LITERACY PRACTICES OF FOUR KOREAN-ENGLISH BILINGUAL

STUDENTS IN THREE CONTEXTS: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

by

JENNIFER MOON RO

(Under the direction of Donna E. Alvermann)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the literacy practices of four Korean bilingual students in their home, church, and school. The study was shaped by a two-pronged interest in exploring the sociocultural aspects of biliteracy and inquiring into whether Cummins’s theories of linguistic interdependence and threshold apply to Korean bilinguals. Findings suggested that there is some evidence of interdependence for phonemic awareness. In terms of the sociocultural aspects of biliteracy, the data showed that the students’ literacy practices were increasingly shifting toward English. It was found that this shifting is facilitated by the view that English is the dominant world language and is valued in Korean communities. Such shifting is also facilitated by the students’ and their families’ favorable outlook on acquiring English literacy. Peer groups were determined to be an important factor in moving students toward English literacy and in helping students acquire school Discourses. It was also determined that Korean bilingual students who initially appeared to have mastered the school Discourses actually had difficulties understanding the texts they were required to learn.

INDEX WORDS: Biliteracy, Second Language, Sociocultural, Social practice, Primary and Secondary Discourses, Case study, Korean children, Korean Language School
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DEDICATION

To my parents.
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I wish to thank my mother-in-law and my father-in-law. This dissertation would never have been finished without their encouragement, support, and loving care of their granddaughter.

My brother, sister, mom, dad, relatives, and friends in New York City. They have cheered me on from afar.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Recently, my father-in-law and mother-in-law came from South Korea to stay with us and to take care of my baby while I finish my dissertation. As they get more accustomed to living in the United States, they often ask a lot of questions about why certain things are this way or that way. One day, my father-in-law asked why it is that every time men in his church bow to pray, they burst into a tearful outcry. Why every time? Are they sincere? He asks rather disapprovingly. My mother-in-law is quick to point out that the women are just like the men. Their prayers are also earnest and heart-wrenching to hear. She adds, “It’s because their hearts are filled with han.” How can han be translated into English? There is no accurate counterpart word in English, and ‘unexpressed sadness’ is the closest I can come to explaining it. It embodies all of the hard work, sometimes humiliation, and frustration with living in a world of a foreign language, and wishing for something better for their children.

The Korean American children, often very successful academically, inherited this sadness. It comes from being part of a smaller number rather than the majority of the people, wherever you go. As I write this, a voice in my head says, “Why does anyone need to know this story?” It is none of their business. Why should I let them inside my head?” No, write in an “academic voice” and leave these personal thoughts out. You’ll regret it later for exposing yourself. I don’t know what kind of a story I will be piecing
together. I don’t know if I would do my participants’ stories justice. Their stories, intertwined with my own stories, as people of minority background, are difficult ones to tell. Even more difficult is finding understanding listeners. Like I still try to find my “place” in this world, so do these stories. Where would these stories be appropriately placed? Who will want to know about Korean American students? Who would be able to relate? And, without a willing audience, is it worth telling? It’s just a small number of us . . . . To paint a picture of victimization is the last thing I want to do. Despite all of my insecurities and questions about who I am in this world, I often feel powerful and able to do a lot of things that I want to do—rather than fret about not seeing myself in this world. [Journal 8/2/01]

The above is an excerpt from an entry in a journal I had kept throughout the data collection. I wrote about my personal thoughts and feelings as my data and my life intersected. The purpose of this study was to gain a holistic perspective of the literacy practices of biliterate students in their everyday contexts. I was also interested in how their multiple, sociocultural contexts influence their attitudes toward their two developing literacies. Often, studies of bilingual readers have focused on isolated skills in contrived settings created by the researchers. These studies also rarely considered students’ normal contexts of literacy, such as their schools, homes, and community settings, which may provide a more holistic understanding of their literacy development in two languages.

Rationale

As we enter a new millennium, it is projected that student demographics will continue to change in the United States. It is expected that in the near future, there indeed will be a dramatic increase in the number of students who speak languages
other than English at home. Despite this forecast, in the field of literacy we have not adequately addressed what these changing demographics mean for pedagogy and research. Most classroom teachers have no training in how to assist students who do not speak English. Therefore, given the rapid rise in the number of children who speak languages other than English at home in the United States, a study focusing on the literacy practices of one language-minority population is a timely one.

Although there have been many studies attempting to document what bilingual readers do when they read and how to best help them, these studies have been done predominantly with Spanish-speaking children. This is understandable because they account for the majority of language minority students in the United States. However, bilingualism, biliteracy, and language minority students do not make up a monolithic entity; there are many different faces and languages captured under those terms.

Unfortunately, due to their small numbers, many other language-minority groups do not get the same attention that has been given to the Spanish-speaking students in bilingual/biliteracy research. Literacy research focusing on children who speak languages other than Spanish needs to be conducted to better understand the diversity of our classrooms; issues relating to biliteracy may be different for students with home languages other than Spanish. For example, Spanish English students may benefit from “cognates” (Fitzgerald & Cummins, 1999; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995; Jimenez, 1997) in Spanish words that relate to difficult English words. Korean and English languages do not have that relationship. However, there may be other relationships between them that should be examined.

If it is argued that Hispanic students and families do not receive the support they need from their schools, it is even truer for Asian students and families. Although there may be enough Hispanic families to create a parents’ association to voice their
concerns for their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990), for example, it is unlikely that Asian families would have the crucial number and momentum to become organized. Thus, it is becoming more common to find school personnel who speak Spanish; it is still unlikely, however, to find those who speak other minority languages.

Currently, sixteen states, including Georgia, have enacted “English Only” laws that further diminished the possibility of finding personnel who speak minority languages (American Civil Liberties Union, 2000). According to survey responses gathered by Park (1994) of Korean parents with children in U.S. schools, the parents identified two major sources of concern about education: (a) not being knowledgeable about the American educational system in order to help their children and (b) their children’s limited proficiency in Korean. With little or no means of accessing and communicating with the schools, parents of these minority students rarely understand the school system and how they can better help their own children. Without family connections to schools and the benefit of a common language, however, how is it that most students of Asian families still become so successful academically?

Unlike some language minority students in the United States who have cycles of low literacy at school and at home (Carger, 1996), children of South Korean immigrants generally have been successful in school. The South Korean students and their families face the same types of difficulties and barriers of any language minority groups, but most seem to have managed to become successful literate participants in their classrooms. Because they have learned English and have acclimated to the U.S. school culture, literacy professionals have neither identified a problem nor a need to study this group. Since we have limited information regarding this population, we have only a general impression that these students are doing well as a group. We do not know whether they might be struggling individually. If they are successful
students in their classrooms, we do not know how they are doing in other literacy contexts. Do their literacy practices in their home and community help them to be successful students? What is compromised, if anything, for the sake of success in U.S. schools?

Much of the South Korean community in this Southeastern university town are divided into pockets of church communities. The church has served as a center of community for this group. As a regular member of one church for several years, I have seen many Korean students come to pursue their studies at the university and then return to South Korea or secure a job in the United States. Their children have always been interesting cases for me to observe during these years. Although their parents gain little oral proficiency in English, the young children seemed to “pick up” the language very quickly. This has become a common occurrence with children in the community I studied. Whenever a new family arrives from Korea, and they are worried about their children’s academic career in a new land, everyone assures them that the children will assimilate quickly—and indeed they do. High levels of school achievement and English literacy are expected by the parents in this community, and their expectations are realized shortly after their arrival.

School success, however, is seldom achieved without paying a price. My experience of knowing South Korean families in the United States has told me that a compromise must be made for students to succeed. For South Korean parents, their children’s success in school is everything. Worried that their children will struggle with language issues like themselves, they encourage their children to learn English as soon as possible—even if it means sacrificing maintenance of their first language. Although reading and writing for school are encouraged, literacy development in the children’s first language is not considered as crucial. With a strong emphasis on
English literacy, some children stop communicating in Korean almost completely. It is a common scene in Korean households in the United States for the parents to speak to their children in Korean while their children reply in English (or a mix of both Korean and English). In households where oral proficiency in both languages is nurtured, it is still common for children to speak Korean but not be able to read and write it.

