

# A Geolocate Linguistic Landscape Project in Korean as Foreign Language Education



Hakyoon Lee and Bumyong Choi

**Abstract** This study explores the employment of Linguistic Landscape (LL) as a pedagogical tool in Korean as a Foreign Language classroom. Despite the noticeable growth in LL scholarship focused on Korean, there are few studies to date that have investigated Korean language learning. By illustrating how LL is applied to Korean language classes in combination with other pedagogical tools, including digital storytelling and geolocate applications, this study aims to fill this gap. Fifty-two students in university-level Korean classes participated in this project. The students explored local areas fully embraced by the growing Korean community, produced digital stories, and shared their videos on a Google map. The collaboratively created map was a space for sharing complexity of the multilingual environment, offering linguistic exploration, and creating dynamic discussion. The findings show that LL benefits the students by engaging them with displayed texts and promoting the students' development in broad learning goals. Students used their linguistic knowledge as well as regional knowledge to understand different signs and evaluate whether the environment was an authentic source of the target culture. This study discusses how the inquiry-based, student-led, and community-focused project impacted the students' understandings of the target language and culture as well as local multilingualism.

**Keywords** Linguistic landscape · World-Readiness Standards · Communities · Korean · Local multilingualism

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## 1 Introduction

The most widely used definition of the linguistic landscape is that of Landry and Bourhis (1997): “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (p.25). As the scope of the general issues and methodologies in Linguistic Landscape (LL) research have expanded, so has its definition. For instance, Shohamy (2018) proposed that beyond the quantitative approach outlined in Landry and Bourhis (1997), the central emphasis of LL research needs to be placed in a multimodal analysis with consideration of the people who interact in the linguistic landscape.

In this vein, Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) emphasize the ways in which written discourses interact with other forms of discursive modalities including visual images and nonverbal forms of communication. This claim is grounded on the idea that while language is the most important construct, it is but one of the elements for understanding a place. An investigation of the substantially growing presence or disappearance of languages in the field of LL can be fully understood with exploration of other modes of communication. Additionally, it is important to take into consideration the people who inhabit the linguistic landscape, interact with it, and analyze it.

To make these considerations more tangible, this study broadly focuses on learners’ linguistic practices and interaction within the linguistic landscape and uses a survey to investigate these learners’ discussions as well as their reflections on their exploration of the linguistic landscape. The overarching goal of this study is to investigate how LL can be applied to Korean as a Foreign Language classes to promote the 5Cs at the elementary level of language study and, in doing so, to examine the benefits of LL in target language learning and use.

Our motivation for this project started with our awareness of and interaction with the emerging multilingualism in the local context of Atlanta, Georgia, and from our inquiries of how we, as language educators, can use local multilingualism in our teaching context. With transnational flows and growing mobility, migration has brought an immense increase in multilingualism, and Atlanta is no exception to this trend. Multilingualism is no longer considered a marginal phenomenon for researchers or policy makers but is instead a characteristic of our everyday lives.

With the above-stated aims, this study examines how a LL project connects language learners in a Korean language class to the local community. We examine how LL projects can ensure learners’ interactions with local communities, through contextualized and authentic linguistic resources in the local arena. As emphasized in Rowland (2013), a study that focused on students’ engagement in a LL project for both research and pedagogical purposes, LL scholarship is amplified by adding emic understandings from language learners and etic analysis from the researchers. In the following section, we will discuss further the previous LL studies in language education in diverse linguistic contexts.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 *LL in Language Education*

In the rapidly growing field of LL research on public signs, there has been a growing interest in LL activities and inquiry in language education. Taking a critical stance on the implementation of LL in learning, Shohamy and Waksman (2009) argue that LL is “a powerful tool for education, meaningful language learning towards activism” (p. 326); they view texts as tools for deepening our understanding of histories, cultural relations, politics, and humanities. Cenoz and Gorter (2008) investigated how public signs, when viewed as authentic and contextualized input, can be used for second language acquisition, particularly the development of pragmatic competence, literacy skills, and language awareness. In subsequent research on a multilingual school in the Basque Country where more than one language is taught and used, they also argued that multilingual signage contributes to the multilingual competence of the students, and that the domain of education deserves to be investigated more in-depth (Gorter and Cenoz 2015). Similarly, looking at an educational context more closely, Brown (2012) investigated the schoolscape to explore less commonly used languages at a school and issues of revitalization in Estonia.

In another approach to integrating LL work into language learning, researchers explored linguistic resources outside of the language classroom and bring them to class for teaching and learning activities (e.g. Dagenais et al. 2009). Sayer (2010) investigated the linguistic landscape in Mexico in English as a Foreign Language context and used signs as teaching resources to analyze social meanings of the use of English in Mexico. He examined the purposes of the signs, the intended audiences, and different meanings of English, and offers insights into how LL, when used in a foreign language classroom, can help overcome the limited opportunities for authentic input in the foreign language context. Similarly, Rowland (2013) examined the application of LL in English classes in Japan, and he emphasized that LL is useful for the development of students’ symbolic competence. LL is also applied in the context of teacher education. In Hancock (2012), LL was used as a tool to raise student-teacher awareness of the multilingual reality and linguistic diversity of schools. He explored how pre-service teachers respond to the LL in Edinburgh and shows how LL can serve as an educational resource for language teaching. This study also argued that LL projects help students to develop creativity and critical thinking.

