

# 韓国におけるベトナム人花嫁の適応: 地理学の観点から

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# Adaptation of Vietnamese Brides in Korea: A View from Geographical Perspective

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## Abstract

Adaptation is a natural and inevitable process of all immigrants, especially to those people who intend to settle down in a new country as the case of Vietnamese brides in Korea. Most Vietnamese brides came from the rural areas of Vietnam. More than half of them migrate to urban areas; nearly half of them moved to rural areas of Korea. Though, there are many supporting programs from the Korean Government and NGOs; and, Vietnamese brides themselves also have great motivation to adapt to the new life; they are widely observed to be much more marginalized than other foreign brides. Concerning about the marginalization of Vietnamese brides in Korea, this paper tries to comprehend how they improve their communication competence (including language and culture competence) in rural and urban areas of Korea. Firstly, we provide the model of geographical context of adaptation. Based on this model, we analyze the social-economic characteristics of Vietnamese brides before and after migration to examine how they acquire communication competence to adapt themselves to Korean society; what are the difficulties/constraints they face in the two areas. Results of the analysis show that in rural areas, Vietnamese brides in rural areas of Korea face with more difficulties not only because of the insufficient supporting programs from Korean Government/NGOs but also because of the low education level of Vietnamese brides. Concrete and suitable supporting programs should be considered in rural areas to help Vietnamese brides, especially those brides with primary education level, to improve their communication competence to adapt into Korean society.

## Keywords

Adaptation, marginalized, communication competence, Vietnamese brides, Korea

## 韓国におけるベトナム人花嫁の適応

### —地理学の観点から—

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## 要旨

適応はあらゆる移民にとって自然で不可避のプロセスであり、とりわけ韓国のベトナム人花嫁

のように新たな国で身を落ち着けようとする人々にとってはそうである。多くのベトナム人花嫁がベトナム農村部の出身である。韓国で彼女たちの過半数は都市地域へ、残りの半数近くが農村部へと移り住む。韓国政府やNGOが様々な支援を提供し、ベトナム人花嫁自身も必死に新たな生活へ適応しようとしているにもかかわらず、彼女たちは様々な面で他の外国人花嫁と比べてより周縁化されている。韓国におけるベトナム人花嫁の周縁化に関して、本稿は地理学的視点から彼女たちの新たな生活への適応過程を理解しようとするものである。最初に適応過程の地理学的コンテキストのモデルを示し、次いでこのモデルに基づいてベトナム人花嫁の移住前後の社会経済的特性についての分析を通して、(1)彼女たちは韓国社会に適応するためのコミュニケーション能力(言語的・文化的能力を含む)をどのようにして獲得していったのか、(2)二つの地区を取り上げて彼女たちが直面する困難や制約はどのようなものか、についての検討をおこなう。その結果、農村部においてベトナム人花嫁が困難に直面している背景には、韓国政府やNGOによる十分な支援を受けられないことだけでなく、彼女たち自身の低い教育水準が関係していることが明らかとなった。農村部においてベトナム人花嫁を支えるためには具体的で適切な支援プログラムが必要であり、とりわけ低い教育水準のベトナム人花嫁については韓国社会に適応するためのコミュニケーション能力の向上のための支援が不可欠である。

#### キーワード

適応, 周縁化, 適応能力, ベトナム人花嫁

## Introduction

Nowadays, Korea is one of destination countries of many foreign brides. The statistics of KOSIS (2011) reported that the total number of foreign brides were 6,945 (2000), increased to 101,902 (2005); then jumped up 239,726 (2010), and reached 261,991 (2011).

From February, 2005, responding to the request to regulate marriage agencies of sixteen congressmen, the central Government of Korea has begun paying great concern about the foreign brides. Korean Government conducted two nation-wide surveys, including Survey for the Welfare State of International Marriage Family, in 2005; and Survey on the Conjugal Life of Transnational Marriage Families, in 2006. Since 2009, a periodical nation-wide survey on the foreign brides will be conducted every three years. Besides, some local governments also carried out surveys on the foreign brides such

as Kyungpook-do (2007) etc. Since the increasing of foreign brides has become important topics of discourse in Korea, data sources of these surveys have been analyzed by researchers in different aspects such as social welfare, sociology, education, feminism, and politics etc. (Kim, 2007; Kim & Shin, 2007; Lee, 2008; A. Kim, 2009; Kim, 2010, Yang, 2011, Kim, 2011).

Sociology researchers often focused on the adaptation of foreign brides. They discussed problems that most foreign brides are faced in their adaptation process, for example, language barrier, cultural differences, social exclusion and discrimination (Lee, 2006; Kim, 2006; Kim & Shin, 2007; H. Kim, 2009). Language barrier and cultural differences are considered as the main difficulties for the foreign brides to adapt to the new life.

Some scholars argued that the foreign brides are not treated as an equal individual in the family court since their roles are highlighted as

mother and wife (Yang, 2011; Lee, 2008). Kim (2011) agreed with Yang and Lee propositions. Besides, Kim emphasized that the foreign brides are also posited as "others" in the overlapping hierarchical relationship between husband and wife as well as between sending and receiving countries.

Based on the national Survey in 2005, Lee (2006) categorized the foreign wives into five groups, including Korean-Chinese, other foreign Korean, South East Asian, Family Federation<sup>1</sup>, and brides from other countries. Lee stated that, nationality and ethnicity greatly affect social positions of foreign brides after marriage. According to Lee, Korean-Chinese brides are the most independent and active group because of social and cultural proximity, ethnic ties, and Korean proficiency. And, Southeast Asian brides are considered as the most adaptive because they want to be full members in their Korean families and society.

A general viewpoint of foreign brides in rural areas is they faced with more difficulties than those brides in urban areas in term of marriage life and adjustment to Korean society due to the closed culture of rural community and insufficient supporting programs. Kim & Shin (2007) pointed out that in rural areas, foreign brides are multidimensionally excluded, including exclusion from the main stream culture, education opportunities, economic life, and community life. It is more difficult for the foreign brides to adapt themselves to Korean society because the people in rural areas are more conservative and traditions are well-preserved. Kim & Go (2008) stated that foreign brides in rural areas are confronted with diverse kinds of problems including marriage life, child nursing, leisure time spending, and social networks. Many of them experience

deprivation, exclusion, conflicts with in-laws due to the lack of Korean ability, lack of information about supporting programs, and narrow social network, etc. Foreign brides in rural areas have strong demand for educational or social services, including Korean language education, Korean cuisine learning, language interpretation service, job training, Korean culture and history, and medical consultation. In reality, their strong demands cannot be fulfilled under inadequate, inefficient, segmented, and irrelevant supporting programs of the central/local governments and NGOs.

The existing studies often focused on the disadvantages of foreign brides on their adaptation in general, especially the disadvantages of their condition in Korea. Little has been examined about the pre-migration social-economic characteristics of specific group of foreign brides. So (2011) suggested that future studies need to investigate the adaptation of foreign brides by nationality because those brides came to Korea from different cultural backgrounds. Besides, previous researches often used data source came from surveys of Korean Government or local governments. It is necessary to do empirical researches in order to comprehend the real status as well as the voice of foreign brides during their adaptation in Korea. Since the share of Vietnamese brides among foreign brides in rural areas is much higher in comparison with other foreign brides; and, it is widely observed among Korean people that Vietnamese brides are more marginalized than other foreign brides in Korea, this paper tries to comprehend the adaptation of Vietnamese brides based on geographical perspective.