Many Korean churches across the United States have recognized language loss as a serious issue and have taken action. To address this issue, it has become a trend to establish a Korean Language Schools (KLS) in the churches. Last year (2000–2001), my small church followed this trend and set up the KLS for children in kindergarten to middle school grades. Such programs recognize the need for children of South Korean immigrants to be anchored in both cultures and languages. Issues of communication problems at home and the South Korean children’s lack of Korean cultural knowledge have made bilingualism and biliteracy attractive to adults in the community.

Biliteracy issues are different for different groups of language-minority children. Differences in the languages involved and the sociocultural contexts of biliteracy mean differences in how pedagogy is determined, how support structures are (and will be) built to foster success in literacy, and how research is conducted. It is important, therefore, to explore individual cases of biliteracy that involve language-minority children—especially those children who have been less frequently studied in previous research. Such studies should not only consider school literacy practices, but also provide a more holistic image of the individuals through various contexts (e.g., classroom, home, and community). According to Delgado-Gaitan (1991), children’s school performance depends on the sociocultural practices of the family and
community. Hence, it is important to know how individuals engage in literacy across contexts.

As Garcia (2000) notes, bilinguals with equal command in both languages are rare. As students navigate their often English-only worlds, they learn to prefer one language over the other. Although most students communicate in the first language at home, overall, their communication and literacy practices continue to be skewed to one side. According to the Mexican-American feminist scholar, Anzaldua (1999), “borderlands” refer to the space where two cultures meet. In that space, there is a tension regarding the preservation of one language over another. Anzaldua has identified herself as straddling the border. Likewise, the South Korean children living in the United States find themselves straddling the border of two cultures and two languages in their everyday worlds.

There is very little research focusing on multiple literacy contexts of speakers and readers of languages other than English. Often, investigations have focused only on the acquisition of English. Only a few researchers to date have conducted studies that attempt to look at students reading texts in more than one language (Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995). In addition to being limited in number, these studies are also focused primarily on task-oriented activities that do not consider the natural literacy settings of children’s classrooms, homes, and community activities.

**Theoretical Perspective**

There are two strands of thought that shaped this study. The first is grounded in a sociocultural (Barton, 1994; Gee, 1996) perspective of literacy, and the other in Cummins’s (1981) theories of Linguistic Interdependence and Threshold. Cummins’s two theories suggest that L1 knowledge can transfer when the learner has reached a certain “threshold” in L2 knowledge. Although there are evidences of transfer
reported for other languages, there was no literature that examined how Cummins’s
theories may be applied to Korean bilingual readers. This study sought to examine
what traces of transfer might be gleaned from the everyday contexts of the students’
literacy practices.

Several researchers (Hornberger, 1992; Quintero & Huerta-Macias, 1995;
Verhoeven, 1994) exploring biliteracy have identified a need for sociocultural
approaches in an area of study dominated by quasi-experimental approaches. A
sociocultural perspective of literacy can be applied to school contexts as well as to the
home and community contexts. Barton and Hamilton (2000) suggest a view of
literacy as a social practice. According to them our values, attitudes, feelings, and
social relationships are reflected in our literacy practices in everyday contexts. These
practices are related to the different areas of our lives, including home, church, and
school.

Gee (1996) points out that literacy is expressed through a particular language.
Thus, having access to two languages has interesting implications for how they are
used. Gee’s theory of Discourse (with a capital D) is closely related to social identities
that we all construct across various domains of our lives. Each of us is part of many
different Discourses. Each Discourse embodies a set of literacy practices that are
based on “tacit rules” that guide us in the “correct” way of being a part of a particular
Discourse. In terms of being biliterate, being a member of a certain Discourse may
mean that one participates through one or both languages. In doing so, one constructs
a social identity for oneself that says that one is a “certain kind of” person. For
example, I am a Korean American who is a doctoral student, researcher, teacher,
mother, wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law. Within each Discourse, then, there are
tacit rules that guide or require me to use one or both of the languages. These social identities are not fixed, but rather, they are constantly being adjusted.

Gee (1996) identifies two types of Discourses: primary and secondary. Early in life people are socialized into their primary Discourses of their families. Primary Discourses provide our first social identity and a “framework” in which to base or resist other Discourses that we encounter. Primary Discourses enable us to form ideas about who we are and what people like us do, say, value, and think when we are not in the public sphere. Individuals are socialized into their secondary Discourses as they interact with social groups outside their homes, such as the church, school, shopping mall, or workplace. The secondary Discourses may or may not be compatible with people’s primary Discourses. Primary and secondary Discourses influence each other. Secondary Discourses can be so powerful that they can proliferate into one’s primary Discourse and alter the pattern of home literacy practices.

Research Questions

In this multiple case study, I was interested in observing and documenting how young South Korean bilingual students engage in literacy practices across three contexts: public school classrooms, homes, and Korean Language School (KLS) classes. In essence, I wanted to find out what it was like to be biliterates in each of these contexts. More specifically, my guiding questions for the study were as follows: (a) What are the students’ attitudes toward their developing English and Korean literacies? (b) Are there changes in their preference and usage of one language over another? (c) Are there evidences of the transfer of literacy skills from their L1 to L2 and vice versa? (d) Do the literacy practices in their homes and their Korean language classes influence their level of engagement in their classrooms? (e) What are some
difficulties students face in their process of developing second language literacy skills?

**Definition of Terms**

**bilingual.** Individuals who speak two languages. The degree of proficiency in each of the two languages may differ.

**biliteracy, biliterate.** Refers to literacy in two languages. I define literacy broadly to include not just the traditional reading and writing components, but also an individual’s use of a variety of texts. I define text beyond the written (e.g., novels, magazines, journals) to include other forms of texts, such as those that are spoken (e.g., conversations, music, movies) and are visual (posters, drawings, computer games). Biliteracy, then, refers to an individual’s use of these forms of texts in two languages. Biliterate is a descriptor for an individual who is able to—and does—engage in literacy in two languages.

**language-minority.** A label for students who speak a language(s) other than English at home and who are in the process of developing proficiency in English. It is comparable to other descriptors, such as English as a second language (ESL), English students of other languages (ESOL), English as a foreign language (EFL), Heritage or home language (HL), and bilingual.

**literacy practices.** Literacy is more than a set of skills for reading and writing; it also includes what we do with reading and writing. Barton and Hamilton (2000) view literacy as a social practice where our values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships are reflected in our everyday contexts. This view reminds us that literacy is always embedded in the different areas of our lives, including home, church, and school.
**orthography.** I use the definition provided in *The Literacy Dictionary* (Harris & Hodges, 1995), which defines it as “a conventional writing system in a given language” (p. 174).

**phonemic awareness.** The ability to distinguish sounds (or phonemes) in spoken words and match the sounds with letters or characters that make up words in an alphabetic language.
CHAPTER 2
Review of Relevant Literature

What we know about bilingual students’ reading is limited. Many of the research studies on bilingual reading have been done outside of the United States. The following review draws from literature in the fields of literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL) and Foreign Language (FL), psychology, and sociolinguistics that share a common focus of bilingual reading and second language reading. In this review, L1 and L2 denote the participants’ first language and second language, respectively. The term L2 may or may not refer to English in FL research. This chapter is divided into three sections: (a) research on bilingual reading, (b) sociocultural approaches to literacy, and (c) chapter summary.

Bilingual Reading

Theories Relating to Bilingual Reading

When examining bilingual and second language reading, researchers have largely referred to Cummins’s (1979, 1981) linguistic interdependence hypothesis that proposes that knowledge of one language affects the understanding of the other, but only under certain favorable conditions. Cummins’s linguistic interdependence hypothesis suggests that language and literacy skills can be transferred from one language to another in biliteracy development. His other hypothesis to consider is the threshold hypothesis, which suggests that bilingual readers must reach a certain “level of competence” in their L2 knowledge in order to process L2 texts. Taken together, his two hypotheses suggest that L1 knowledge can transfer but only when the learner has reached a certain level of competence of L2 knowledge.
Cummins’s (1979, 1981) theories have been criticized by other researchers (e.g., Genesee, 1984; Troike, 1984) for not considering sociocultural factors and for looking only at linguistic and cognitive variables. Troike (1984) has argued that sociocultural factors “may be more powerful than purely linguistic factors” (p. 388) in determining school achievement in bilingual contexts. More recently, and in response to these criticisms, Cummins (1984, 1989, 1991, 1997, 2000) shifted his focus to consider sociocultural factors that may affect bilingual students’ understanding. Since his seminal work with his two hypotheses, Cummins has been an outspoken advocate for bilingual education, and has sought ways to empower bilingual students by providing them with supportive contexts for biliteracy development in the public schools. Also, Cummins (1991) incorporated sociocultural approaches as a way of examining the home/school connections of bilingual students.