As we have discussed above, many LL studies with different emphases have proven the educational benefits in language education. However, the topic is still under-explored, particularly in the case of Korean language education. Indeed, only a few LL studies related to Korean have focused on the expanding use of English and increasing visibility of English in Korea. For instance, Vlack (2011) investigated English business signs in Korean urban contexts with comparative perspectives. Malinowski (2009) conducted interviews with Korean shop owners and interpreted the store’s signs to investigate the authorship of the use of Korean and

English. He also conducted LL research that investigated Korean-English linguistic landscapes (Malinowski 2010). By taking investigative research methods to the multimodal linguistic landscape, his study presented how to teach and learn Korean through linguistic landscape activities with the use of technology. More recently, Lawrence (2012), in his LL study in Korea, claimed that the use of English is related to notions of modernity, luxury, and youth. Meanwhile, in the field of education, Chesnut et al. (2013) used narrative analysis to investigate how LL can be used as learning resources for English pedagogy.

Even beyond these studies focusing on LL-related pedagogies in Korean contexts, the Korean language itself is a relatively less commonly taught and researched language in applied linguistics and foreign language education. By illustrating how the concept of LL is applied to Korean language classes and how it benefits the learners, this study seeks to fill the gap in these areas. This project involves language learners in the analysis of their local linguistic landscapes, while the researchers examine students' responses to languages on signs. Furthermore, in this study, we consider our participating students as principal agents in Korean as a Foreign Language (KFL) classes by providing them the opportunity to investigate the local linguistic landscape, which becomes an authentic linguistic and cultural resource. We can in turn harness this linguistic and cultural exploration for an in-class discussion. In our study, we place the students who interact in the linguistic landscape at the center of attention.

## 2.2 *The 5Cs in Foreign Language Education*

The widely known World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages were developed to establish what students should know and be able to do as a result of foreign language study. It emphasizes the notion of literacy in a broader cultural context by presenting five domains of goals for language learning, known as the 5Cs: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. Since their inception, the 5Cs have made a tremendous impact on foreign language education and research (see ACTFL Task Force on Decade of Standards Project 2011a, b for more details).

Though the National Standards have had a substantial impact on foreign language teaching at the elementary and secondary levels, the challenges of implementing these Standards in college-level foreign language classes and their comparatively little impact at this level have often been discussed (e.g., Scott 2009). As a result, the influence from the Standards has been less visible in higher education, compared to the secondary education context, even though the Standards are explicitly envisioned for PK-16 levels (Magan 2017).

The ACTFL Decade of Standards Project (ACTFL 2011a, b) revealed that language educators have prioritized the Communication and Cultures standards in their instruction. Among Comparison, Connection, and Community, "Communities has often been termed the 'Lost C'" (ACTFL Task Force on Decade of Standards Project

2011b, p.47) since it poses logistical difficulties for teaching. Moreover, it is often considered as an application task which can only be completed once basic language abilities are achieved.

However, based on surveys conducted with first- and second-year university learners of both less commonly taught languages and commonly taught languages, the Communities domain has been found to generate the highest learning outcomes, motivation, and expectations (Magnan et al. 2014). Ironically, language educators often disregard Communities in their teaching goals (ACTFL Task Force on Decade of Standards Project 2011a, b). This indicates that there is a considerable pedagogical gap between instruction and students' needs. Moreover, in the novice level language classroom, it is an even more challenging task to integrate all 5Cs in the curriculum, due to limitations of resources, a lack of clear assessment tools, and students' limited language proficiency. However, considering the importance of Comparison, Connection and Community, the LL project in this study aimed to offer lower-level Korean students more opportunities to promote these three Cs in addition to Communications and Cultures.

### 3 The Aim of This Project and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to conduct a location-based project in Korean as a Foreign Language education. Students selected geolocative points of interest, such as restaurants, shops, or cultural events and activities. Students then visited their points of interest, studying how the target language was used and how the cultures were integrated into the local community. The pedagogical rationale for this geolocative language learning was to increase students' engagement in the language learning process by moving their language learning experiences out of the classroom and into the world (cf. Thorne 2013).

As such, this study investigated the following three research questions: (1) To what extent do LL projects allow the students to understand Korean in multilingual contexts? (2) How do LL projects contribute to promoting the 5Cs in the Korean elementary level language classroom? and (3) What are the different potentials, opportunities, and challenges found in LL projects?

There are specific areas in the state of Georgia where the majority of Korean people reside. One in particular is Koreatown in Atlanta. Here, Korean signs can easily be found. The students who participated in this project investigated this focal area's abundant linguistic and cultural resources. In addition, when investigating geolocative points of interests, students were able to interact with target language speakers and to directly learn language and culture from them.