Data sources of this study came from the field researches conducted on 48 Vietnamese brides, in Gangwon, Gyeongsangbuk provinces,

and Daegu city; from December 7 to 12, 2010 and from July 31 to August 7, 2011. The field researches include a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted in different places, such as in the Multicultural family support Center, the Women Migrant Human Right Center, a coffee shop, and in the home of eleven brides. We used Vietnamese language to do the field researches; therefore, Vietnamese brides can expose their opinions, feelings, and attitudes without difficulty.

To investigate the adaptation of Vietnamese brides in rural and urban areas. Firstly, we provide the model of geographical context of adaptation. Then, we make an overview of the current inflow of Vietnamese brides to Korea. Based on the geographical context of adaptation model, we will analyze the social-economic characteristics of Vietnamese brides before and after migration to examine their communication competence and the difficulties/constraints they faced to adapt to Korean society. In the final chapter, by analyzing the social-economic characteristics of specific cases, we try to ascertain fully all the reasons that make Vietnamese brides cannot improve their communication competence, especially Korean ability.

## **I. Theoretical foundation**

In this chapter, we provide the geographical context of adaptation model of immigrants by modifying Kim's framework.

### **I.1. Geographical context of adaptation**

Evidently, migration means that the migrants will enter an unfamiliar environment and need to adjust themselves to the new surroundings. Nor matter adaptation is stressful or not, it is a natural and inevitable process to all immigrants.

According to Kim (1989), adaptation process greatly depends on one's own ability. And, communication with the host society play a central role in the adaptation of immigrants. Communication competence is the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately in specific contexts. The more interaction with the host society, the more communication competence the migrants acquire. This interactive and multi-dimensional model of adaptation demonstrates the linkage between the migrants' background in the country of origin and conditions in the destinations. Though, Kim's theory is very suitable and comprehensive to depict the adaptation process of migrants, this theory does not emphasize the effects of geographical context in which the migrants' adaptation takes place.

Here, we define geographical context as the area/location where the migrants out-migrate and in-migrate, including rural and urban areas. The migrants might move to a new place which has the same geographical context or might not. The case of Vietnamese brides in Korea is an example. All most all Vietnamese brides are from rural areas. In reality, more than half of them migrate to big cities<sup>2</sup>. In other words, nearly half of them moved to a relative similar geographical context as in Vietnam, i.e. rural areas. This means, many brides will start their adaptation process in a familiar agricultural living condition; and, many other will adjust themselves to the new life in a completely different living environment.

Basically, urban and rural areas are multidimensionally different, including economy, employment, education, service and information accessibility, sense of the community, demography, political views, etc (Scott et al., 2007). In rural area, the solidarity of community is higher,

social relation is closer and traditions are more preserved than in the urban. In urban area, more advantages in education, occupation opportunities etc are available. Beside, urban people often have a wider perspective of life, public opinion is more open and rationale, social relationships are loose. In the two areas, different social relations will be formed, different social interactions will be put in practice from which the immigrants will improve their communication competence. Therefore, in each area, the immigrants will face with different difficulties to adapt to the new life.

As we know, Korea is a very racially homogeneous society. It must be difficult for all immigrants to adapt to Korean society, not only the marriage migrants (Kim, 2006). In contemporary Korea, due to the big gap between rural and urban area regarding the development in economic, social and cultural aspects; it is widely believed that in rural Korea, foreign brides will face with more difficulties than those in urban area such as hard-working condition in agricultural sector, poor public

transportation, different kinds of social controls/ social pressures due to the closure of agricultural culture and well-preserved traditions, less of supports from NGOs, insufficient support from the Government etc (Kim & Shin, 2007; Kim & Go, 2008).

Anyway, in rural areas, the social relationships are dense, including relationship within the family and in the society. Most foreign brides in rural areas live in extended families in which different social relations with other family members exist, not only relationship between husband and wife (Wang, 2007). Besides, the significant characteristic of agricultural communities is the close solidarity in all aspects of rural life such as family ties, relationship with relatives, connection of the neighborhood, countryside lifestyles, community events, rural markets etc. This means, in rural areas, foreign brides are forced to make communication/interaction with Korean people/community in many circumstances. Thus, they experienced more chances to practice and improve their Korean ability naturally than those brides in urban

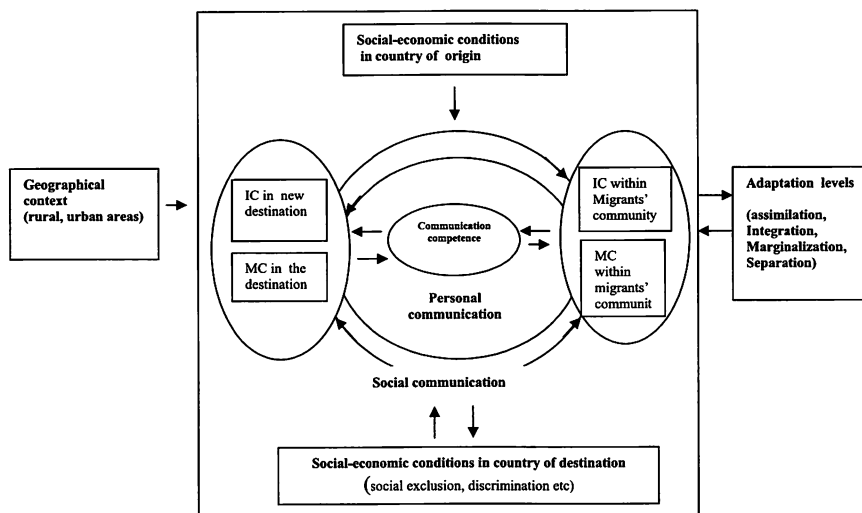


Figure 1. Geographical context of adaptation model

Note: IC = interpersonal communication, MC= mass communication

Modified: Kim's model (1989)

area<sup>3</sup>. For example, in the city, it is possible for foreign brides to buy commodities in a supermarket without making any conversation with the cashier. In contrast, in a market of rural areas, they must try to tell the sellers what they want to buy, to ask about the price, to bargain if possible etc. Without making communication, they cannot possess the thing they want to buy. Such conversations can help foreign brides improve their Korean ability, and gradually improve their communication competence.

Figure 1 presents the model of geographical context of adaptation (modified Kim's theory) to conceptualize how the Vietnamese brides acquire their communication competence to adapt to Korean society in specific geographical context. Their social-economic conditions before and after migration greatly influence to their communication competence of Korean society. Their knowledge of Korean language/culture will be increase cumulatively and progressively by making interaction and dealing with the Korean people/community. This mean, the more interaction with Korean people/community Vietnamese brides make, the more communication competence they acquire. The more interaction with Vietnamese people/community, the less communication competence of Korean society they will have.

### I. 2. Related working concepts

The four adaptation levels are assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation.

**Assimilation** is to remove one's former identity completely and adopt a new one when it is absolutely necessary to adapt to the culture of destination country.

**Integration** is a successful transition of one's own culture to the host culture. It represents

the incorporating the new cultural characteristics while still maintaining one's own cultural identity. This is the most adaptive resolution for adaptation because there is a relative balance between maintaining one's own culture and acquiring the new ones.

**Marginalization** means losing contact with both one's own culture and the host culture. This means, ones are in between the two cultures, losing one's own identity and often being isolated.