Vocabulary and bilingual readers. In terms of vocabulary instruction for bilingual readers, Prince (1996) sought to determine which of two types of instruction better serves second language learners: learning new words in an L2 context (within sentence) or in translation pairs. Learning as many L2 words as possible and as soon as possible is seen to be a key factor in bilingual reading. Prince states, “The size of the vocabulary needed to achieve general communication skills in English has been estimated at 5,000 words, with critical importance being attached to 2,000 to 3,000 words as quickly as possible” (p. 478).

Forty-eight French adult students enrolled in an English class were the subjects of the study conducted by Prince (1996). They were divided into two groups where one studied the L2 target words in translation and the other within L2 sentence contexts. In the latter, students were asked to figure out what the unknown words might be from reading the sentences. Then the students were given a test asking them
to translate half of the words and to fill in the other half of the words in the sentences with blanks. Both groups performed better in the translation learning condition than in the context learning condition. When data were examined according to the reading ability of the subjects, the weaker subjects in the English class tended to rely heavily on a translation strategy. Although students were able to learn unknown L2 words more easily in the translation mode, it was not determined whether they could successfully access the same words in a new L2 context.

S. Kim (1995) conducted one of the few studies that examined Korean students’ reading in English. It looked at the effects of vocabulary knowledge and prior knowledge on reading comprehension through a recall procedure. The students were 108 high school students in Korea who had at least four years of English instruction. An analysis of the problems as reflected in the recall protocols showed some interesting patterns. One major difficulty the students faced was the lack of, or misuse of, vocabulary knowledge. There were mismatches between the meanings of words the students learned and the ways in which they were used in the texts. For instance, the students learned the word “certain” to be “undoubtable,” but in the passage text, the appropriate meaning was “specified but not named.” This partial knowledge of word meanings worked against the students; believing that they knew the correct definitions of words, they did not attempt to guess at the meaning from context. Recall protocols also showed that students did not monitor their comprehension. The students’ recalls in Korean often did not make sense because they had attempted to reconstruct the text literally. In other words, because these Korean bilingual readers had limited or incomplete knowledge of vocabulary, they often read literally.
There was also evidence of what S. Kim (1995) calls “language interference”. These problems occurred because of the unique relationship between their L1 and L2. In the Korean language, the /l/ and /r/ sounds are variations of the same phoneme; therefore, it is difficult for Korean speakers to make the distinction. The confusion, it appears, is also evident in their reading. For example, students often overlooked or mixed-up the ls and the rs in words they encountered in passage. During recall, they often read “diary” for the word “daily,” “border” for the word “bolder,” and “fame” for the word “frame.” Such mistakes obviously interrupted comprehension. This latter finding is interesting because it has specific implications for Korean English readers. Results indicated that having an incomplete knowledge of vocabulary was more often the source of problems than lacking of prior knowledge. Even among those students who received prereading instruction about the content of the passage, their comprehension suffered due to their limited vocabulary knowledge.

Comprehension and bilingual readers. Droop and Verhoeven (1998) examined the role of background knowledge on the reading comprehension of Dutch text by two groups of Turkish third graders for whom Dutch was their second language. Authentic texts from children’s curriculum textbooks were selected to represent three categories: Dutch culture, Islamic culture, and a “neutral” culture. There were high and low levels of difficulties in each of these categories, for a total of six different texts. Each of the 300 children in the study was tested individually. After children were asked prior knowledge questions, they read aloud the text, and were asked to retell and answer comprehension questions. All of the questions were asked in Dutch. Thus, Turkish children who had limited proficiency in their L2 were thought to be at a disadvantage. Results showed that children had better prior knowledge on the texts that referred to their respective cultures. In the “neutral” text,
Dutch children outperformed the Turkish children. Results on comprehension questions showed that the Dutch children performed better on all texts except for the simple text referring to minority culture. Overall, both groups of children had more trouble with the more difficult texts. However, when reading more difficult texts, the Dutch children used more sophisticated top-down strategies whereas the language minority children used more bottom-up strategies. Based on these results, the researcher reported that Dutch children who use top-down strategies on more difficult texts perform better on comprehension. In conclusion, the authors stated that background knowledge is useful only when the text is within the reading ability range of the reader. The second language readers were not able to make use of their background knowledge when the text became too difficult, and they focused on using bottom-up strategies. Although the Droop and Verhoeven study looked at the effects of different background knowledge on comprehension, it did not address what is assumed to be the important sociocultural aspects of those differences.

Reading in Two Very Different Orthographies

Most research in bilingual reading has focused on languages that are orthographically similar to English (e.g., Spanish). In order to investigate reading issues of bilingual students with access to two different types of orthographies, Geva, Wade-Woolley, and Shany (1993) looked at the concurrent development of spelling and decoding skills in U.S. primary grade children enrolled in a private Hebrew school. They found Hebrew orthography to be “shallow” and the English orthography to be “deep” because Hebrew has a simpler one-to-one matching of each sound to letter. English, on the other hand, has more phonemes than the number of letters in the alphabet. The purpose of Geva and her colleagues’ (1993) study was to determine the role of L2 proficiency (in this case, Hebrew) in the development of basic decoding
and spelling skills. The 45 students were tested in their first and second grade years. In the tests, they were asked to do several tasks, including The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and phoneme segmentation. In addition, they were given word recognition tests in English and Hebrew. The study’s findings suggest that L2 (Hebrew) proficiency does not play a crucial role in decoding in a shallow orthography. This finding is contradicts other studies that have reported L2 proficiency to be an important predictor of high level skills, such as reading comprehension. L2 proficiency does not seem to affect skills related to phonemic awareness skills. Geva and her colleagues also learned that developmental patterns of English and Hebrew spellings were very similar. This unexpected finding suggests that even though the orthographic depths of L1 and L2 may differ, phonemic awareness skills seems to affect both languages of bilingual students. This finding implies an interdependence between different orthographies.

A similar study looking at the role of L2 language proficiency and phonological awareness of Spanish-English bilinguals was conducted by Durgunoglu, Nagy, and Hancin-Bhatt (1993). They found that unlike comprehension, phonemic awareness skills and the transfer of such skills across languages were not affected by limited English proficiency. The first grade students who were skilled in phonemic awareness in their L1 were able to transfer it to phonemic awareness tasks in their L2.

Both of the just cited studies are important in that they provide evidence that the transfer of skills in one language to another exists even when there are orthographic differences between one’s L1 and L2, and when one has yet to develop strong proficiency in the newer language (L2). However, examinations of sociocultural factors are often absent from these studies. While some contexts may aid in creating situations that encourage and value students’ attempts to make connections
between their languages, other contexts may discourage or ignore such attempts. Either way, such contextual factors influence how students learn to fit into those contexts. A broader view of bilingual students as readers might be gleaned from observations and inquiry into the various sociocultural contexts in which they engage in literacy activities.

Finally, Verhoeven (1994) looked for evidence of transfer of five subcategories of linguistic and cognitive skills: pragmatics, lexicon, grammar, phonology, and literacy (reading). The study involved 98 6-year-old Turkish children living in the Netherlands. Verhoeven did not find evidence of transfer from L1 to L2 in lexicon and grammar, but he did find evidence for pragmatics, phonology, and literacy (reading). In other words, in support of Cummins’s linguistic interdependence hypotheses, Verhoeven found interdependence between L1 and L2 in three subcategories: pragmatics, phonology, and literacy (reading). Pointing out that sociocultural factors were not considered in this study, he stated, “To arrive at a better understanding of the notion of interdependence, it is important to relate child, family, and institutional factors to actual processes of L1 and L2 acquisition” (p. 411).