The motivation for this project was to connect to the local community of the target culture and give students an opportunity to engage in activities related to Comparisons, Connections and Communities as they intersect with Communication and Cultures, as explained in the previous section. The learners went out to Korean communities in Atlanta, took pictures of different signs in different areas, and

interviewed Korean people to get to know the use of language in given contexts. After taking photos and videos, students uploaded them as points of interest on a map. In so doing, the learners became aware of the use of Korean in various social contexts and could observe and analyze the linguistic and cultural resources around them. We analyzed students' outcomes from this project qualitatively (Leeman and Modan 2010), by attending to what they achieved from the project. We also want to note that we consider context a "socially constructed notion" (Canagarajah 2013), that is to say, a notion that is not limited to a physical concept but rather one that is formed by ideological components. For this reason, we need to understand multiple layers of meanings shown in the public spaces, beginning in one focal context of this project: the state of Georgia.

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 *Context: Korean in the State of Georgia*

The Korean community is one of the fastest-growing communities in the state of Georgia, particularly in the northern region, where there has been a shift in the linguistic environment. Korean is widely used, and one can easily see Korean in commercial and public signs in this area. Georgia has the third-fastest growing Korean community in the U.S., according to the U.S. Census Bureau's ranking of the top ten fastest growing Korean populations in U.S. states (U.S. Census Bureau 2010a, b). The data shows that during the rapid growth of the Korean population in Georgia from 2000 to 2010, the number of Korean residents doubled. In addition, due to this increase in the number of Korean immigrants in Georgia, the most commonly spoken language at home other than English and Spanish is Korean (American Community Survey 5-year Estimates 2012). These statistics support first-hand accounts of the noticeable increase in the number of Koreans in Georgia communities. They also suggest that a large number of Korean immigrants, especially newly arrived families, maintain their home language. According to the latest census, it is estimated that more than 66,000 Koreans call Georgia home and 41.9% of the state's Korean-Americans live in Gwinnett County, where most of the students' projects were conducted. In addition, according to the Korean Education Center in Georgia, currently there are over 70 Korean companies in Georgia creating over 5000 jobs for people who live in the state. Based on this information, it can be assumed there are some fundamental changes in the population of the given areas as well as changes to the languages spoken and written within these areas. Moreover, this growing Korean population impacts local businesses in the area, including restaurants, groceries, and other businesses. It is thus timely to investigate more closely how the population change impacts residents' linguistic choice(s) and other aspects of the linguistic environment, in order to understand how we can maximize these linguistic resources in language teaching and learning.

## 4.2 *Participants*

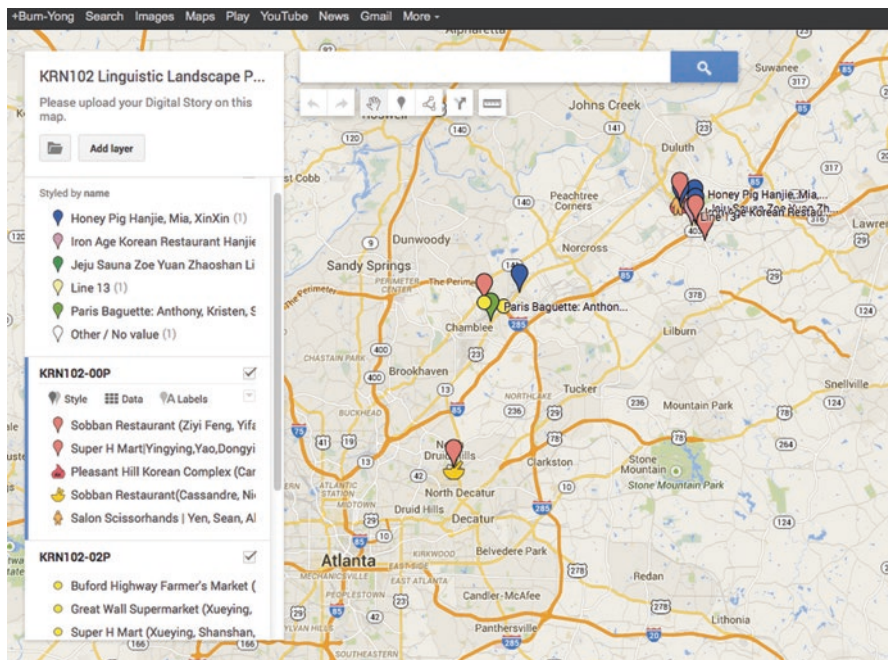
Fifty-two students, between the ages of 17 and 22, participated in this project. They were novice language learners enrolled in one of the four second-semester Korean courses at two universities in Georgia at the time of this research. They took this Korean course either because of the university's language requirement and/or their interest in Korean language and culture. The students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds varied, and the students' first languages included Chinese, English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Among the 52 students, 10 students had a heritage language background, which means they had some level of exposure to the Korean language at home and/or in their communities. A heritage speaker is defined as a person who speaks an immigrant, indigenous, or ancestral language that the speaker has a personal relevance and desire to (re)connect with (Wiley 2005). However, this does not necessarily mean that the heritage language learners have higher language proficiency compared to other non-heritage language learners.

