Relatively little is known about the relationship between first language (L1) attrition and language choice patterns related to emotions. While it is commonly believed that it may be easier for late bilinguals to express their emotions in their L1, studies suggest that the L1 is not always the language for emotions for bilinguals (e.g., Dewaele, 2004a; Panayiotou, 2004; Pavlenko, 2004). Bilinguals may use the L2 as a strategy of distancing from anxiety-provoking topics (Bond 1986), or their verbal and conceptual representations of emotions may change in favour of the L2 due to the habitual use of L2 (Dewaele, 2004b; Pavlenko, 2002, 2003). In any case, the increased L2 use and the resultant decreased L1 use may lead to L1 attrition. This paper addresses this issue by investigating a group of 30 young Korean immigrants, all of whom have been residing in New Zealand since the age of 12-13 years. Their L1 and L2 proficiency measures were produced by analysing data obtained through a story-retelling task; their language choice patterns related to emotions were analysed through their responses to a questionnaire; supplementary information for these responses was elicited through a follow-up interview. The degree of emotions represented by the questionnaire items are classified into ‘light’, ‘medium’, and ‘heavy’ on the basis of the result from a pilot survey. The findings suggest (1) that the bilinguals tended to use more L2 in situations where emotional load was heavier in spite of their general dominance of L1 use, (2) and that this was particularly related to increase in ‘L2 fluency’ and decrease in ‘L1 accuracy’. A closer investigation into these relationships revealed that the strength of correlation between ‘L2 fluency’ and the degree of L2 use increased as the emotional load increased. However, it was also found that the correlation between the degree of L1 use and ‘L1 accuracy’ was significantly weaker when the emotional load was ‘heavy’ than when it was ‘medium’. This paper discusses what might be underlying these findings drawing on data from the interview, and highlights the complex interaction between emotions and L1/L2 use and proficiency changes during the adolescent years. Implications are drawn for the importance of L1 maintenance particularly among new immigrants in their teenage.