The Korean Orthography: Some Features

Although Korean looks different from English, both are alphabetic. According to B. L. Kim (1988), the Korean language, which is called, *Hangul*, consists of 19 consonants and 21 vowels (10 “simple” and 11 “compound”). However, aside from being alphabetic, the similarities between Korean and English, end. First, there is a drastic difference in the way they are written. The Korean words are not strung out linearly but stacked together. For example, ㄱ +ㅏ+ㄱ = 학. Unlike most alphabetic languages where the alphabet is used to build words, the Korean alphabet is used to build syllables, which are then combined to make words (e.g., 학
According to Taylor and Olson (1995), the Korean orthography is:

... an alphabet, in that its letters represent phonemes ... [and] has some unique features. For example, the basic letter ㄱ represents k or g. ... Hangul is used like a syllable in writing and reading: two or more consonants and vowel letters are packaged into a syllable block ... in which the final consonant, -C, is put under CV. (pp. 4-5)

There are significant differences in grammar as well. B. L. Kim identifies some of the major differences: word order, subject-verb agreement, article use, and noun deletion. Based on B. L. Kim’s useful examples of differences word sequence between English and Korean, I provide some of my own examples in the table below:

Table 1

*Differences in English and Korean Word Sequence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English word order</th>
<th>Korean word order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Subject, verb, object</td>
<td>Subject object verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I MAKE CAKE)</td>
<td>(I CAKE MAKE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Noun, adjective clause</td>
<td>adjective clause, noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(THE PENCIL THAT I BOUGHT)</td>
<td>(I BOUGHT PENCIL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Verb, adverb phrase</td>
<td>adverb phrase, verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(PUT IN THE BAG)</td>
<td>(IN THE BAG PUT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the examples above demonstrate, applying grammar rules from one language to another often results in connected prose that is grammatically wrong. Other features of the English language, such as choice of articles (e.g., a and the), subject-noun agreement, or cases (upper and lower) do not exist in the Korean language. These are some differences between the languages that may present some challenges for Korean students reading in a second language.

On the other hand, because both Korean and English are alphabetic languages, biliterates may benefit from developing a phonemic awareness in one language and using it in the other. Transfer of phonemic awareness skills between alphabetic languages has been documented by some researchers (Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, & Lacroix, 1999; Dungunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993; Geva, Wade-Woolley, & Shany, 1993). It has yet to be determined whether or not a transfer of phonemic awareness occurs between English and Korean.

Sociocultural Approaches to Literacy

Supportive Contexts and Biliteracy

In order for bilingual readers to successfully develop biliteracy throughout their schooling and life, various supportive contexts must be in place for them. Some of the factors Tse (2001) identified as being key to her participants’ success in maintaining their biliteracy include the following: (a) a peer group that uses the heritage language (HL), (b) contact with institutions that value the languages, and (c) parents who speak the heritage language and encourage its development.

Similarly, Hornberger (1992), in her study of Cambodian and Puerto Rican students in two public schools of Philadelphia, found various factors that supported biliteracy development. She also found differences between the two language minority communities. Hornberger presented three continua of biliterate contexts: (a)
a micro-macro continuum, (b) a monolingual-bilingual continuum, and (c) an oral-literate continuum. The micro-macro continuum refers to the contexts “at every level from face-to-face interaction to national policy and global politico-economic situations” (p. 200) that affect the usage and development of biliteracy. At the national level, policies and funding have not supported bilingual development but rather have continued to support English acquisition for linguistic minorities. Despite the lack of national support, the Puerto Rican population in Philadelphia has maintained its Spanish language and its identity because individuals have kept long-lasting contact with their homeland. In contrast, the Cambodians in Philadelphia are smaller in number, have a shorter immigration history, and have not made maintaining their language, Khmer, a priority.

In terms of monolingual-bilingual continuum, the Puerto Rican students received supportive educational contexts that helped them to develop their English and Spanish literacies. Their two-way bilingual programs in which Spanish-speaking students read with mainstream English-speaking students enable them to make many gains in their L2 as well as to use their L1 with their peers. The Cambodian students received pull-out ESL instruction, which proved to be ineffective.

The oral-literate continuum shows that the Puerto Rican students’ biliteracy development suffers once they leave their current school to attend English-only schools. For the Cambodian students, their use of L1 occurs only when they need to translate for their parents or when they have a need to carry out particular literacy tasks. Hsui (1996) observed that not all bilinguals have literacy skills in both languages. Usually, bilinguals have oral proficiencies and not the reading and writing skills in both languages.
In a related study, Hornberger (1990) identified four aspects (motivation, purpose, text, and interaction) that were observable in two classrooms where the teacher was successful in addressing the needs of bilingual students. The first classroom was a Spanish immersion program, and both the teacher and the students shared a Puerto Rican background. The second classroom was taught by a third generation Italian American teacher. This was a mainstream classroom where almost half of the students were from Cambodia. They received pull-out ESOL services. Although both teachers had different pedagogical approaches, Hornberger identified them as exemplary teachers. In keeping with Hornberger’s (1992) monolingual-bilingual continuum presented above, the Puerto Rican teacher allowed students to code-switch continuously during class while the mainstream teacher stopped the Cambodian students from conversing with each other in their home language. The teachers taught in two different schools where attitudes towards bilingualism differed. While the first teacher taught in a school where bilingual immersion program was institutionally supported, the second teacher taught in a school where bilingual students were prevented from using their home language and expected to assimilate into mainstream classrooms.

Despite the assimilation approach, the teacher who had Cambodian students in her class was sensitive to her bilingual students’ specific struggles with their L2. For example, she created a relatively risk-free classroom atmosphere where other students became aware of the difficulty Cambodian students had in distinguishing \( v \) and \( w \) sounds because there is no \( v \) sound in Khmer. Therefore, when students said \textit{wollyball} instead of \textit{volleyball}, the non-Cambodian students understood this difficulty. In addition, the teacher did not correct Cambodian students’ grammatical errors in their written work. The teacher treated such “errors” as she would African American
Whether this practice is a sound pedagogy or not, she was able to create a context that initially supported the bilingual students’ production of L2 literacy. While the two teachers clearly had different perspectives about helping their bilingual students, Hornberger implied that good teaching practices could be found in both immersion and mainstream classrooms. In short, the two Hornberger (1990, 1992) studies mentioned above point to the importance of considering different sociocultural supports and structures that exist for students’ biliteracy development.

Hornberger’s (1992) monolingual-bilingual continuum suggests that bilinguals’ uses of their L1 and L2 are not exclusive of each other, but tend to be a more fluid mix of the two languages. The bilingual speaker has the choice of speaking either one or both languages. This linguistic behavior, *code-switching*, is commonly observed in bilingual speakers (Baek, 1992; Fantini, 1985; Zentella, 1997). Researchers have shown that code-switching behavior is not random, but influenced by various factors around the speech event. For example, in her study with Puerto Rican children in New York City, Zentella (1997) showed that her participants code-switched for two main purposes: the addressee’s language proficiency and the context. Baek’s (1992) study on the language choice and code-switching behaviors of eight Korean bilingual prekindergarten students in their homes and schools revealed that her participants chose to speak in Korean in both contexts, and that code-switching behavior was more readily observable in students who were more competent bilinguals.

*Home School Connections*

Researchers studying bilingual children have also looked at families’ everyday practices and how they might inform school learning. It is generally thought that children who come from homes where a continuity, as opposed to a discontinuity,
exists between values and social practices of the home and the classroom, would have an easier time succeeding in schools. Often, continuity is said to exist between mainstream homes and the schools, while discontinuity is said to exist between minority homes and the schools. Through case study methodology, Xu (1999) compared the home literacy practices of the two Chinese American kindergarten children’s homes and found that they experienced varying degrees of continuities and discontinuities. However, Xu challenged the assumed benefit of continuity between home and school. That is, in the case where continuity existed, it was not considered beneficial. Xu found the children’s classroom to be too restrictive and the instruction to be phonics drill based. In the case where one child experienced more discontinuity, the home literacy experiences were more positive than the school literacy experiences. Therefore, Xu posited that it is too simplistic to view all the continuities between home and school as beneficial and all the discontinuities as detrimental.