## 4.3 *The LL Project*

This project was designed in a multilayered way. The students participated in the class' LL project, and the researchers analyzed the students' LL project outcomes by focusing on what linguistic and cultural resources they used. First, the students were asked to collect LL data, decode and understand the meaning of visual data, and then to present their findings using digital storytelling. The researchers analyzed the students' findings with respect to the educational benefits of a LL-based project as well as what they intended to represent. As such, this LL project dialogues with other studies that have documented the challenges and potentials of implementing project-based language learning tasks in beginning language classes (e.g., Allen 2004; Beckett and Miller 2006).

In each of the four elementary level Korean classes, students formed 5–6 groups of 3–4 people and chose one of the geolocate points in suburban Atlanta that reflected rich Korean cultural features. Next, the students attended an illustrated lecture on the concept of LL and then submitted a project proposal showing the topic area and the contexts to be investigated. At that point, each group visited their target site(s) where Korean is used for different purposes, investigated the use of language within that context, and collected LL data (pictures, video, sound, etc.). The participating students visited business places, grocery stores, restaurants, etc. We provided a list of potential questions to guide the students' investigation of LL. These questions were adopted and modified from Rowland (2013) to help the learners organize their photos and better present their findings, as follows:

- What type of sign is it?
- Where is the sign located?
- Who made the sign?



**Fig. 1** Google map for class project

- Who is the intended audience of the sign?
- Why do you think Korean is used on the sign?
- Why do you think English is not used in place of other languages on the sign?

After their fieldwork, each group met to analyze the LL data and create a digital story (more details of the project procedures can be found in Appendix 1). Digital storytelling was used as a tool to share the students' LL experiences and present their ideas from the project. In their digital stories, the groups introduced their findings about Korean language use in local contexts. The final projects were posted on a shared Google Map and screened in class. Below is an example of a Google map with students' projects (Fig. 1).

After the presentation, the students discussed each other's projects and wrote a reflection paper. These papers were collected along with a survey of students' views about the LL project.

## 5 Data Analysis and Findings

### 5.1 Students' Analysis and the 5Cs

Since Communications and Cultures were a standard part of this project, we mainly focused on how the other typically overlooked 3Cs (Comparisons, Connections and Communities) were used and presented in the students' discussions and analyses of data in their projects.



### 5.1.1 Use of L1 and C1 to Analyze the Linguistic Environment: Comparisons, Connections, Communities

The learners who participated in the LL project paid close attention to the languages used in the public space. They collected observational data from the local community and engaged with the culture and speakers of the target language. In the LL project, students practiced reading both linguistic and symbolic meanings of signs in the data they collected. In particular, they used their knowledge of their first languages and own cultures to understand underlying, embedded, and other symbolic meanings which cannot be easily seen on the surface. One of the prominent aspects of the students' analyses was their use of L1 and C1 knowledge to understand the target linguistic environment in the contexts they explored. That is to say, their own familiar languages and cultures served as resources to analyze multilingual and multicultural data.

One group went to a Korean grocery market to investigate how different languages were used. They examined the use of a Chinese character in the name of a ramen product sold there, which served as an example that learners “build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively” (Connection Standard: Making Connection) (Fig. 2).

In their final project, they analyzed this Korean brand of ramen with a Chinese character in the following manner:

Look at the *Shin* ramen and noodle with black bean sauce. The character *shin* is a Chinese character meaning spicy. *Shin* is the pronunciation of 辛 in Chinese [Spicy]. I guess when Korean (word) was created; it was inspired by Chinese, but adjusted to its own cultural uses. So the term, ramen, in Chinese refers to hand pulled noodles, but in Korean it refers to instant noodles. (Script from students' video1 0:30–0:40).

This analysis of the interaction between two languages was made by a Chinese international student. She gave a translation of the character *shin* 辛 in Chinese [spicy] first, but she also noticed that the word “ramen” signified instant noodles in Korean, which is different from its Chinese meaning of “hand pulled noodles.”

We looked closely at the group members' discussion to see how they analyzed the use of the Chinese character in the same video.

- A: I don't think this is in Korean. What ramen is this?  
 B: Oh it's actually *Shin* ramen. The Chinese character is *shin* which means spicy. So it's *shin* ramen we all familiar with.  
 A: Why do they use Chinese characters here?  
 B: I guess from what I heard, Korean people use Chinese characters to make their products fancier so that more people want to buy them.  
 (Script from students' video2 2:40–3:10)

In this excerpt, there was one Chinese international student who tried to give his own analysis in response to the question from Student A, who did not have any knowledge of the Chinese language. He also started with the meaning of *shin* and then provided his own reasoning as to why the Chinese character was used on the product, suggesting a connection to the current Chinese economic power and his

**Fig. 2** Student's data:  
*Shin* ramen



pride for his own country. Some Korean people would not agree with the student's statement about the usage of the Chinese characters as a way to make the product fancier, but the interesting point was that both students utilized their own linguistic and cultural knowledge as well as language ideologies when they found contact between their L1 (Chinese) and L2 (Korean) outside of language class. In addition, we also recognize that this example shows students' knowledge of how the writing system and selection of language deliver meanings of wealth, success, or prestige in the product. From examples such as this, we argue that we can observe how multilingual competency and multilingual literacy are developed by investigating how students with diverse linguistic backgrounds interpret the display and use of languages on signs.