**Separation** is retaining one's own culture and withdrawing from the host culture.

### **Social exclusion**

Kim & Shin (2007) discussed that social exclusion is multi-dimensional; and, the dimensions of social exclusion are defined by the researchers themselves. This current paper discusses some dimensions that Vietnamese brides are excluded in Korea; including education opportunity, economic life, and community life. Therefore, we consider that social exclusion is the deprivation of chances to join in the sectors of social life, culture, and economy.

### **Discrimination**

Although, discrimination is a legal and political concept, it is related to many fields such as culture, linguistic, and sociology, etc. Therefore, it becomes a social analysis. According to *Gordon Allport (1954)*, *discrimination is the actual behavior towards members of another group. It involves excluding and restricting members of one group from opportunities that are available to other groups.*

## II. Current inflow of Vietnamese brides in Korea

### II. 1. Statistics trend

**Table 1: The increasing of Vietnamese brides in Korea**

year		2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	Total
foreign brides		6,945	10,698	25,105	29,665	28,163	26,274	239,726
Chinese brides	No	3,566	7,023	18,489	14,566	13,203	9,623	66,470
	%	51.3	65.6	73.6	49.1	46.9	36.7	27.7
Vietnamese brides	No	77	474	2,461	10,128	8,282	9,623	52,262
	%	1.1	4.4	9.8	34.1	29.4	36.6	22

Source: Korean National statistics (2010)

Table 1 presents the abrupt increase of Vietnamese brides in Korea from 2000 to 2010. Vietnamese brides soon become the second largest group, just after the Chinese, with the total number of is 52,262, counting for 22% of all foreign brides in Korea. (Kosis, 2010)

In 2000, there are only 77 Vietnamese brides in Korea. In 2004, the number of Vietnamese brides suddenly rises to 2,461 brides, keeps on increasing drastically in 2006 with 10,128 brides, and little level off in 2010 with 9,632 brides. Noticeably, while the proportion of Chinese brides decrease gradually, that of Vietnamese brides steadily and rapidly increase from 1.1% in 2000 to 9.8% in 2004, 34.1% in 2006, and 36.1% in 2010.

The increasing of Vietnamese brides is greatly related to the operation of marriage brokers. Actually, the first and biggest inflow of foreign brides to Korea through marriage agencies is the Chinese, including the Korean-Chinese (Josunjok group). However, since late 1990s, after recognizing many disguised marriages, Korean Government restricted the inflow of foreign brides from China (Kim, 2007; Lee, 2008). This made the marriage brokers in Korea try to find foreign brides from Southeast Asian countries, and Vietnam is one of the new sources. Before migrating to Korea, most Vietnamese women from rural areas of Vietnam married Taiwanese men via brokers. Since 2004, Taiwanese Government attempted to

restrict the influx of Vietnamese brides (Chen, 2006; Kim, 2007; Nguyen 2010), this made marriage brokers in Vietnamese try to find a new source, and Korea become the new destination. This explained why Vietnamese brides started to migrate to Korea in 2000s, and the number increased rapidly after 2004.

## II. 2. Geographical distribution

From Figure 2, we can see that more Vietnamese brides migrate to urban areas of Korea than to rural areas, including five big cities like Seoul, Incheon, Daegu, Busan, Ulsan.



Figure 2: Regional distribution of Vietnamese brides in Korea

Source: Vital statistics of Korea (2010)

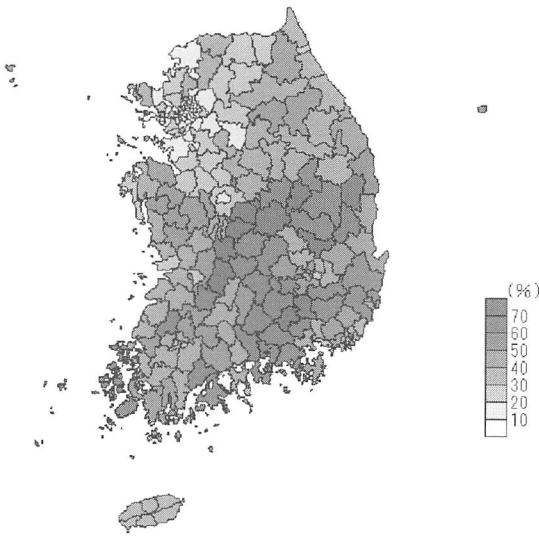


Figure 3: Share of Vietnamese wives out of foreign brides  
Source: Vital statistics of Korea (2010)

Data from Kosis (2010) show that, 54.1% Vietnamese brides live in urban areas, 45.9% in rural areas of Korea. This means, the absolute number of Vietnamese brides move to rural areas of Korea is about 24,000.

Noticeably, the proportion of Vietnamese brides is much higher in comparison with other foreign brides in rural area, as presented in Figure 3. This can be explained by the rural men’s preference Vietnamese brides to other brides because most Vietnamese brides are from rural areas of Vietnam. Vietnamese women were advertised by the brokers as

young, obedient, whole hearted to the family, from poor rural areas, and never run away etc really attract Korean men in rural areas (Yang, 2011)

In our survey, around 66.7% Vietnamese brides live in urban areas, 33.3% in rural areas, as shown in Table 2.

### III. The social-economic characteristics of Vietnamese brides before and after migration

Based on analyzing the social-economic characteristics of Vietnamese brides before and after migration in rural and urban areas of Korea, this chapter will discuss how Vietnamese brides differently acquire communication competence in the two areas.

#### III.1. The pre-migration social-economic characteristics of Vietnamese brides

Pre-migration social-economic characteristic of individual greatly influence the way Vietnamese brides adapt to the new life in Korea. We will discuss the following categories age, education level, occupation, and way of marriage, length of knowing the husband, preparation, and motivation before migrating to Korea.

##### General characteristics

Table 3 presents the general background of Vietnamese brides in our survey. Most of Vietnamese brides are very young, under and in their twenties; a majority of Vietnamese brides finished junior high school and lower; half of them got married via broker; a great number of them got married for economic reasons and decided to get married in a very short time (less than one week or one month); most of them took unskilled and low payment jobs; a greatest number of brides come from

Table 2: The displacement of Vietnamese brides

	Korea		Urban area (dong)		Total
	Rural area (Eup, myon)		Fre	%	
Vietnam	Fre	%	Fre	%	
Rural area (commune)	16	33.3	30	62.5	46
Urban area (ward)	0	0.0	2	4.2	2
Total	16	33.3	32	66.7	48

Source: Survey of authors

Table 3: Social-economic characteristics of Vietnamese brides before migration (n=48)

Marriage age		Education		Occupation		Hometown	
17-19	13	Primary	7	maidservant	7	Rural	46
20-24	22	Junior	21	Worker	11	Urban	2
25-29	12	Senior	14	Farmer	9		
30-34	1	tertiary	6	Seller	9		
				Others*	12		
Motivation		How to know		Length of knowing		Hometown by regions	
To help the family	20	Via relatives	12	<1week	21	North	15
For a better life	14	Via friends	10	<1month	9	Central	2
others	14	Via brokers	24	more	18	South	31
		others	2				

Source: Survey of authors

(\*Others: student, accountant, teachers)

the south of Vietnam, then from the north, and few from the central. Especially, most of them are from the rural areas of Vietnam.

