Identity in L1 maintenance and L2 learning: its fuzzy role among Korean adolescents in New Zealand

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This paper explores the issue of identity through a study of 30 young Koreans who immigrated to New Zealand at the age of 12-13 years. After arriving in New Zealand, these participants have spent several years in learning English as they went through their adolescence. The paper examines how these bilinguals negotiate their identity in their use of L1 and L2 and how their perceived identity relates to their maintenance of L1 proficiency and acquisition of L2 proficiency. Data were collected through a questionnaire, interviews, a vocabulary test, and a story-retelling task. Findings suggest that, while perceived L1 identity is an important indicator of L1 use among these participants, it is not directly associated with their L1/L2 proficiency measured through their linguistic performance. The paper highlights the complex nature of identity related to L1 maintenance and L2 acquisition during adolescence, and discusses L1 support for adolescent immigrant children.