In addition, the interplay between other semiotic modes, the relationship between text and image, and the connection between different languages on signs, considered as "intersemiotic relations" (Jewitt 2009), is a crucial part of multimodality. Understanding the relation of two different languages and how the learners' LL projects engage with multimodal literacy skills is an example of multimodality. This dovetails with Jewitt's (2009) approach to multimodality as understanding "communication and representation to be more than about language," and attending "to the full range of communicational forms people use—image, gesture, gaze, posture, and so on—and the relationships between them" (p. 14).

Furthermore, in this process, we can see how the learners utilized the Comparison area in both standards—Language Comparison and Cultural Comparison—to solve the puzzle they encountered in this field trip. Another standard in the Connection area is "Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives: Learners access and

evaluate information and diverse perspectives that are available through the language and its cultures.” The excerpt between learners A and B can be interpreted as an example of how learners develop new perspectives on Korean language and society by comparing and analyzing the L2 language use with their L1 linguistic and culture background.

One of main concerns about the implementation of the Standards is that the goal areas are considered individually rather than interrelated (Magnan 2017). However, this data shows the interplay between the 5Cs in this one context. Students engaged in linguistic exploration of local communities while comparing the target language and culture to their own language and culture (Communities and Comparisons goal areas).

### 5.1.2 Comparison of Language Selection and Use with Regional Knowledge

Students used their context-specific knowledge from their experiences to interpret linguistic signs. Many of the students’ examples were related to linguistic choices. The two pictures below are signs for items in aisles in different Korean grocery stores. The students concluded that different languages were used based on where the stores were located. The sign on the left has English and Korean together with Korean provided as a supporting language in smaller font. On the right, the Korean-only sign (meaning canned foods, noodles, and curry) is from the region in Georgia that has a Korean-dominant population. The students analyzed these two signs with their contextual and regional background knowledge (Fig. 3).

Interestingly, the Korean-only signage was from a grocery store in Korean-dense Gwinnett County in North East Georgia. According to 2000 U.S. Census Data on Foreign-Born Population by Region, Gwinnett County has a large proportion of the Korean population within Georgia. This one grocery store has more Korean speaking customers than other local stores do, and this fact is relevant to the higher visibility of Korean-only signs. The students’ understandings of the connections between place and the selection of language are an important indicator of the students’ regional competency. The students were able to differentiate focal locations with different features, particularly the linguistic surroundings.

In another example, the students found that different branches of chain stores put up signs with different languages depending on their specific locations. One group investigated Korean bakeries in Atlanta and, interestingly, found that the languages appearing on store signs of bakeries were different depending on the local population and target customers’ languages. “Windmill” or “White Windmill” are widely used as bakery names in Korea. The pictures below show two bakeries which are branches of the same company but use different languages on their store signs. On the left, they use the English version, while the one on the right has a Korean sign with the symbol of a windmill and smaller lettering for the English words, “Bakery and Cafe”. Not surprisingly, the second picture was taken in Gwinnett County where the majority of customers are Korean (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 3** Students' data on aisle signs



**Fig. 4** Korean bakeries

As these examples show, the students used their regional and contextual knowledge to compare and contrast different language usages in their analyses. Building this comparative perspective is closely related to their linguistic competency, as well as their regional competency, because the students can fully understand how languages and cultures are located in a specific context, and how the people within the settings use them. Their analyses show how they take into account the target audiences of the signs. This shows the students' ability to compare language use with the characteristics of local communities—thereby realizing the Comparison goal of the ACTFL World Readiness Standards.

### 5.1.3 Evaluation of the Authenticity of Target Culture: Connection and Comparison

Although the main focus of this project was the students' investigation of the linguistic features found in the linguistic landscape, they often referred to the interplay between other resources including images, smells, and tastes. In this section, we will discuss how the students evaluated the authenticity of culture based on this information. It is notable that students could have different interpretations of the same linguistic or cultural environment. As an example, two groups visited the same Korean-Southern fusion restaurant, but had contradictory interpretations regarding the authenticity of the restaurant and the food. One group reported their evaluation of the restaurant as follows during the discussion after showing their video:

As a Korean inspired authentic restaurant at Atlanta, it is interesting to see how this restaurant utilized its Korean words, English words, and combined words in both languages in order to make their menu feel like that to their customers.

In contrast, the other group presented their evaluation as follows:

- Z: *Bibimbap*<sup>1</sup> tastes not bad; however, it does not taste like the normal *bibimbap* that I had in other Korean restaurants. It kinda lacks both the traditional Korean and Southern flavors, so now it tastes like a new version of *bibimbap*.
- P: Do you like it though?
- Z: Not really... Somehow this doesn't taste authentic.

