY was supposed to put any important events in her life in relation to her language repertoires and uses and to write a reflection upon them (Extract 3). I paid particular attention to the event about 'Suomi toisena kielenä (Finnish as a second language)'. There has been an upheaval in her identities at the age of seven when she was placed in a group of students of Finnish as a *second language*. She states that she had not thought of herself as a Korean until she was *singled out* among the other normal Finnish children at school. At first, she might have felt isolated or separated as she was *singled out* as a minority from the majority group of native speakers of Finnish, as her identity was negotiated based on the *contemporaneous chronotope*. She had, however, as an *individual agent*, decided to learn Finnish hard so that she became good enough at Finnish and did not need to take the course any more later. After all, it gave her such a sense of accomplishment to develop her identity as a competent speaker of Finnish. She developed herself through the 'painful process of self-interpretation' (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 169–170) when her relationship with Finnish had to be renegotiated due to the stance of the community. We can see her identity has been negotiated in relation to others and her everyday experience (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). It can further be inferred to be constructed as the main symbol of her

personal growth, improvement and maturity based on *the biographical chronotope* (Woolard, 2013).

#### 4.1.3 Socio-historical chronotope

I have detected one more chronotope representing itself in YY's data. In the first line where she described herself as a Korean from her birth, we can infer that her ethnic, family and biological background affected her identity, which can be called 'social-historical chronotopes' (Woolard, 2013). The social-historical chronotope relates the individuals' identities to more collective dimensions such as ethnicity, family and biological background, whereas the biographical chronotope is related to rather personal dimensions of identity such as their personal interests and dynamic, lived experiences in their everyday lives. This socio-historical chronotope will be further elaborated on through the other data in the next sub-chapter (see Extract 4).

In contrast to the contemporaneous and biographical chronotopes, GM and Seunjae (SJ) negotiate their identity with focus on the social and linguistic values of languages such as the scientific and economical status (usefulness), language system and historical, ethnic or biological origins of language speakers based on the *socio-historical chronotope*. The discussion made by GM and SJ after YY's comment shows an example of this chronotope as they were developing their discussion about language priorities and identities (see Extract 4).

#### Extract 4. Social and linguistic values of languages

- 1 GM: (umm..) There (in the article) (umm..) Korean is more .. what should I say? (.) (hahaha) Korean is easier to learn and .. (umm..) SCIENTIFIC?
- 2 T: ↑ (Is Korean) SCIENTIFIC?
- 3 GM: Yeah, they said. (.) So it's (Finnish is) difficult to learn. (umm..) Finnish is spoken only in Finland.  
(.) So (umm..) (.) in the future, (umm..) it's better to learn Korean.
- 4 T: Yes, ((turning to SJ)) Can you tell us, Seungjae?
- 5 SJ: (...) (umm..) The Finnish language was made of many different language origins.  
(...) So it is not simple (.) (umm..) It has such a complicated structure. (.)
- 6 So (this is why they believe) (umm..) it is not as scientific as Korean and many people feel it is difficult to learn.

GM brought a piece of information about Finnish from a newspaper in the discussion. He elaborated that Finnish is a more difficult language to learn and the scope of its use is quite limited so that it could fail to gain much credit in terms of its social value as a spoken language. However, he agreed with the news article that Korean would be a good alternative for the future as it is more *scientific* than Finnish. There is a consensus between GM and SJ as both of them placed Korean at a higher level than Finnish when it comes to their assessment of the relative social values of the languages. SJ also referred to linguistic aspects such as the historical origins and the language structures in support of GM's opinion. He explains that Finnish is not as scientific or economical as Korean since it has such a complicated structure (Line 5, 6). Analyzing this discourse based on the socio-historical chronotope shows that socio-historical features of the languages have significantly affected GM and SJ's language priorities and identities.

**Extract 5.** GM's comment on Korean language school

(Translation)

The Korean school is a small community in Finland for Koreans living in Finland. Mostly the participants are children between 3 and 18 years of age. I am a 16-year-old Korean, Gyumyeong (Pseudonym). I go to the Korean school almost every Saturday. Many of my friends think that it is exhausting. But, to me, going to the Korean school is a priority/privilege. Going to the Korean school beside my normal school makes me remember where I come from.