The average marriage age of Vietnamese brides is 22.3; of Korean husbands is 39. The average age gap between husband and wife is 17 years, similar to that of Kosis's report (2009). Kim (2010) also mentioned that most of Vietnamese brides in Korea are young and get married to Korean men the first time.

In comparison with other foreign brides in Korea, Vietnamese brides belong to the lowest education levels group (Kosis, 2009). Around 20% and 41.9% Vietnamese brides finished primary and junior high school, much lower than the figure of 8.5% and 28.0% of the total

foreign brides. The figure 4% Vietnamese brides have tertiary education level is also the lowest, five times lower than the figure 20.8% of total foreign brides.

When we asked Vietnamese brides the question *what did you prepare before going to Korea?* 88.5% brides responded as "learning Korean language", 33.7% "learning Korean culture", 13.9% "learning cooking", and 13.9% "learning nothing", as shown in Figure 4. However, 90% brides learned Korean in a very short time, often within two months, during the time they were waiting for visa to migrate.

Especially, before migration, Vietnamese brides have very little information about the husbands' families as well as the living condition in Korea since most of them decided to get marriage in a very short time, less than one month and less than one week. About 64.6% brides responded that they have little and no information of the husbands' families in Korea.

Some cases below are examples

Case 1: In Vietnam, I learnt Korean language during the time waiting for visa to move to Korea. I had three classes in a week. Each class took three hours. Actually, what I learnt was too little that I cannot communicate in

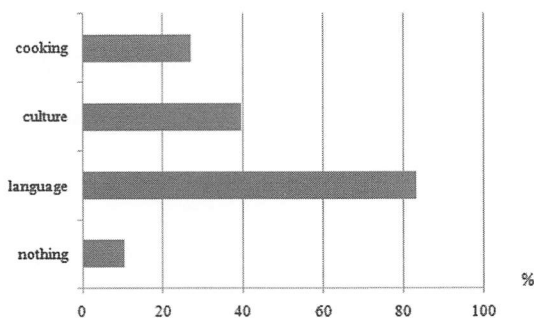


Figure 4: Preparation before going to Korea (n=48)

Note: multiple choices

Source: Survey of authors

Korean after coming to Korea.

Case 2: I was chosen by my husband in the first meeting and we immediately decided to get married. The broker organized a wedding party for me, together with other three brides in Dam Sen park. At that time, I even could not remember exactly my husband's name. I knew only two things, he is a worker and over 40. When I asked the broker information about my husband, they responded: "Go to Korea and you will know".

### **Motivation for adaptation**

Vietnamese brides have great motivation to adapt to the new life and to settle down in Korean forever because of the following reasons. First, it is nearly impossible for them to return Vietnam and remarry with Vietnamese men. This can be explained by the fact that in Vietnam, the Vietnamese majority disregard and discriminate Vietnamese brides in foreign countries. Most Vietnamese people criticize that those brides are not only selling their own dignity cheaply but also spoiling the image of Vietnamese women and traditions (Tran, 2006; Phan, 2005; Nguyen, 2010; Nguyen & Tran, 2010). Therefore, Vietnamese brides understand that they have no choice except to settle down and accept their destiny in Korea.

Second, Vietnam is deeply influenced by the Confucianism, especially the patrilineal ideology, that is, "a married daughter is no longer a daughter". This means, after marriage, Vietnamese brides must totally submit themselves to their husbands and husbands' family. Once decided to go to Korea, they never want to be pushed back Vietnam in any circumstance because it is not only so shameful for themselves but also for their parents (Nguyen et al., 2009). Nguyen et al. (2009) focused on the returned brides

due to different reasons. Nguyen et al. stated that all the returnees face with many difficulties to restart their life in Vietnam. Under serious pressure some of them continue to seek for opportunities to become foreign brides again.

### **Different social-economic characteristics**

There are some differences in education level, occupation, and way of getting married of Vietnamese brides in rural and urban areas of Korea.

As we can see in Table 4, education level of Vietnamese brides in rural areas is much lower, especially primary group. This can be explained by the business of marriage brokers. Since Korean men in rural areas also have lower education level than those in urban areas (see Table 5), brokers tend introduce them with the Vietnamese women of lower education group.

Correlative with education level, more Vietnamese brides in rural areas worked as maidservant, and farmer than in urban areas.

**Table 4: Pre-migration characteristics of Vietnamese brides in rural and urban areas of Korea**

		Number of person (%)		
		rural	urban	Total
education	Primary	5(31.3)	2 (6.3)	7(14.6)
	Secondary	5(31.3)	16(50.0)	21(43.8)
	High school	5(31.3)	9(28.1)	14(29.2)
	tertiary	1 (6.3)	5(15.6)	6(12.5)
How to know	friends	1 (6.3)	11(34.4)	12(25.0)
	relatives	5(31.3)	5(15.6)	10(20.8)
	broker	10(62.5)	14(43.8)	24(50.0)
	others	0 (0.0)	2 (6.3)	2 (4.2)
occupation	maidservant	2(12.5)	3 (9.4)	5(10.4)
	farmer	7(43.8)	3 (9.4)	10(20.8)
	service	3(18.8)	7(21.9)	10(20.8)
	worker	2(12.5)	9(28.1)	11(22.9)
	other	2(12.5)	10(31.3)	12(25.0)

source : survey of authors

Table 5: The social-economic characteristic of Vietnamese brides in Korea (n=48)

		Number of person (%)			
		Rural (n=16)	Urban (n=32)	Total (n=48)	
1	<b>Occupations</b>	housewives	9 (56.3)	27 (84.4)	36 (75)
		working	7 (43.8)	5 (15.6)	12 (25)
2	<b>Korean friend</b>	Zero	6 (37.5)	21 (65.6)	27 (56.3)
		One+	10 (62.5)	11 (34.4)	21 (43.7)
3	<b>Vietnamese friend</b>	Zero	0 (0.0)	1 (3.1)	1 (2.1)
		One+	16 (100)	31 (96.9)	47 (98.0)
4	<b>Husbands' education</b>	unknown	2 (12.5)	3 (9.4)	5 (10.4)
		Primary	1 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)
		Secondary	3 (18.8)	1 (3.1)	4 (8.3)
		High school	10 (62.5)	18 (56.3)	28 (58.3)
		tertiary	0 (0.0)	10 (31.3)	10 (20.8)
5	<b>Husbands' occupation</b>	Farmer	6 (37.5)	0 (0.0)	6 (12.5)
		Driver	0 (0.0)	6 (18.8)	6 (12.5)
		Worker	5 (31.3)	17 (53.1)	22 (45.8)
		Engineer/officer	0 (0.0)	2 (6.2)	2 (4.2)
		others	5 (31.3)	7 (21.9)	12 (25.0)
6	<b>Types of family</b>	Nuclear	8 (50.0)	21 (65.6)	29 (60.4)
		With in-laws	8 (50.0)	11 (34.4)	19 (39.6)
7	<b>Length of stay (years)</b>	<1	5 (31.3)	13 (40.6)	18 (37.5)
		1-3	4 (25.0)	13 (40.6)	17 (35.4)
		4-5	5 (31.3)	4 (12.5)	9 (18.8)
		6 +	2 (12.5)	2 (6.3)	4 (8.3)
8	<b>Number of children</b>	Zero	2 (12.5)	11 (34.4)	13 (27.1)
		One	9 (56.3)	15 (46.9)	24 (50)
		Two +	5 (31.3)	6 (18.8)	11 (22.9)
9	<b>Attend Korean class</b>	Regularly	6 (37.5)	15 (46.9)	21 (43.8)
		Irregularly	10 (62.5)	14 (43.8)	24 (50.0)
		no	0 (0.0)	3 (9.4)	3 (6.3)
10	<b>Attend public events</b>	Often	3 (18.8)	3 (9.4)	6 (12.5)
		Sometimes	5 (31.2)	17 (53.1)	22 (45.8)
		Rare	8 (50.0)	12 (37.5)	20 (41.7)
11	<b>Email user</b>	yes	5 (31)	24 (75)	29 (60)
		no	11 (69)	8 (25)	19 (40)
12	<b>Korean ability</b>	Good	5 (31.3)	6 (18.8)	11 (22.9)
		Average	1 (6.3)	13 (40.6)	14 (29.2)
		Poor	10 (62.5)	13 (40.6)	23 (47.9)