As these examples show, different groups evaluated the authenticity of a Korean fusion restaurant in totally different ways. The first group reported this restaurant to be a very authentic Korean restaurant while the other group criticized this restaurant because of the lack of authenticity. These different perspectives might reflect their experiences and expectations regarding the target culture. These contradictory evaluations are not limited to being divergent opinions, but they open a space for discussing the issue of authenticity in class. This can be found in the other students' project reflections.

After watching the two videos on the local restaurant by our peers, it was interesting to see their contrasting viewpoints on authentic Asian food. Cassandra and Nicole seemed to feel as though the restaurant was very Korean whereas the other group felt differently. These differences could possibly stem from different background knowledge of how a Korean restaurant should feel.

This portrays how students' subjective evaluations established a space for sharing ideas and learning different perspectives (Connections: Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives). As such, the linguistic language can be a source of both authentic input and contestation, as argued by Gorter (2013, p. 201): "Linguistic landscapes can be places where linguistic diversity is displayed but also contested." The diversity of interpretations of the linguistic environment reveals the importance for language teachers to offer a space for students to express and share ideas in

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<sup>1</sup> *Bibimbap* is a signature Korean dish, meaning "mixed rice" in Korean.

class. Through this process, learners have the opportunity to access and evaluate diverse perspectives on the target languages and cultures.

#### **5.1.4 Language Awareness and Construction of Identities: Connections and Communities**

The LL project documented in this study also provided opportunities for students to develop awareness of cultural identities expressed through language. As signs can display the identities of certain language groups, they reflect different groups' social status and history in various contexts (Gorter and Cenoz, 2007). Leung and Wu's (2012) case study on linguistic landscape and heritage language literacy education shows that LL projects are also closely related to reinforcement or shifts of identities (e.g. heritage identity). In Leung and Wu's (2012) qualitative content analysis of 330 photos of multiple Chinese language usages, they found that the linguistic landscape can be a resource for socially sensitive literacy development, with the ability to teach how Chinese is used in informal and community-based contexts, which might be different from formal educational contexts. In this light, one student in our study traced the changes of their linguistic environment over time and reported as follows:

When I was a young child, I actually didn't want to learn Korean. Sometimes my classmates would tease me for being Asian, and I didn't know many Korean kids my own age. At that point in time, I didn't see a use for learning the language. However, as I grew older and began to embrace my heritage, I developed a strong interest in learning Korean. Through this linguistic landscape project, I was able to explore the use of the Korean language in the context of such different areas and observe the changes over the time. It was interesting to find out how Korean people—and thus, the Korean language—has migrated and established itself around Atlanta. I was also able to explore some of the historical reasons and factors affecting the migration of the language.

Another student also reported in her reflection that from the LL project, she came to have high self-esteem in her language and culture. Observing the spread of Korean language and culture and their visibility in local contexts made her realize the growth of the culture.

It made me proud that my Korean heritage was spread to many different locations. I became conscious of how important language and culture are in influencing the way a place develops over time, and the integration of Korea in many foreign countries was impressive to me. I think that many people are exposed to linguistic landscapes, but do not consciously realize it. Although I think it would be good if people were more aware, I think the fact that they accept it as natural and normal says something about how languages and cultures have become extensively assimilated in many places of the world.

These responses reveal that the LL project influenced the students' reflections on their language learning as well as reconstructed their identities (Connection: Making Connections). They came to understand individual language choices and, from this understanding, they thought about how the multilingual society was constructed (Shohamy and Gorter 2009).

Investigating one's linguistic and cultural environment is an active process of creating and reinforcing one's linguistic repertoires. Through understanding the choice of language within a multilingual context, students in this project also interpreted language as not merely a tool of communication, but as a meaningful choice of individual linguistic repertoires. Students engaged with heteroglossic discourses of the local community by focusing on particular neighborhood practices in linguistic landscapes including different Korean cafes where they could see the use of multi/bilingual and monolingual Korean signs (Communities: School and Global Communities). Students also cultivated abilities to research in out-of-class contexts through developing and sharing findings regarding their local linguistic landscapes. Furthermore, students challenged the notion of territoriality that most often considers places as fixed. In the following section, we will further discuss the overall findings of this study and the pedagogical implications of LL projects in terms of promoting the 5Cs in the beginning language classroom.