Another data segment has been selected for analysis based upon this socio-historical chronotope (see Extract 5). This data has been extracted from the portfolio produced by the students for the activity 'Making a Korean language newspaper.' The students were supposed to choose a topic about the Korean language such as stories about themselves as Korean speakers living in Finland and to write an article about it. I asked them to write their articles in *any languages* they would feel free and best motivated to create their ideas through. GM then wrote a comment *in Finnish* about what the Korean language school has meant to him.

GM defined Korean school as a small minority community for the young children who live in Finland, where his identity is illustrated according to the *contemporaneous chronotope*. He further described the weekend time when he goes to the Korean school as an extraordinary time compared to the regular Finnish schools which usually open for the weekdays. Going to the Korean school at weekends could thus mean extra work for him compared to the other Finnish students. He described his identity as a Korean speaker, a member of a minority language community as an extraordinary time compared to the contemporaneous time in the major Finnish community. As I paid attention to the hybridization of time-space in the discourse, it was found that the temporal-spatial configuration moves *from the contemporaneous to the socio-historical chronotope*. He negotiated himself as a Korean speaker who is not merely constrained as a member of a minor group in mainstream Finnish society; he further appreciated that this extraordinary time and space gave him *a priority or privilege* so that he could reflect on his origin in a deeper sense. The socio-historical chronotope helped make visible that a recognition of another identity as a Korean learner has reminded him to remember where he comes from. He presents himself as deeply rooted in what Bakhtin (1981) calls "ancient time" (p. 50), constructing his identity from his own historical origin and family background, rather than from the contemporaneous time in Finland.

**4.1.4 Adventure time of everyday life**

The last chronotope I have noticed from the data is, to quote directly from Bakhtin (1981), "adventure time of everyday life" (p. 120). It has been identified from Wonhyo's (WH) portfolio which were produced through such activities as 'Making a Korean newspaper'. He explained how he has constructed his identities as a Korean-Finnish who lives in Finland (Figure 2 & Extract 6).

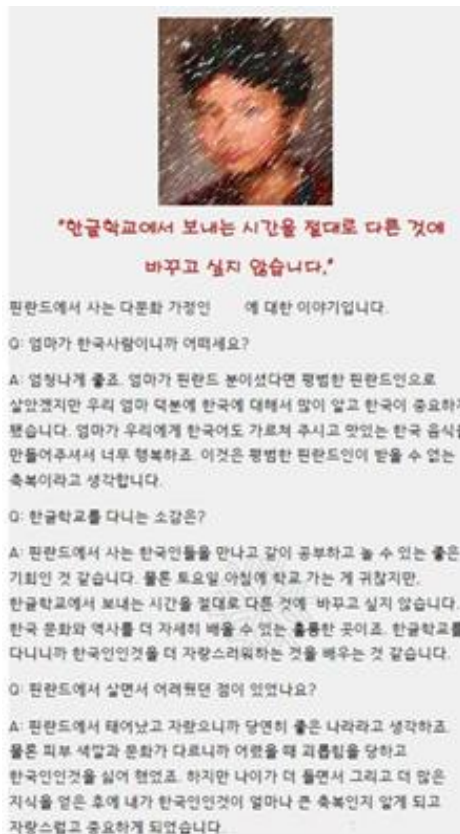


Figure 2. WH's self-interview about his language identity

**Extract 6. WH's self-interview**  
(Translation)

Headline: "I will never want to replace the time I spend in the Korean language school with something else."

This is a story about myself who lives in a multicultural family in Finland.

Q: How do you feel about the fact that you have a Korean mother?

A: I feel great about it. I wouldn't feel so special if I were just born from a Finnish mother and simply Finnish. Thanks to her, I got to know a lot about Korea and the country became important to me. She has taught me the Korean language and cooked delicious Korean food, which has made me feel so happy. I think this kind of life is a blessing which ordinary Finnish people cannot receive.

Q: How do you feel about going to the Korean language school?

A: This is a good opportunity to meet other Korean people and study the Korean language together here in Finland. Sometimes I feel too tired or irritated to go there every Saturday morning. However, I will never want to replace the time that I spend in the Korean language school with anything else. I think this school is a wonderful place for me to learn Korean culture and history as well. Going to the Korean language school makes me feel more proud of myself as a Korean.