Positive involvement of family members in an individual’s literacy can have a great influence on improvement, as Moulton and Holmes (1995) found in their case study of an individual who received support from his family members. Similarly, Paratore, Melzr, and Krol-Sinclair (1999) reported on the importance of familial support for school success in their intergenerational literacy. The authors categorized their multiple case studies as children who were “highly successful,” “on their way” to success,” and “struggling” in school. Based on their data, they found that the parents’ literacy skills and English proficiency did not play an important role in their involvement with their children’s school success. Despite these barriers, parents who were motivated were able to provide their children with the support needed.

Schecter, Sharken-Taboada, and Bayley (1996) conducted a study on the motivations and rationales of ten Latino families for raising their children as bilingual.
They found that the parents viewed bilingualism to be beneficial in helping their children academically, in adjusting to relocations, in preparing for the job market, and in affirming their group identity. Similarly, Craig (1996) found that parents’ attitudes toward a language affects the outcome of their children’s second language learning. Gardner, Masgoret, and Tremblay (1999) examined the link between 109 college students’ current attitudes toward learning a second language and toward their early experiences of learning a second language. Their results indicated that the “sociocultural milieu” of second language learning affected the students’ attitudes toward their second languages. These studies showed that parents and the home environment have important roles in students’ attitudes toward their two languages.

When considering home school connections, one cannot ignore the changes in home literacy practices brought on by technological advances. The number of computers used at home has steadily risen across race, ethnic, and economic groups (Samuelson, 2002). The U.S. Census Bureau’s 2001 report indicated that close to three-quarters of all Asian American (Whites, 70%; African Americans, 56%; Hispanics, 49%) homes have computers. Observing such changes in our times, Carrington and Luke (in press) posit that home literacy practices are influenced by the blending of digital and the traditional texts. Students are coming into the schools with different “patterns” of practices, which may include uses of nontraditional texts in the home. These literacy practices in the home are often self-selected by the students, while much of the school literacy is imposed upon them. In order to obtain a more holistic picture of students’ out-of-school literacy practices, it is imperative that these self-selected literacies be considered.
Discourses and Social Identities

Gee’s (1996) notion of Discourse offers a useful way of thinking about literacy practices and how they are connected to individuals’ social identities. Discourse is a way of participating in one’s everyday social contexts. It is the way people interact, value, think, believe, speak, read, and write through tacit theories that guide them in knowing what is the “normal” or “correct” way of being a certain type of person. Each of us is a part of many Discourses and we have many social identities associated within each of them. If we want to be a part of a certain Discourse, we internalize (or acquire) the way other members within the Discourse practice the ways of being a part of it. Gee points out that our Discourses are not valued equally and that this can present conflicts for people.

One way of being a part of a Discourse is through the use of language. For example, being a part of a certain Discourse might mean that an individual speaks English or Korean with certain people in certain contexts but not in others. For those who can use two languages, the use of one language and not the other can be one way of participating in different Discourses. Because Discourse is closely tied to people’s social identities, being literate in two languages is one way of showing they are a “certain type” of people.

(Bi)literacy as a Social Practice

Barton and Hamilton (2000) suggest that literacy is a social practice. Literacy practices are culturally patterned ways in which we interact with others around the use of texts. These literacy practices reflect our values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships. According to Barton and Hamilton, “Practices are shaped by social rules which regulate the use and distribution of texts, prescribing who may produce and have access to them” (p. 8). Under this theory, literacy practices are tied to the
specific contexts. Therefore, there are different literacy practices connected to different “domains” of life.

Barton’s and Hamilton’s (2000) theory of literacy as a social practice has implications for how biliteracy can be conceptualized. Barton (1994) states that, “Being literate is always expressed in a particular language” (p. 69). Biliterates have different literacy practices associated with their two languages. Literacy practices in different areas of their lives (e.g., home, school, church) can be linked with either one or both of the languages. Although some literacy practices are imposed in one language (e.g., English in reading class), others are self-imposed by the individual (e.g., talking to friends in one or both languages). It becomes interesting, then, to explore how biliterates use their two languages in their literacy practices across various contexts of their lives.

By borrowing Gee’s (1996) notion of Discourse once again, one can think of the Korean people in the United States as engaging in the Korean Discourse (or the big K) guided by tacit rules that inform what being a Korean means. Some of these tacit rules might be related to the following: Confucian beliefs, even though most Koreans in the United States are Christians (Park, 1997), which suggest that you will succeed if you work hard; close-knit family relationships; adjusting your use of Korean and English speech patterns to accommodate the addressee (Korean to people older than you, and English to your bilingual peers and others younger than you); trying to establish yourself as a middle class citizen; maintaining contacts with events in Korea; eating Korean food regularly; and doing well in school. Of course, there are probably other aspects of doing the Korean Discourse aside from the few mentioned above. It is important to note that there is not one conglomerate Korean Discourse, but that different Korean people would be a part of different Korean Discourses.
Research studies that focus on the literacy practices of Korean biliterates are few in number. Scarcella and Chin (1993) conducted a survey of language use in two Korean American communities in California. The results of the survey provided general patterns of language preferences of parents’ and children’s literacy practices in their homes and communities. It was determined that while 100% of the parents used Korean for church-related activities, only 50% of the children used Korean for the same purpose. It was also determined that these two communities had a variety of written Korean texts in their homes (e.g., newspapers, magazines, novels, children’s books, academic books, religious literature, and encyclopedias). It was also reported that there was a socioeconomic difference between homes where English and Korean were spoken. English was spoken in middle- and upper-class families. The longer Korean families lived in the United States and established economic stability, the less Korean was spoken at home.

B. L. Kim (1988) found that while many Korean Americans learn English for functional purposes (e.g., jobs and school) in society, they retain their Korean language for social purposes. In Scarcella’s and Chin’s (1993) study, the one community that had more contact with native English speakers on a daily basis used their English more than Korean. Conversely, in the other community, which was described as an “enclave” of Korean Americans, people had very limited contact with native English speakers. This group used Korean in most of their literacy practices and had difficulty fully developing their English literacy skills.

Model Minority and Korean Students

Lee (1996) challenged the stereotyping of Asians in America as the model minority. Since the authors of popular magazines (e.g., U.S. News & World Report, Time) in the 1960s began using the term to describe the successes of Chinese
Americans, the stereotyping practice has been a difficult one to erase. The model minority stereotype, “good” and “docile,” has sometimes served to isolate Asians from other minority groups, and thereby increased tensions between minority groups (Pak, 2001). Lee’s interviews with Asian high school students revealed that many of the students readily took up these stereotypes. Lee divided the Asian group into four distinct groups: Korean, Asian, Asian new wave, and Asian American. Lee noted that among the Asian groups, Korean students had a strong sense of nationalism and attempted to distance themselves from other Asian groups. For example, they formed a separate Korean Student Association while the rest of the Asian students joined pan-Asian groups. Lee also pointed out that Korean students sought to follow the footsteps of “White American behavior” because they tended to view Americans as White. Park (1997) suggested that Korea’s history of being economically dependent on the United States probably has influenced its people’s dual desires to maintain their nationalism and, at the same time, become American.

Lee (1996) asserted that school officials, consciously or unconsciously, have singled out Asian students and used them as models to measure the achievements of other minority groups. In the high school that Lee described, Asians and Whites were placed in the gifted programs, while African American students were placed in the regular classrooms. According to Lee, the Asians students were viewed as “insiders” while African American students were viewed as “outsiders.” This division eventually led to racial tensions between the two minority groups. Hence, both Lee (1996) and Pak (2001) have argued that the model minority stereotype should be critically examined instead of being internalized by Asian students. In the next section, the discussion shifts to reports on literacy practices of Korean people in the United States.
Language Shift

English is a language of power around the world. It is often the language of international business, research, and communications. In societies like the United States where many languages are spoken, there is a difference in power among linguistic groups. In situations where one language is privileged by society, a language shift tends to occur from the home language (HL) toward the dominant language. Some have described the process as a gradual one, often occurring over several generations. Pease-Alvarez and Winder (1994) have described a more dramatic language shift during one school year of their elementary school participants.