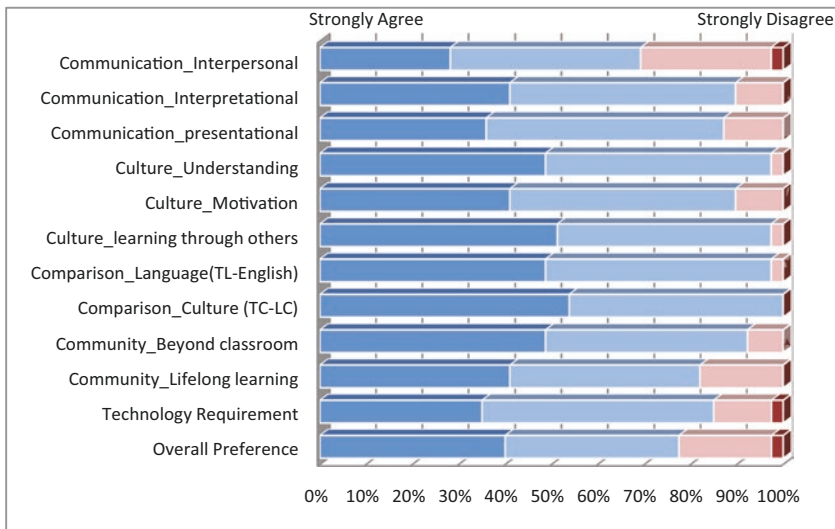
## 5.2 *Students' Survey on the 5Cs*

To investigate the effectiveness of the project and what the students thought about the LL project, a survey was implemented after the project's completion. Survey questions consisted of students' self-evaluation of their improvement in the 5 Cs. In terms of Culture, we asked about the understanding, motivation, and learning experiences that resulted from the other students' work. For Comparisons, we wanted to know whether the students compared the target language and the target culture with their native languages and local culture through the LL project. For Communities, we asked whether or not students were able to reach the local communities beyond their language classroom, and whether or not the project contributed to the development of their motivation to continue learning the language. This also relates to the students' motivation to maintain lifelong language learning experiences in the "Community" factor of the 5Cs. Although Connections was not included in the survey, students did in fact actively utilize the Connections area in their analyses of the data that they collected.

Overall, as Fig. 5 illustrates, all the items had very high ratings: 70–100% were positive. As perhaps could be expected, the comparison of both culture and language, and reaching the community beyond the classroom had the most positive responses. In the domain of communication, the most positive response was in the interpretive mode, followed by the presentational mode and interpersonal mode.<sup>2</sup> Since this was a graded project, students dealt with a lot of the written format of data rather than having interactions with other people using the target language.

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<sup>2</sup>Here our use of the terms "interpretational," "presentational," and "interpersonal" modes borrows from performance descriptors commonly employed by ACTFL to differentiate between types of communicative activity in a foreign language.



**Fig. 5** Student survey results

**Communications** The students explained that the project enhanced their communication skills through interactions with local speakers of the target language and the growth in their ability to read and understand signage, menus or other written text in the target language.

**Cultures** The students also answered in their survey that the LL project enhanced their understanding of the target culture in the local context and that participating in digital storytelling increased their interest in Korean culture. In addition to creating their own videos, watching their other classmates' projects helped them learn more about the culture.

**Comparisons** The project also increased students' awareness of the similarities and differences between the target language and their first language, as well as the target culture and their own cultures.

**Communities** According to the students' answers, the project also furthered their understanding of local Korean communities beyond the language classroom, and it increased their motivation to continue to learn the target language. The following response from one of the participating students illustrates this point.

The good part of this project is because we need to collect data from Korean, so it pushed us to get into Korean community, and deeper level of Korean culture. By complete this linguistic landscape project, I can learn that Korean culture has been known by more and more Americans, and it is very nice to see more foreigners would like to try another new culture, and get to know new culture by eating their food, shopping in their markets.



The students' projects included presentation materials (digital storytelling and analysis), a survey, and a reflection paper. In the following section, we will discuss the outcomes from the project and examine the benefits of the LL project in Korean language education.

## 6 Discussion

The findings from this study illustrate that LL is relevant to foreign language classes; specifically, LL can be applied to elementary level foreign language classes. This project helped students explore their linguistic surroundings and become aware of the multilingual environment. It also promoted the learners' understandings of the use of Korean in multilingual contexts. LL projects are grounded on place-based, community-focused education (Brown 2012) that encompass incidental language learning and developing multimodal literacy.

The students decoded the language on signs in different ways. This owed in part to their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and this diversity engendered active interactions about the target language and culture, the local language and culture, and students' own languages and cultures (e.g. Chinese, Vietnamese, or Japanese). In analyzing students' LL projects, we were able to see (1) how the learners used their L1 and C1 to analyze the linguistic landscapes, (2) how they evaluated the authenticity of the language and culture, (3) how they compared and contrasted different signs with regional knowledge, and (4) how the learners' awareness of linguistic diversity impacted their reflections on language and culture. In addition, we found that language learning or cultural learning happened not only when students collected or analyzed the data, but also while they were watching other students' videos and discussing different findings.

The findings also show how the LL project promoted the 5Cs in the Korean as a Foreign Language classroom. Predominantly, the LL project afforded students opportunities to develop the 5Cs by closely connecting to the target communities and analyzing signs with comparative perspectives. One of the main concerns about the 5C Standards is "a tendency to consider the goal areas individually instead of focusing on their interrelationship" (Magnan 2017). However, outcomes from LL projects in this study show how the 5Cs interplayed within a cultural context. Communities offered contexts for linguistic and cultural exploration, and the students explored these while connecting to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and comparing the target culture to their home cultures. As seen in the example of the students' analysis of an instant noodle package, learners used both language comparison and cultural comparison to make sense of the multilingual package, showing that learners can interpret signs with diverse perspectives and create new understandings of the Korean language.