Source: Survey of authors

And, a majority Vietnamese brides got married via brokers, rural (62.5%), urban (43.8%); married via relatives and friends is lower than in urban areas, rural (37.6%), urban (50%). This mean chain marriage migration is more popular in urban than rural areas.

### III.2. The social-economic characteristics in Korea

The social-economic characteristics of Vietnamese brides in Korea directly influence to their communication competence, especially their Korean ability. We will discuss the following factors of Vietnamese brides in rural

and urban areas: occupation, length of stay, friendship, type of family, number of children, husband's education, occupation and income, attending Korean class, attending social events, email user.

Table 5 shows that, in Korea, most Vietnamese brides (75%) do not engage in work. Kosis (2009) also reported that, only 21.2% Vietnamese brides work, much lower than the figure 40.2% of the total foreign brides. About 72.9% brides stay in Korea within three years; 56.3% brides do not have any Korean friend while 90% brides have Vietnamese friend; 79.1% Korean husbands' education level is high school and tertiary; 70.8% Korean husbands work as farmer, driver and worker; 60.4% brides live in nuclear family; 72.9% brides have children; 56.3% brides cannot attend Korean class regularly; 12.5% brides often attend public events; 40% brides do not use email; 22.9% brides are good at Korean.

There are different social-characteristics between Vietnamese brides in urban and rural areas. In urban areas, the number of working brides is lower, urban (15.6%), rural (43.8%) because most of Vietnamese brides in rural area engage in farming works. More brides in urban area stay in Korea within three years, urban (81.2%), rural (56%). This is reasonable because Korean men in rural areas involved in international marriage earlier than those in urban areas. More brides in rural areas live in extended family, urban (34.4%), rural (50%). This means, Vietnamese brides in rural areas will face with more pressures and social controls within the family than those in urban areas.

In urban areas, fewer Vietnamese brides have Korean friends, urban (34.4%), rural (62.5%). Education of Korean husbands in urban areas is higher, urban (56.3% high

school and 31.3% tertiary), rural (62% high school). This is understandable because many Korean husbands in urban areas belong to the middle social class. Most of Korean husbands in urban area work as worker (53.1%) and driver (18.8%) while most of Korean husbands in rural area work as farmer (37.5%) and worker (31.3%). Fewer Vietnamese brides in urban area have children, urban (12.5%), rural (34.4%); and fewer brides have two children, urban (18.8%), rural (31.3%). This also can be explained by the length of stay of brides in urban areas is generally shorter.

More brides in urban areas can attend Korean class regularly, urban (46.9%), rural (37.5%) because in urban area, there are more supporting centers, and public transportation is more convenient etc. Actually, child-bearing and childrearing after migration is also one important reason that limits Vietnamese brides, both in urban and rural areas, from improving their Korean ability. As mentioned above, 72.9% brides have one or two children (after a short length of stay in Korea). Due to pregnancy and consequent childcare, Vietnamese brides often stop attending Korean class until their children go to school.

Data from Kosis (2009) shows that Korean speaking ability of Vietnamese brides is the lowest, and much lower than that of the total foreign brides; excellent (2.2%), good (10.3%), average (46.8%), poor and very poor (40.7%); while that of total foreign brides are 16.9%, 19.3%, 39.7%, 24.1%, respectively.

Results from our survey also show that Korean ability of Vietnamese brides is poor and closely related to their education level, as indicated in Fig 5.

Figure 6 reveals a great number of Vietnamese brides are not good at making

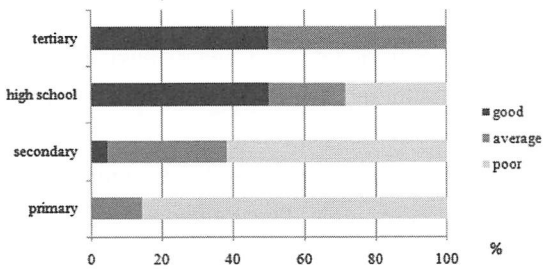


Figure 5: Education level and Korean ability (n=48)  
Source: survey of authors

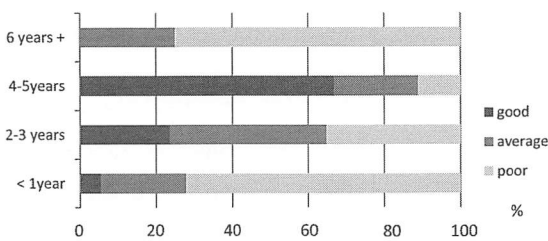


Figure 6: Length of stay and Korean ability  
Source: Survey of authors

communication in Korean. Only 22.9% brides responded as “good”, 29.2% as “average”, and 47.9% as “poor”<sup>4</sup>. Besides, in general their Korean ability is related to the length of stay in Korea.

In reality, the length of stay of Vietnamese brides in rural areas is generally longer than those in urban areas. However, as we can see in table 5, more brides in rural areas are poor at Korean, urban (40.6%), rural (62.5). This can be explained by the insufficient of social supporting programs from the Government and the low education levels of Vietnamese brides themselves.

Table 4 above show that in rural area, Vietnamese brides at primary education is 31.3%, around five times higher than that in urban area. If we convert 31.3% out of the total number of Vietnamese brides in rural areas (around 24,000 brides), the absolute number would be 8,000 brides. With low education

level, it is very hard for 8,000 Vietnamese brides to acquire a new language. Actually, among the Vietnamese brides we interviewed, some brides even cannot write and read in Vietnamese properly. The low education level brides in rural areas of Korea will be the most problematic group, struggling to improve Korean ability. Thus, they need special supporting programs from the central and local governments.

In general, language barrier is the first reason limits Vietnamese brides (both in rural and urban areas) from developing personal networks and enlarging social relations in Korea. The second reason is the Korean people, including their husbands and in-laws, discriminated Vietnamese brides because of many things such as their low education level, their purpose of marriage (for economic reason), coming from rural areas and a poorer country etc. Among the 48 interviewees, some stated that “the less I communicate with Korean people, the better I feel”. Or “it is better to say nothing when going out, then Korean people cannot recognize that I am not Korean, but Vietnamese”. This means, Vietnamese brides naturally are prone to alienate from interaction with Korean people/society.