Tse (2001) sought to identify factors that contribute to college students and adults’ desires to relearn their home language after they lost it. She identified at least two factors that contribute to language shifts: (a) a perception of language prestige or power and (b) parental attitudes and uses of the language. Alternatively, Wong-Fillmore’s (1991) model of second-language learning in a social context identifies three components that are necessary for second language learning. These are as follows: (a) a need to learn the second language and a motivation to learn it, (b) access to native speakers of the language and help in learning it, and (c) a social setting that brings learners and native speakers into frequent contact.

Summary

In this literature review, I combined relevant research from fields of ESOL, FL, psychology, sociolinguistics, and literacy to better understand issues involved in biliteracy. First, I presented research on bilingual reading. I began by identifying Cummins’s (1979, 1981) two theories of bilingual reading (linguistic interdependence hypothesis and threshold hypothesis). Next, I presented research on vocabulary and comprehension relating to bilingual reading. Then, I presented studies that focused on
different orthographic languages that showed evidence of transfer for phonemic awareness skills. Finally, I provided relevant highlights of the Korean orthography.

In the second section of the chapter, I reviewed the literature on sociocultural factors influencing biliteracy support and success. Some factors considered were parental support, institutional/contextual support, and increased contact with the languages. It was also suggested that a person’s social identity was closely linked with maintaining or resisting language maintenance.

Next, I presented Gee’s (1996) theory of primary and secondary Discourses as a way of thinking about literacy practices and social identity. I then considered the notion of biliteracy as a social practice, including Barton and Hamilton’s (2000) theory of literacy as a social practice and Barton’s (1994) explanation that all practices are expressed through a language or languages. Then I described a rare study on the literacy practices of two Korean American communities.

Finally, I briefly presented issues surrounding the model minority stereotype and some ways it relates to Korean students. Then, I presented the phenomenon of language shift described by Tse (2001) and Wong-Fillmore’s (1991) model of second language learning.
CHAPTER 3

Method

Settings of the Study

Observing biliterate students engaged in literacy activities in multiple contexts is an important aspect of this study. Consequently, I observed four students (three boys and a girl) in their public school classrooms, their homes, and the church’s Korean Language School (KLS) classes. Because I already knew the students and their families through our church, I had easy access into their homes and community. Before the study began, I was asked by the mother of the two young boys to accompany her to a parent-teacher conference as a translator-in-waiting because she was insecure about her verbal communication skills. I met the two classroom teachers of the boys first and briefly expressed my interest in observing the boys engaged in literacy-related activities in their classrooms. Both teachers were supportive and inviting. The two younger boys and a fourth-grade boy attended Harvard Elementary School. A sixth-grade girl attended Cornell Middle School.

Participants in the Study

The participants in this study were three elementary students and one middle school student from two South Korean families. The two boys, in grades 1 and 3, were brothers who came from South Korea only seven months prior to the beginning of this study. They came with their mother with the main purpose of learning English. They were purposefully selected, because I believed they represented a quickly-growing trend in the Korean communities in the United States. English literacy
proficiency had become such a necessary and prized commodity in South Korea, some families chose to live apart (usually the mothers and children traveled to the United States while the fathers remained in South Korea to support them) for the sake of gaining English literacy, and securing an edge over others. Since the South Korean government recently issued permission for school-aged children to go abroad to study, many children have left their homeland to go to English-speaking countries. Given such a trend, I predict children like these two boys will continue to be part of U.S. classrooms in the future.

The other two participants were siblings from the second family. The boy was in the fourth grade while the girl had entered middle school this past year. They have been in the United States for about three years. Since these two children have lived here for a few years, they were further along in their process of developing English literacy skills. However, common sense and research on bilingual readers suggest that it takes longer than a couple of years for students to develop native-like literacy skills. In short, I selected these two students because I was interested first in observing the kinds of difficulties children who appear to be doing well in school might continue to have and then in exploring whether or not new difficulties would surface once students had made initial breakthroughs in language barriers.

I purposefully selected this group of students for the study because they were all students at various stages of acquiring English proficiency and literacy skills. I also sought to find students who represented a certain range in age because I believed doing so might provide a chance to observe the different levels of skills bilingual students must address when developing literacy in a second language. In short, I believed that the participants represented ranges in L2 proficiency and in age.
The Schools

*Harvard Elementary.* Harvard Elementary School is located in an intersection of residential and commercial areas in a rural, university town in the Southeast. The school was built in 1957, and then in 1990 several trailers were added to make additional classroom space for the increased student population. There was a large outdoor playground behind the school building. The school houses students in kindergarten through grade 5. The total student population was about 11,000. In 2001, 59% were African American, 25% were White, 10% were Hispanic, and the remaining 6% were Asian. Approximately 10% of the students, representing nine languages, were classified as ESOL students.

As one entered the front door, a small reception niche displaying pictures of the school faculty receiving awards. Next to it was a display of newspaper clippings of student awards and recognitions, as well as a list of successful people (including a well-known Hollywood celebrity) who attended the school. The classroom doors were usually closed during class sessions, and the hallways were very quiet. On a few walls of the hallway were large bulletin boards displaying individual student’s Accelerated Reader (AR) points. Accelerated Reader, the reading program which requires students to read independently books that are assigned points according to difficulty level and to answer a few comprehension multiple choice questions on the computer, was used in the school. One bulletin board inside one of the participant’s classroom was divided into four sections representing a range of 0 to 500+ AR points earned by the students. The star distribution resembled the normal curve with only a few students having earned either very few or an exceeding number of points, and the majority of the students having earned somewhere in between the two. Bright gold paper stars labeled with students’ names were affixed to the three sections accordingly. A serious attitude
toward school work and individual achievement were two impressions one formed while walking around the school.

*Cornell Middle School.* Cornell Middle School was also recognized as one of the better schools in town. It housed 785 students from grades 6 through 8. The student demographics were similar to those of Harvard Elementary. About 50% of the students were African American, 36% were White, 8% were Hispanic, and 5% were Asian.

The school was segregated until 1959. In 1990, the NAACP picketed in front of the school in response to a racially charged incident between a White teacher and an African American student. The current principal, who took office after the incident, claims that he had tried hard to change the image of the school. Security cameras, installed at various locations in the vicinity, were monitored through a cluster of TV screens that hung outside the principal’s office.

The school building went through several renovation and expansion projects to accommodate the growing student population. Cornell Middle School followed the school district’s core curriculum guidelines of language arts, math, social studies, science, and a variety of electives and exploratory classes. The school boasted its strength in academic achievements and test scores. There were various gifted programs, which serviced about 25% of the students. Accelerated Reader was also used as part of the reading program. Similar to the elementary school, Cornell Middle School portrayed itself as a place for serious work that focused on scholastic achievement and citizenship.
Our Church

The Korean church that the two families and I attend is housed in a small building owned by a sponsor (or “Mother”) church and is shared with a Hispanic congregation at alternating service times. One of two Korean churches in this Southeastern university town, it was first established by a group of Korean students who left the other church. Until recently, it was both a religious and a contact center for many Korean students who come to the university to pursue their studies or to learn English by enrolling in the university’s Language Education Program (LEP).

From the beginning, the church has had a history of transient membership. Students who finish their studies and leave for South Korea are replaced by new students. The relationship began when South Korean students contacted the church to help them with settling in. Church members often picked them up at the airport and helped them find housing and transportation, obtain necessary documents, and finally, enroll in classes. However, in recent years, these contacts ended as new students, savvy about the Internet, contacted each other and took care of their business themselves. Since then, the numbers of students in our church diminished dramatically, and now the church consists of families rather than students who intend to live in the United States.

The Korean Language School classes. There were three classes offered by the church’s KLS. The classes were divided into beginning, intermediate, and advanced classes. The teachers placed the students according to their Korean literacy skills as perceived by the teachers’ and parents’ informal judgments of everyday conversations. Due to the lack of teachers, 20 students, representing a wide range in grade levels (kindergarten to tenth grade), were grouped as best as possible. Therefore, there was an age gap among students in the same class. For example, Joey (third grade) was
placed in the advanced class with Amelia (sixth grade), and Danny (fourth grade) and Carey (first grade) were in the intermediate class. Joey was placed in the advanced class because he knew how to read and write as well as the middle school students who were placed in that class. Danny was placed in the intermediate class with younger students because he was deemed to have difficulty with basic decoding skills. The teachers knew that there was a wide difference in literacy skills in each of there classes, but it was difficult to find more people willing to volunteer to teach.

