



Title of Project:

A Safe House for Korean (Im)migrant Women in the US:
A Feminist Cyber-ethnography of Korean (Im)migrant Mothers'
Investment in Learning English Online and their Identity Shifts

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Project Summary:

The proposed dissertation research aims to explore how Korean (im)migrant mothers invest in English learning while generating and managing an online English language learning community, and how their investment affects and is affected by the interplay of capital, identity, and ideology. The women in the study may be considered “cosmopolitans” as described by De Costa (2011), given that they are “ostensibly advantaged” because of their possession of economic and social capital upon migration, and thus are neglected in SLA. Regardless, they still confront multiple “contact zones” (Pratt, 1991) and struggle to be recognized as “legitimate speakers” (Bourdieu, 1991). Through the affordances of digital technology and high inspiration, the women have created their own unique “safe house” (Pratt, 1991) wherein they not only hone their English language skills but also prepare themselves to thrive in contact zones. This five-year-long feminist cyber-ethnography has employed multi-methods for data collection including archival online posts written by the participants, observation of online weekly meetings, and individual interviews conducted online. The methodology is grounded in Gajjala’s (2004) study, which emphasizes “the epistemologies of doing,” making it possible to provide precise emic perspective, along with Creswell’s (2013) qualitative thematic analysis. The findings from this specific online language learning community add to our knowledge of how learners themselves initiate and carry out investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015) without educators’ assistance and broaden our understanding of the safe house in contact zones, all of which are expected to contribute to TIRF’s research on digital technology in language education.