In urban areas, Vietnamese brides’ network is strongly developed. About 66.7% brides live in nuclear families, 84.4% brides are housewives, and 65.6% brides do not have any Korean friends. As a result, those brides often interact with other Vietnamese brides, not with Korean people. They have more chances to connect, to hang about with other Vietnamese brides because there is no pressure, no control within the family. Especially, when the Korean husbands go to work, Vietnamese brides in nuclear family can often gather together to

enjoy Vietnamese food and chatting. One Vietnamese bride told me that: "I can freely go to other Vietnamese friends, but, I need to return home before 4pm because my husband will back home at 4".

We will take two cases as examples to demonstrate the fundamental difference between social relations within the community in rural and urban areas. Though, it may be not applicable to every case because it also depends on the type of family or the treatment of Korean husband/in-laws towards Vietnamese brides.

Case A: a bride in Hongcheon (a rural area of Gangwon).

A said that she lives with her husband, but her mother-in-law lives very close to her. So, her mother-in-law often comes to A's home to teach her everything, especially on festival or anniversary occasions. When she first came to Korea, her mother-in-law took her to introduce with all the neighbors within her village (ri).

Case B: a bride in Dong Daegu, Daegu city.

B said that her parents-in-law is in Daejeon. After 3 years in Korea, she met them only three times, once in her wedding party, and the other two in the New year occasions. She rarely meets other siblings of her husband, too because they live far away from Daegu. In her neighborhood (dong), she rarely communicates with Korean people. Also, few Korean people know her, even though, they live next door.

More brides in rural area rarely attend public events, urban (37.5%), rural (50%) because the brides in rural areas are often busier with farming work or taking care of the old parents. In other words, more Vietnamese brides in urban area can benefit from the mass media and supporting programs of Korean Government than in rural areas. In Korea,

mass media system with programs focused on the multicultural family is very convenient for the Vietnamese brides to improve Korean ability and social understandings etc. There are some special magazine issues for multicultural families, for example *The Rainbow*, issued four times a year; or the website *Danuri*. More importantly, social support and the policies for multicultural family have been changed incessantly to tackle with new emerging issues.

Since 2006, after announced the Grand Plan, Korean Government and NGOs have devoted lots of support to help the foreign brides adjust themselves to the new life. A variety of projects, programs, supporting centers have been established (Kim, 2011). Information about these supports is published in various kinds of mass media. Actually, programs to support the foreign brides have become a campaign in Korea.

In 2008, the Multicultural family support centers (MFSCs) and the Hotline Center was established and implemented a variety of support programs. The main purposes of the MFSCs are providing education, counseling and giving social services, supporting the early settlement, and helping the foreign brides to enjoy stable lives in Korea. From 2012, there will be 18 shelters for the foreign brides who face with domestic violence. Besides, the Working Centers for Women will be established to support the foreign wives to find jobs. All the foreign wives who finished senior high school are eligible to apply for jobs in this center.

As we know, language ability is the prerequisite factor for all immigrants to adapt themselves to the new society. It is more important for Vietnamese brides because they are individually inserted into Korean family as

dependent members. Korean is the common and main language they use in daily life. Thus, many problems will happen, many conflicts will occur because of language barrier. As mentioned above, since most Vietnamese brides are not good at Korean, it is hard for them to adapt to Korean society. Therefore, we hope to fully ascertain the reasons and constraints making Vietnamese brides cannot attain language competence as well as the problems they faced with in their adaptation. This point will be examined in the following chapter based on analyzing social-economic characteristics of specific cases.

#### **IV. Case study analysis**

Based on the four levels of adaptation mentioned in chapter I, this chapter will categorize and analyze four specific cases to comprehend the difficulties and constraints from improving Korean ability of Vietnamese brides in rural and urban areas. Then, we will make a short discussion and implication.

##### **IV.1 Adaptation levels**

For the case of Vietnamese brides, assimilation means they are no longer Vietnamese, but fully become real Korean. This also means they attain sufficient communication competence, including language and culture competence such as custom, traditions, social values, behavioral norms, etc. Not only they are recognized but also they recognize themselves as Korean. Integration means Vietnamese brides are good at Korean and can make contribution to Korean society in some aspects such as social, economical, political, etc. In other words, they acquire communication competence, however, still maintain the Vietnamese culture.

They recognize themselves as Vietnamese, even they have Korean nationality. Marginalization means Vietnamese brides are excluded in Korea, even though they are a member of Korean families and society. They are in between the two cultures, neither Korean nor Vietnamese and often experience isolation and exclusion. Separation means Vietnamese brides do not have any connection or relation with Korean people/society and still maintain Vietnamese culture.

In reality, nobody will deny that it seems possible for a child to be fully assimilated into the new society, but not for an adult. Therefore, we can assume that Vietnamese brides cannot remove completely all the Vietnamese cultural characteristics to adopt the Korean's. Or none of Vietnamese brides can be fully assimilated into Korean society. Likewise, none of Vietnamese brides can be separated in Korea because they are inserted directly and individually into Korean families. They become a member of Korean families and society. Their adaptation is natural and inevitable. As such, the two adaptation levels of Vietnamese brides in Korea can be integration and marginalization. If Vietnamese brides are good at Korean or acquire communication competence, they can be integrated into Korean society, otherwise, they are marginalized.

Data from in-depth interviews show that, some Vietnamese brides, both in rural and urban area, can be integrated into Korean society. Since they are good at Korean, they have chances to work and can participate in community events. In reality, a majority of them are not at Korean, as shown in Table 5.

Based on the Vietnamese brides' Korean ability in Table 5, we categorized them into three groups described as below.

Table 6: Outline of four specific cases

	A (rural)	B (Urban)	C (urban)	D (rural)
Marriage age	19	26	24	19
Education	High school	tertiary	primary	primary
Korean ability	good	average	poor	average
Types of family	nuclear	nuclear	nuclear	extended
Occupation in Korea	translator	housewife	housewife	farmer
Length of stay	3 years	3 years	2years	7years
Number of children	1son	1 & pregnant 2 <sup>nd</sup> child	1son	2sons
Adaptation level	integrated	marginalized	marginalized	marginalized

Source: Survey of authors

IG: Integrated group = good Korean ability (11 cases)

MG1: Marginalized group = average/poor Korean ability/rural areas = (11 cases)

MG2: Marginalized group = average/poor Korean ability/urban areas = (26 cases)

From the three above groups, we selected three specific cases for analysis. Case A is from IG, case B is from MG1, and C from MG2. The three cases are summarized in Table 6.

#### IV.1.1. Integrated case

##### **Case A: supported and respected by family members**

A is a bride with high school education level. A has lived in Korea for three years. At present, A works as a translator in a MFSC in Hongcheon, a rural area of Gangwon-do. Her home is in a village. A can make great contribution to Korean society as well as to help other Vietnamese brides.