At the time of this study, there were three teachers who taught each of the classes for about two hours after the Sunday service and fellowship time. The pastor’s wife, who taught at another KLS in a nearby city on Saturdays, began the KLS in our church in response to the concerns raised by the parents. The parents were worried that their children were losing their Korean literacy. The pastor’s wife supplied the curriculum for the beginning and the intermediate classes. The curriculum was obtained from the Korean Embassy in a major city nearby. The intermediate teacher used a workbook that focused on vocabulary and comprehension questions during her sessions. The teacher of the advanced class designed his own curriculum, which included discussions after watching a Korean video and reading sections from Korean literature downloaded from the Web. The students were usually required to write (in English) a weekly synopsis of their reading (in Korean) and e-mail it to him.

*The Students’ Homes*

The families in this study were typical of the South Korean student families in the university town where the research took place. The parents first arrived with the intention of pursuing their advanced studies or improving their English and returning to South Korea. Therefore, their homes contained only necessary items essential for everyday living. However, with the passing of each new year, furniture and personal
possessions accumulated. Yet, for these families, there was never the feeling of completely settling down. Presently, their home life is focused on the children and their education and extracurricular activities, such as music lessons (piano, flute, clarinet, and cello) and sports (Taekwondo, swimming, tennis, baseball, and soccer). For these families, the Korean language classes were not as urgent as the other activities, but they were still something in which the children participated.

_Amelia and Danny’s home._ Amelia and Danny lived with both their parents. Their father came to the United States two years ahead of the family to pursue his studies at the university. The rest of the family joined him about three years ago. Because their children have acclimated well to school and American society, the parents have begun making plans to remain in the United States.

_Joey and Carey’s home._ Joey and Carey came to the United States with their mother to learn English, while their father remained in Korea. They represent a growing trend within Korean communities in the United States; that is, young students come here to focus on their English literacy. Joey, Carey, and their mom planned to returned to South Korea after immersing in English language and culture for a year and a half. Every effort was made by their mother to provide as many contacts with English speakers during the short period of time. The boys attended after-school programs so that more opportunities were available for them to interact with peers. They were taught by a reading tutor at the beginning and were enrolled in an after-school reading at the end of their stay. Initially, their mother wanted someone to tutor them during the church’s KLS classes in reading English texts rather than have her boys keep up their Korean literacy. The structure of this family was different from that of Amelia and Danny’s in that the former had a very clear and driven motive to gain as much English literacy as possible before leaving the United States.
**Multiple Case Study Design**

A multiple case study design was appropriate for pursuing my research questions because, according to Merriam (1998), a case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 27). Since I was interested in how four young individuals used their two literacies in multiple contexts, an intensive observation and analysis of their activities was necessary.

Case study is also said to be a “particularly suitable design if [one is] interested in [a] process” (Merriam, 1998, p. 33). Each of the four students was involved in a process of becoming biliterate in multiple contexts. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Merriam (1998) cited Lightfoot’s (1983) portraiture of the good high schools as an example of a multiple case study. Merriam stated:

> Instead of studying one good high school, for example, Lightfoot (1983) studies six. Her findings are presented first as six individual case studies (or “portraits” as she called them); she then offered a cross-case analysis suggesting generalizations about what constituted a good high school. (p. 40)

I applied an aspect of Lightfoot’s (1997) methodology—voice—to my multiple case study design. Lightfoot (1997) asserted that a researcher brings her personal history into her research process. As a researcher who shared a cultural background with the participants, I drew upon my personal history to interpret what I observed and wrote about them.

**Role of the Researcher**

**Participant/Observer**

My role was not always a participant/observer in each of the settings. Initially, I intended to be a participant/observer in every one of the students’ classrooms; before...
going into the classrooms, I visualized myself observing and communicating with my participants freely. However, on my first week at the elementary school, the principal told me that she did not want me to interact with the students. She explained that one of the teachers had complained that my speaking to the students interfered with her instruction. The principal decided that she did not want any kind of interference with instruction, and she did not want me to initiate any conversation. She revealed later during our interview that the ESOL teacher, who had a prescribed method of teaching English to foreign students, did not want me speaking to the students because she would not know if the answers would be coming from me or the students.

Although it was initially frustrating for me to have my role restricted, and I debated whether I should seek other participants in a different school, I decided to proceed in this setting because the restrictions were part of this particular school culture. I soon learned that these classrooms were not operated in a way that allowed speaking naturally. Usually, literacy lessons were conducted and controlled by the teacher, and the students, sitting at their desks, alternated between doing workbooks and reading silently. The students worked diligently, and there was a business-like atmosphere in the school. Had I not been restricted from speaking to the participants, I would still have felt uncomfortable about interacting with them. However, as I became a regular visitor to their classrooms, teachers came to me after their instructions to chat, or I would go to them to ask questions about what they were doing. I also tried to sit next to or close to my participant students, trying not to interfere with their tasks; consequently, opportunities for communication arose when they would ask me questions or comment on something that was happening around them. Overall, I found myself observing more than participating in the classrooms, and asking them questions about what they were doing when I made home visits.
In the other two contexts, I was a participant observer. In our church’s KLS classes, the atmosphere was more casual and conversational, and the teachers and students interacted with me freely. For instance, whenever the teachers needed help translating a Korean expression to English because the children did not understand, they would look to me for help. During home visits, the mothers and I had meals together and spent many hours talking about “our kids” and trading stories about the struggles of living in a new land.

*Insider/Outsider*

In each of the settings, I saw myself shifting roles between an insider and an outsider. As a former classroom teacher and a student, I was able to relate to what teachers and students were going through in the classroom instruction. However, at times, I found myself becoming critical of the way instruction was carried out. As a university instructor of reading method courses, I repeatedly saw areas where instruction could have been improved, but I could not interfere. In addition, it was a strange experience to reenter the classroom after a long hiatus away from it while pursuing my doctoral studies. One such feeling is documented in my field notes dated 3/8/01:

As I sit in my corner of the room and watch Danny “doing school,” I can’t help feeling how suffocated I feel in this context. I can’t believe how structured this classroom is. Everything works like clockwork and no one is really communicating with each other. The teacher does her own thing and the students sit behind their desks thinking who knows what? Did I teach in a setting like this too? Classrooms are such a strange and unnatural place! It’s like that scene in *The Matrix* where Neo finally sees the inner network of the system.
In the beginning, I was an outsider, partly due to my ethnic identity. That is to say, some teachers and one principal initially identified me, along with the student participants and the families, essentially, as a foreigner. They had made an assumption before getting to know me personally. Then, as we continued to communicate formally (through interviews) and informally (through chance conversations), I saw their views of me transform from a foreigner to someone who had a shared history with them of living in the United States for many years. For instance, one educator came up to me one day and apologized for keeping me waiting. She said, “I’m sorry. You have to understand. We in this country are so obsessed with tests and grades.” And I responded, “I know. I remember taking all those tests myself. We really are obsessed!” [Recalled conversation March 11, 2001]. The educator looked at me with a flash of realization. After that incident, she interacted with me a little differently. She did not waste time trying to explain things to me.

In the church and community settings, I was also an insider/outsider. As most of the church members were South Korean nationals—not Korean Americans, like myself—I found myself sometimes relating and then pulling away continuously. They saw me often as someone who shared experiences with them but also as one who had a different set of experiences of living in the United States. They often sought advice or information from me. At the same time, they made a habit of explaining certain things to me during conversations about events that were occurring in South Korea. In addition, the students in the church seemed to consider me as a person who embodied a dual identity of an adult and an older sister. Although the students spoke to all of the other adults in Korean, they usually spoke to me in English. I believe that at times their perception of me as being approachable allowed them to reveal to me thoughts and feelings that they did not reveal to other adults.
Researcher’s Voice

When I decided to conduct this study, I knew that I would not be able to remove myself conveniently when telling my participants’ stories. As someone who also had to make a transition into the language and culture of a new country, albeit a couple of decades earlier, I was deeply involved with the four students’ lives. Many memories came back as I observed them going through the process of becoming biliterate in these multiple settings. As an insider/outsider, I knew that their stories would, at many points, mesh with my own stories.