Along with the previous LL research that emphasized the importance of the perspectives of the actors in LL research (e.g., Malinowski 2009; Lou 2010; Papen 2012), students' voices, perceptions, and reflections on the LL project were incorporated into this study by documenting their discussion in class, conducting a survey, and having students reflect on their projects. The students' reflections show that the LL project helped them become aware of their linguistic environment and language use in general. In particular, this project encouraged the learners to interact with their local Korean community and to understand their language and culture. Additionally, it is notable that for the heritage students who spent their whole lives in Georgia, this project offered a meaningful opportunity to rethink their Korean heritage and to obtain a sense of pride in their culture and language, which might have been overlooked by the learners. Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the idea that we cannot think of language learning without social contexts and the linguistic environment, including in particular notions of space, location, and language (cf. Pennycook and Otsuji 2015), all of which are indispensable elements in language education. Our learners engaged with meaning-making processes by incorporating these concepts. We also highlight the significance of considering how multiple layered meanings are differently constructed in relation to other languages and cultures within a socially constructed space (Canagarajah 2013). The local community of the target language is a great resource for students to observe how language and culture are expressed and developed in different regions. This perspective involves a broader understanding of culture to include such features as knowledge of the natural-physical environment where culture develops and awareness of how culture is expressed in a specific region.

## 7 Conclusion

This student-centered project offers support for foreign language classrooms engaging meaningfully with out-of-class contexts and expands opportunities for language use in the foreign language context. By pushing the notion of multilingualism to a more concrete and accessible level, projects such as the one documented here offer opportunities for students to reflect on their own language learning and use as well as better understand their linguistic and cultural surroundings. In this process, students are considered as active participants, "language detectives" (Sayer 2010, p.144), investigators, and ethnographers who can think creatively and analytically about how language is used in their domestic settings and become more aware of their own sociolinguistic contexts. This also leads students to better understand how multilingualism is locally relevant (Kasanga 2012). This also answers the call for participatory and inquiry-based learning across multilingual sites in critical and alternative pedagogy (Shohamy and Waksman 2009), and socially sensitive pedagogy. Careful analysis of the linguistic landscape can help us appreciate the ways individual language choices are constructed and understand the target language and culture in multilingual contexts (Shohamy and Gorter 2009).

Future research involving more systematic analyses of linguistic features in the linguistic landscape, including orthography, pronunciation rules, and syntax is needed, and these areas can be used to develop classroom materials. In a similar vein, the development of additional pedagogical materials for language learning and teaching is necessary to facilitate this type of project. For example, we need to improve hands-on classroom activities for learning vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions from the investigation of linguistic landscapes. In addition to that, longitudinal LL exploration may bring meaningful results. For instance, visiting the same places several times over a time period and observing the linguistic shifts in a given context could be a meaningful contribution. Additionally, with the students' increasing mobility, the opportunity to compare and contrast two different linguistic surroundings (e.g. FL and SL) will provide an interesting investigation. The linguistic environment is always changing as time passes, and these shifts may bring changes in linguistic and cultural ideologies with them. The linguistic landscape is a valuable resource for our foreign language classes because of its authentic nature and, undoubtedly, there is room to develop more creative and critical applications in our foreign language classrooms.

## Appendices

### *Appendix 1: A Summary of the Project Procedure*

Steps	Formats	Emphases
1. Introduction	Lecture	Definition/Goals/Possible Topics/ Examples
2. Students' research	Group work (3–4 students)	Identify geolocative point of interest that is related to target culture Visit the places and collect data Analyze the data and write a script Obtain feedbacks on the script from the instructor Creating Digital Story Telling and Posting it on Google Maps
3. Presentation	Digital Story Telling (DST), Presentation, board	Present DST videos on Google Maps in class Peer feedbacks and interactions to the DST through Google maps
4. Reflection	Individual Writing	What did you learn from the project?
5. Grading		Script (10%) Materials Contents (70%): Information, analysis, & creativity Interaction and Reflection (20%)

## Appendix 2: Student Survey Questions

This project enhanced my communication skills to interact with local speakers of the target language.*	Communication_Interpersonal
This project enhanced my ability to read and understand signage, menu, or other text written in the target language.	Communication_Interpretational
This project enhanced my ability to organize concepts and ideas to inform, explain, and narrate in the target language.	Communication_Presentational
This project enhanced my understanding of the target culture in the local context.	Culture_Understanding
Creating the digital story increased my interest in the target culture.	Culture_Motivation
Watching other students' digital stories helped me learn the target culture.	Culture_Learning through others'
This project increased my awareness of the similarities and differences between the target language and English.	Comparison_Language (target language-English)
This project increased my awareness of the similarities and differences between the target culture and the local culture.	Comparison_Korean (target culture-local culture)
This project furthered my understanding of local Chinese/Japanese/Korean communities beyond the language classroom.	Community_Schools and communities (beyond classroom)
This project increased my motivation for continuing learning the target language.	Community_Lifelong learning (motivation)
The technology required for the project was easy to learn.	Technology
I would recommend using this project for future language classes.	Overall preference

\*The target language and culture used in this survey refer to Korean language and culture since this survey was conducted in Korean as a foreign language classroom

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