*"Before migrating to Korea, I studied Korean language and culture in a month. After going to Korea, I still could not make communication in Korean properly. I stayed at home for the first six months. My mother in-law often took me to the neighbors' home to introduce*

*me with them. Then, my husband and my mother in-laws, in turn, took me to the Multicultural family support center (MFSC) to learn Korean three times in a week. When I have children, my mother came to Korea to take care of the son for me. So, I could continue to study Korean at the MFSCs. I worked very hard at studying Korean language because I understood that if I were not good at Korean, it would be difficult for me stay in Korea. After one year, I could speak Korean rather fluently. Then, I got the chance to work in this Center. Again, my husband brought my mother to Korea for taking care of my son. I like to work in the Center very much because I have opportunities to meet, talk and help other Vietnamese brides. Many of them are not good at Korean. Many of them live far from the Center and have to work hard. Besides, I have lots of chances to participate in public events. I often introduce Vietnamese cuisine, culture, and traditions etc to others. I have lots of chances to work and make communication with Korean people etc. The Korean people here are very helpful, friendly and polite to me. Actually, I think, I am very lucky because my husband and mother in-law are very kind. They support me to learn Korean, and to work in this Center.*

*Especially, my mother in-law is very helpful, even though she does not live together with us. I am very satisfied and happy with my life in Korea.*

Case A demonstrates that the support from her husbands and in-laws is very important for her to improve Korean ability. A cannot become good at Korean in a short time without her husband and mother in-law support. This also means that A is respected by her husband and mother in-law.

#### IV.1.2. Marginalized cases

##### ***Case B: To be discriminated and excluded from education within the family***

B is a bride with tertiary education. B lives in Korea for three years in Daegu city. B's Korean ability is average. She is a housewife. Within three years in Korea, B has a two-year old daughter and pregnant the second child.

*"Before migrating to Korea, I studied Korean language, culture and cooking in two months. After going to Korea, I could not quickly improve my Korean ability because I soon have children. My husband and mother in-laws want me to stay at home, to have children and take care of them. Thus, I am pregnant the second child, around 6 months. In Vietnam, I was a primary school teacher. In Korea, I cannot find work a teacher because I am not good at Korean, just enough to make simple conversations. Honestly, after three years in Korea, I rarely participate in community events not only because I am not good at Korean but also because I am a foreigner. I am often reluctant to attend public events. I feel much better to gather with other Vietnamese brides here. We can easily share many things with each other. I*

*can freely come to other Vietnamese brides to hang out, but, I need to return home before 4pm because my husband will be back home after work at 4".*

Case B demonstrates that childbearing and childrearing limits her from learning Korean. Within three years in Korea she continuously has two children. That is why she cannot learn Korean regularly. She is not supported to learn Korean when she has children. She does not have the priority to learn Korean because her husband wants more children.

##### ***Case C: little education and childcare***

C, a bride with primary education level. C has lived in Daegu city for three years. C's Korean ability is poor. After two years in Korea, C has a son.

*"Before migrating to Korea, I did not prepare anything. I could not speak Korean. After going to Korea, I sometimes attended Korean class in the MFSC. I am still very poor at making communication in Korean. Before having children, I tried to get job several times but I could not. When my Korean is better, I wish to find a part-time job such as making kimchi or artificial flowers. I really want to improve my Korean ability to make communication with Korean people. Especially, I need to communicate with my son's teachers when he goes to school. Many brides here cannot make conversation with their children's teachers or doctors. However, I now cannot manage the time for learning Korean. Moreover, it is so difficult for me to learn Korean because I can not remember the new words. I learn a new language very slowly and easily become discouraged.*

Case C demonstrates that low education

level and childcare limit her from improving Korean ability. After two years in Korea, C's Korean ability is still poor. This is understandable because her education level is primary, actually, she has not finished primary school. Even, she is not good at reading and writing Vietnamese. With such low education background, it is really hard and takes a lot of time for her to acquire Korean language competence.

#### **Case D: varied constraints**

D is a bride with primary education level. D lives in a village in Hongcheon, Gangwon-do. Living in Korea for seven years, D is still not good at Korean. D has two sons.

*“... Before migrating to Korea, I did not prepared anything. After seven years in Korea, I can make communication in Korean, but, not very good. If I could manage the time to attend Korean class regularly my Korean must be better. However, my home is so far from the MFSCs, and I am always busy with farming work. We often start working early in the morning until late in the afternoon. Besides, I need to take care of my parents-in law and the two children. They are over 80 and my father-in law is paralytic. Now, I am so worry about my two children. They start entering primary school and I cannot help them with their study at school. I need to improve my Korean more and more...”*

Case D is really a hard case because she experienced almost all kinds of constraints including: low education level, poor preparedness before migration, living in remote rural areas, farming work, taking care of the old parents, busy with childcare etc. She suffers a hard life in Korea. After seven years in Korea, her Korean ability is average. It is really so

stressful for her to adapt to the new life in Korea

In sum, case A and B showed that the conditions in Korea, specially the treatments from husbands and family members, have great influences to their Korean improvement. Before migration, both A and B have poor preparedness; B's education level is higher than A. However, after migration, A is good at Korean and can be integrated after living in Korea for three years, while B is still marginalized.

Marginalized cases show that before migration, Vietnamese brides do not have sufficient preparedness before migration. In Korea, facing with a variety of constraints makes them cannot improve their Korean ability. In rural area, Vietnamese brides faced with more difficulties and constraints than in urban areas. Besides, the constraint from low education level deserves concern.

#### **IV. 2. Reasons making Vietnamese brides cannot attain Korean competence**

Result from section III and IV show that Vietnamese brides are marginalized in Korea mainly because of language barrier. The reasons that make Vietnamese brides cannot improve their Korean ability derived from pre-and post-migration social-economic characteristics. Before migration, their education level is low, and their preparedness is poor. The constraints in Korea are varied, including short length of stay, busy with childcare, live in remote rural areas, discriminated and excluded from education opportunities within the family etc. For example, case B, C and D demonstrate that in the family, Vietnamese brides do not have the priority to learn Korean. Their roles are to be mother and wife. They are not supported to

learn Korean in case they face with difficulties such as living far from the MFSCs or busy with childcare, farming work, etc.

Being confined within the family also means Vietnamese brides are discriminated and excluded from community life and economic life in Korean society. A question should be raised up: Why Vietnamese brides are excluded and discriminated, even in their families?

The discrimination of their family members (and Korean majority in general) can be derived from the Vietnamese brides' migration purposes. In reality, most Vietnamese brides migrate to Korea with the hope of improving the economic condition. A majority of them got married via brokers. For example, in our survey, 85% Vietnamese brides migrate to Korea for economic reason, i.e. to seek for higher economic condition; 55.3% of them got married via broker. Therefore, Korean people think that "she comes here only for money"; "she only wants to send money back to her families in Vietnam" etc. Besides, Vietnamese brides feel inferior because they come to Korea alone with a single suitcase. They tend to accept their lower status and dependent situation, both in the family and society. Therefore, few of them dare require the right to learn Korean if their husbands or in-laws do not support or allow.

### ***IV. 3. Concerning issues and implications***

Previous researchers stated that language barrier and cultural differences are the main reasons of the foreign brides' marginalization (Lee, 2006; Kim, 2006; Kim & Shin, 2007; H. Kim, 2009). The case of Vietnamese brides is not exceptional. However, previous researches did not fully explain why the foreign brides cannot attain language and culture competence

to adapt into Korean society.