Q: Have you ever felt any difficulty living in Finland (as a Finnish-Korean)?

A: I was born and grew up in Finland so I certainly think of this country positively. When I was younger, I would be bullied because I had different skin color and different culture from others. At that time, I would hate the fact that I was partially Korean. However, as I grow older, I have gained more and more knowledge about Korea. Then I have just realized how blessed I am and how proud I am of myself as a Korean.

In this data segment, I found that the narratives about his life as a Korean speaker living in Finland in relation to his identity construction resonate a great deal with

Bakhtin's (1981) "adventure time of everyday life" (p. 120). In his explanation of the chronotope of ancient Roman literature, Bakhtin (1981) contends that an adventure of a hero in a narrative occurs not only across abstract seas and continents, but also through social hierarchies, and such social adventure leaves its mark on the character. He further explained, the course of an individual's life can be characterized as actual progress through space, "the path of his life" (1981, p. 120).

In the beginning, we notice that that WH's discourse when he negotiates his Korean identity can be analyzed with *the socio-historical chronotope*. He explains his identity in a positive way in that having a Korean mother and going to the Korean language school are a blessing and provide him with a good opportunity to learn the language, to experience the culture and history, and to meet other Korean people. Secondly, another identity as a Korean living in Finland, a marginal group member, can be clearly seen in according to *the contemporaneous chronotope*. It was clearly noticed that his identity as a Korean-Finnish was constructed with a negative impact in his earlier life in mainstream Finnish society, which he had consequently experienced some difficulties. Finally, as his knowledge of Korean language and culture have grown, he has undergone personal and inner growth in himself, so that his identity has evolved in a constructive way. This process is described in Woolard's (2013) article as "a personal metamorphosis" (p. 218). The time in this chronotope is a part of his biographical crisis, threshold moments and changes that leave lasting impact in the life of the individual. This is a good example to indicate that WH's social adventure of his identity construction and his own *rites of passage* in negotiating the thresholds between Korean and Finnish identities can clearly be illustrated through Bakhtin's (1981) "adventure time of everyday life" (p. 120).

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

This study has explored the identities of the four school-aged learners of Korean as their heritage language in a context of a weekend heritage language school in Finland. It particularly aimed at investigating the ways in which the learners' identities emerge and are constructed throughout their ongoing subjective language learning processes and lived experiences. Bakhtin's (1981) concept of *chronotope* has served as a key resource to analyze the data of the learners' discourse on their identities and identity construction process. Four distinctive chronotopes have been detected and implicated to frame their identities as language learners (Agha, 2007; Bakhtin, 1981; Woolard, 2013); the *contemporaneous* chronotope, the *biographical* chronotope, the *social-historical* chronotope and the 'adventure time of everyday life' (Bakhtin, 1981). The exploration of these chronotopes in the discourses about the learners' language repertoires and practices does not simply signify that the chronotopes were found to be distinctive in constructing their identities. The active interaction or conflicts among the multiple chronotopes further demonstrates the young learners' playful sense-making process in constructing various language identities. This process of identity construction in a variety of time-space configurations in their lived reality was depicted as not stable or predictable but playfully shaped by the discourses that the learners draw on (Brown & Renshaw, 2006; Karimzad & Catedral, 2018; Ritella et al., 2021). The result is a reminder of what Bakhtin (1981, p. 252)

observed: “chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they coexist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships.”

To evaluate the contribution of this study, a limitation should also be brought to the fore. The data for this article includes only a little part of the actual discussions the pupils had in class during the total data collection time of one and half years. A larger amount of data and a larger variety of chronotopes could still provide more understanding about the learners’ identities and to better illustrate the dynamic interrelations between those chronotopes (see Karimzad & Catedral, 2018). I suggest therefore that still more research is needed to better understand L2 learning and life trajectories. Despite the limited amount of data and limited time period of this study, this exploration of the HL learners’ various identities through chronotopes can still be used to suggest implications for language classrooms. First, the teachers can broaden their ways of viewing the learners’ identities as being a situated, dynamic process so that it will help understand the learners as more unique and subjective individuals through the recognition of the various configurations of time-space (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; He, 2004). The concept of chronotope has further been shown to serve as a potentially resourceful tool to understand the learners’ process of language learning and identity construction within various contexts *from their own lives*. The participants in this study have proven the ways in which they, as bi-/multilingual learners, have agency to make sense of themselves when coping with the such societal situations as monolingual bias or fear of being a marginalized group member different from the majority of the community. They have also shown how they learn to value their history and heritage. This study confirms that a learner’s interaction of past experience, ongoing involvement and yet-to-be accomplished goals need to be respected and encouraged in the classroom (Brown & Renshaw, 2006; Dávila, 2017).