In general, Vietnamese brides are observed to have the following advantages to adapt to Korean society. Firstly, Vietnamese brides in Korea do not face with a clash of different civilizations as if they migrate to Western countries. Vietnam and Korea have some similar cultural characteristics because the two countries are deeply influenced by Confucian (Kim, 2007; Kim and Shin, 2007; Nguyen, 2010; Kamiya and Lee, 2008). Secondly, the two countries have close relationships in social and economical aspects due to the policy to import Vietnamese laborers of Korean Government; and the increase of Korean investors in Vietnam recently. Thirdly, nowadays, Vietnamese people become familiar with Korean culture, lifestyles, and society, etc because of the influences of Korean waves<sup>5</sup> (Kim, 2007; Kim, 2009; Nguyen 2010, Nguyen 2011). Basically, these advantages can help the adaptation of Vietnamese brides become easier and less stressful. In reality, they are seriously marginalized in Korea because of different ethno-linguistic. Due to variety of constraints derived from their social-economic characteristics of pre- and post-migration, Vietnamese brides cannot quickly acquire Korean language after some years living in Korea. The most problematic group of Vietnamese brides is those with primary education level. Especially, in rural areas Vietnamese brides may face with heaped up constraints. Case D is an example.

#### ***IV. 3. 1. Language acquisition***

Due to poor Korea, brides in urban area tend to increase their communication within Vietnamese community; brides in rural areas tend to accept their isolation situation.

Since Vietnamese brides belong to the

lowest education level group among other foreign brides in Korea and poor preparedness, they need specially support to improve Korean language. Since their Korean ability is so poor, their role is confined within the family; they need more communication opportunities. Therefore, concrete and special language teaching programs would be effective for the Vietnamese brides, especially those brides with low education level in rural areas.

#### *IV. 3.2. Social interaction limitation*

Communication is regarded as the central activity of adaptation process. This means, adaptation of individual occurs in and through communications. Actually, communication links people together, creates relationships, and serves as a way to develop, organize, and disseminate knowledge and mutual understandings.

In reality, due to language barrier, exclusion and discrimination, Vietnamese brides have limited chances to make interpersonal interaction with Korean society. Beside, they are also not confident enough to actively involve in social events. As such, Vietnamese brides need more communication opportunities, more chances to be included in regular social and community events. Creating opportunities and helping Vietnamese brides become confident to present themselves are important things. For example, community events/projects that emphasized the significant of “working and sweating together” instead of “teaching” them, as discussed by Takahata (2007), is necessary. Takahata demonstrated that the Filipino community in Naka (Nagoya, Japan) can make great contributions to the host society because the local government helps them to participate in the community’s events. As a result, the host society can maintain their traditions as well as

develop the harmonious community with foreign residents.

Practically, to create and develop a relationship, two individuals need to have mutual understandings. Obviously, Vietnamese brides need to learn Korean language and culture because they are the new members of Korean family and society. However, successful marriages are based on mutual understanding, respect, and co-existence between the wives and husbands. Therefore, Vietnamese language, culture, cooking classes and etc should be useful for the Korean husbands and in-laws. Such programs also represent that Vietnamese people and culture are respected. This helps Vietnamese brides become more confident to interact with Korean people. Moreover, including these programs, the policies to support multicultural families will not be criticized as “Korean-centric” (Kim, 2006; Yang, 2011), or to construct and shape the foreign brides to be Korean both in minds and bodies (Bélanger, et al, 2010).

In reality, for the Korean majority, the term *foreign brides* contains a bad meaning and unrespectable. This way of thinking is not easy to change (Kim, 2007; Kim, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to propagandize Korean people to recognize that Korea needs to care about the Vietnamese brides’ children because they are the young generations of Korean society. Actually, the best way to help mixed generations is to support their mothers, i.e. the Vietnamese brides or foreign brides. This means, the final goal to support Vietnamese brides (or foreign brides in general) is to maintain stable development of Korea in the future. Beside, Korean people need to accept the fact that Korea is no longer homogeneous society. They need to understand and co-exist with Vietnamese

as well as other culture within the country.

## V. Conclusion

Recently, the increasing number foreign brides in Korea has attracted great concerns from Korean Government and scholars. Based on the data from national surveys, researches have been done on the foreign brides in different aspects, such as sociologist, ethnicity, feminism, politics, .... Sociology researchers often focus on the problems foreign brides faced with during their adaptation process. Generally speaking, it is hard for the foreign brides to adapt to the new life in a very racial and homogeneous society as Korean. The foreign brides in rural areas are considered to face with more difficulties than those in urban areas because of the closure of rural communities and insufficient supports from the Government.

In last decade, the number of Vietnamese brides keep on increasing abruptly and soon become the second largest group of foreign brides in Korea, just after the Chinese. Most Vietnamese are from rural areas in Vietnam. Most of them marry the Korean men via brokers and highly motivated by economic reasons. Noticeably, in rural areas, the share of Vietnamese brides in comparison with other foreign brides is much higher.

This study analyzes the social-economic characteristics of Vietnamese brides, pre- and post- migration, to examine how Vietnamese brides improve their communication competence in rural and urban areas of Korea, focussing on the prerequisite, i.e. Korean competence. Based on the model of geographical context of adaptation, we analyze the social-economic conditions of Vietnamese brides before and after migration. The paper demonstrated that,

the brides in rural area face with more difficulties/more constraints to improve Korean ability than those in urban areas. The constraints are not only derived from the conditions in Korea but also from the backgrounds of the brides themselves. Education level is one of the most important constraints that need to be concerned because a majority of Vietnamese brides in rural areas has low education level.

In reality, most Vietnamese brides, both in rural and urban areas, are not good at Korean. From analyzing specific cases, the paper shows that the husband and family members support is very important for Vietnamese brides to improve their Korean ability. If the husbands and family members do not support, it is difficult for Vietnamese brides to improve Korean ability. Actually, within the family, marginalized brides are often excluded from education opportunities.

In urban areas, the constraint is mainly because of childcare. In rural areas, the constraints are varied, including childcare, taking care of old parents, farming work, living far from the center. Since it is widely observed among Korean people that Vietnamese brides are more marginalized than other foreign brides in Korea; improving Korean ability is initial support to help Vietnamese brides adapt to Korean society.

It will take much time and effort for Vietnamese brides to enter Korean society. It also will take lots of time for Korean people to accept the fact that Korean society is no longer homogenous. However, for the future Korea, Korean people need to care about the next mixed-generations of Korea. This means, Korean people need to understand Vietnamese culture and co-exist with Vietnamese brides, as

well as with other foreign brides. Hence, more researches need to be done to find out effective solutions for attainment multiculturalism in Korea.

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## Note

- <sup>1</sup> Foreign brides who married Korean men through Unification Church
- <sup>2</sup> Data from Kosis (2009) show that 53.2% Vietnamese brides migrate to urban areas, 46.8% to rural areas. The number of Vietnamese brides in rural areas is greatest in comparison with other foreign brides.
- <sup>3</sup> I myself experienced this situation during the time making interview in Korea. In a rural area in Hongcheon, I went to a market with five Vietnamese brides, who are not good at Korean. When they want to buy something, they need to try to communicate with the sellers because there is no option, even they also made many mistakes. However, other three brides took me to the supermarket in DongDaegu (Daegu city). We bought many things without making conversation with the cashiers. Even though, one of the three brides told me that: "to void being recognized as foreigners, the best way is to keep silent"
- <sup>4</sup> We categorized three levels good, average, and poor at Korean language based on the Vietnamese brides' subjective assessment of their Korean fluency in making daily communication. Good level means the brides can make communication fluently; average means they can make basic communication; poor means they cannot make basic communication properly.
- <sup>5</sup> Korean waves means the fast growing popularity of Korean entertainment, culture, fashion, cosmetics, etc in Asia and other parts of the world. In Vietnam, the Korean waves started in 1990s and had greatly influences to Vietnamese society, especially the lifestyle of

young generations.