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Original transcripts

#### Extract 1.

- GM: Yooyeon(YY)이의 발표는 구성이 PROFESSIONAL 해서 좋았어요.  
 T: 규명아, 좋은 소감이다.  
 GM: (...) 그런데 YY 에게 질문 하고 싶은 게 있어요. 우리는 지금 핀란드에 살고 있는데 (.) (umm...) 그런데 핀란드어보다 프랑스어를 더 중요하게 생각하는 것 같아요.  
 T: (.) 유연아, 너의 생각은 어때?  
 YY: (umm...) 프랑스 말이 나에게 1 등이에요. 그 다음 한국어가 2등이고요.  
 T: 그럼 핀란드어는 몇 번째야?  
 YY: (.) 내 생각에 핀란드어는 (umm...) 3 번째 또는 4 번째 인 것 같아요.  
 T: ↑[그래?  
 YY: [네, 그런 것 같아요.

#### Extract 2.

유연이는 핀란드에 살면서 핀란드어를 가장 많이 쓰는 데도 왜 핀란드 말의 우선순위가 그렇게 낮아? =  
 = (umm..) 제가 좋아하는 피아노와 음악가 (umm..) 쇼팽 같은 (.) 나의 흥미와 관심과 언어를 연결하면 (.)  
 그래서 프랑스어가 중요하다고 생각해요.  
 그 다음으로는 (umm...) 한국말은 가족이랑 쓰는 말이니까 따뜻함을 느낄 수 있어요. (hahaha) =  
 =그럼 핀란드어는 어떤 느낌이야?  
 (Umm..) 핀란드어는 (.) 그런 좋거나 싫은 감정이 없어서 그렇게 말했어요. (.) 그렇다고 핀란드어가 싫다는 것은 아니에요.

#### Extract 3.

- GM: (umm..) 거기에서 (umm..) 한국말이 더 .. 뭐라고 하지? (.) (hahaha) 한국말이 더 배우기 쉽고 ... (umm..) SCIENTIFIC?  
 T: SCIENTIFIC? 과학적이라고? 왜 한국말이 과학적이라고 말했을까?  
 그래, 승재가 말해 볼래?  
 SJ: (...) (umm..) 핀란드어가 여러가지 언어가 합쳐져서 만들어진 말이에요. (...) 그래서 단순하지 않고 (.) (umm..) 많이 복잡한 구조를 갖고 있어요. (...) 그래서 (umm..) 한국말보다 과학적인 언어가 아니고 많은 사람들이 쉽게 배우기가 어렵다고 생각해서 인 것 같아요.

#### Extract 4.

Koreankoulu on suomessa pieni yhteis ö, jossa käy Suomessa asuvia korealaisia. Pääosa koreankoulussa on vielä lapsia, 3-18 v. Olen 16-vuotias korealainen, Kyumyeong. Moni kaverini ajattelee, että se on uuvuttavaa ja se onkin, mutta mielestäni koreankoulussa käyminen on minulle iso prioriteetti/etuoikeus. Koreankouluun osallistuminen koulun ohessa, saa minut aina muistamaan mistä minä tulen.

## *Appendix 2. Transcription convention*

\_\_\_ emphatic stress

(...) intervening material has been omitted

(.) brief pause

(hahaha) laughter

(( )) transcriber comment

( ) English-translation clarification within parentheses added by the author

[ speaker overlap

= contiguous utterances

, utterance signaling more to come

. utterance final intonation

: lengthening of preceding sound

CAPS increased volume

↑ rising intonation

↓ falling intonation

italics switch to English

bold switch to Russian

EMP emphatic particle

Received March 20, 2022

Revision received February 25, 2023

Accepted April 17, 2023