Lightfoot (1997) outlined six ways in which voice was used in all aspects of doing and writing up research. “Voice as autobiography” was one way where the researcher’s voice “reflects the life story of the portraitist” (p. 95). To her inquiry, the researcher brings and acknowledges her own history of family, culture, ideology, and education. I thought this particular aspect of voice was especially appropriate as my personal history closely resembled those of the participants. As a researcher who regularly transgressed from one side of the linguistic/cultural border to the other, I was able to bring my own insight about what it is like to live with two languages and cultures. I saw this duality as a strength, and not an obstacle, that enabled me to position myself in the continuum of being an insightful insider and an outsider of their various contexts. As a participant observer, I also observed my participants interacting in literacy activities across various contexts that were not all available to teachers, parents, and community members. Therefore, I had the benefit of studying their literacy behaviors holistically. Through the use of narrative writing, I employed my own reflections of my past experiences as a second language user to enhance the interpretation of data. As I encountered data that resonated deeply with my past experiences, I made personal connections in my writing.
Researcher’s View on Biliteracy

As a biliterate, I felt that it was important for Korean students in the United States to maintain both their languages. In the Korean community, the parents often singled me out as a kind of a role model. Whenever someone new came to the church and learned that I was not a visiting student from South Korea, they were surprised at my fluency in Korean.

My bias in valuing biliteracy influenced the way I viewed the participants. For instance, when Danny, who had been in the United States for only a few years, had notable difficulty with the simplest Korean literacy skills, I was quietly frustrated. While going through my data, I noticed that I was focusing on his misuse of the Korean language. I felt it was unfortunate that he had let his Korean literacy falter. On the other hand, I felt that Danny was in the United States long enough to have a better grasp of English literacy skills than he was demonstrating. Conversely, I viewed Joey and Carey, the newcomers, less critically. When they had difficulty with English words or concepts, it was understandable. Therefore, my bias about maintaining both languages influenced my interpretation of the data.

Data Sources and Data Collection

Data were collected in the students’ public school classrooms, their KLS classes, and their homes. I visited Harvard Elementary five times a week and Cornell Middle School twice a week from February 8 to April 19, 2001. I then took a maternity leave for the next three weeks, and restarted data collection from May 16 to the end of the school year, June 1, 2001. Thus, I collected data in the two schools during a total of 13 weeks and over 180 hours. For each of the three elementary students (and before I began data collection), I visited their classroom teachers and requested that they identify times during their instructional day when I might best
observe literacy (reading and/or writing) activities. The teachers suggested that I visit their reading or Accelerated Reader times, as well as the students’ special pull-out programs, such as their gifted program, Spectrum (Danny), and ESOL (Joey and Carey) classes. I then contacted the Spectrum teacher and the ESOL teacher, and I obtained permission to visit these classrooms as well. Amelia, the middle school student, had a reading class and a language arts class. I visited both of these classrooms. Amelia’s reading teacher also taught her science class, so toward the second half of data collection and with the teacher’s suggestion, I also visited her science class to observe her in literacy-related activities. Table 2, below, shows my weekly schedule of data collection in the field.

Table 2

*Weekly Schedule of Data Collection in the Classrooms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00–9:00</td>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>Danny</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00–10:00</td>
<td>Carey</td>
<td>Carey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00–11:00</td>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>Joey</td>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>Joey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15–2:00</td>
<td>Carey</td>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>Carey</td>
<td>Joey</td>
<td>Amelia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each week in the classroom setting, I collected three hours of data for Amelia and Joey each and four hours of data for Danny and Carey each.

Additional data were collected in the Korean-language classes and their homes. There were three classes that my church had established for teaching students Korean
Regardless of age, the students were grouped by ability, representing beginning, middle, or advanced. The four students attended these classes. The classes were held after Sunday service, and since the two classes were held simultaneously, I visited each on alternate weeks. On two Sundays, classes were cancelled due to a church picnic and lack of student attendance. Formal data collection took place from February 11 to May 27, 2001, when the Korean-language classes ended. For 12 Sundays, I collected data for 1.5 to 2 hours, for a total of 21 hours. I also made two home visits per week, for approximately 4–6 hours, divided between the two families. I visited their homes usually after school or on Saturdays when the families’ schedules were more relaxed. Although the formal data collection in the homes took place for 10 weeks, from February 12 to April 16, 2001, informal data were collected continuously until March 31, 2002. For example, my husband and I belonged to the small church members meeting that was held and led by Amelia and Danny’s parents. In addition, the two families sometimes came to the neighborhood public library where I often went after collecting data in the schools. In total, formal data collection took place for 13 weeks, and over 250 hours were spent in the field.

The data sources collected consist of observational field notes, my journal, transcriptions of audio taped interviews, videotape transcriptions, informal interview notes, portraits, and artifacts produced by the students.

**Primary Data Sources**

**Observational field notes.** Observational field notes were taken each time I visited the students’ classrooms, homes, and KLS classes. I wrote my observational notes in a continuous format. Unlike other qualitative research, when researchers’ thinking is written as “OC” (Observer Comment), I believe that a researcher cannot conveniently erase herself when she writes up field observations. Like Lightfoot
I believe that the researcher’s voice is “everywhere” (p. 85). It is present as she makes choices about what she will attend to, what she will ignore, and what she will write down as field notes. Hence, it seemed to me that separating personal comments (“OC”) from the main body of the text and writing such comments in the periphery—instead of including them in the main text of the notes—was an artificial process. Below is an example of my field notes on Danny dated 2/21/01:

His friend tells him to write down bibliographic information about the book he used. His friend also says, “You have to use the encyclopedia.” Danny says, “I did.” “No, you didn’t,” says the unrelenting friend. Danny walks to the encyclopedia shelf. His friend calls to him “You have to get W.” Danny says, “No, I’m getting G.” “You have to find his last name.” Danny finally comes with a book. Looks up Washington and can’t find it. His friend said, “Did you bring a dictionary?” Danny looks at the spine of the book. Yes, he has brought a dictionary instead of the encyclopedia. I was intrigued by how Danny’s friend seemed to be ready to assist or correct him. I say, “You’re a good friend.” He says, “Sometimes. He usually gets it right.” Not quite getting it right seems to be the tendency that I see throughout various contexts for Danny.

As the above example illustrates, my thoughts and feelings were included in the observational field notes. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), field notes are written out (from notes taken on site) immediately after each observation or interview. Field notes also include the researcher’s “ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches” (p. 107), or, in short, her thoughts and feelings during the process of collecting and reflecting on the data. Therefore, I took detailed field notes at the sites and then entered them into computer word files, adding on more details and reflections.
Transcriptions of audio taped interviews. Interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The interviews were conducted at the participants’ homes. The questions were loosely constructed around the thoughts, feelings, and activities regarding their biliteracy.

Transcriptions of videotapes and audiotapes on site. While videotaping was prohibited in the public schools, it was allowed in the KLS classes. In addition to taking detailed field notes, I either videotaped or audiotaped some of the Korean-language classes. In total, I made three videotapes and three audiotapes. I watched or listened to these tapes and partially transcribed sections that related to the questions of my study.

Journal. I also kept a journal as I reread the data; I wrote about my thoughts and feelings as my life events and data seem to intertwined and as old memories of my own struggles of negotiating two languages and cultures emerged. I chose to keep a journal to write down thoughts and feelings that did not immediately relate to field notes and those I did not yet know where to place. For example, since I was a part of this community, I had additional contacts with the participants and their families in church, community, and personal functions. I paid attention to what was said, and when I came home, I thought about the events and wrote down those that seemed relevant to the study.

Secondary Data Sources

Transcriptions of audio taped interviews with the teachers. In addition to interviewing the students, I also interviewed their teachers. I transcribed all of the interviews.

Transcriptions of audio taped interviews with the parents. The interviews with parents were conducted in Korean. I listened to these tapes several times and
made hand-written transcriptions in Korean of segments of the conversation that were relevant to my research questions. I then took the hand-written Korean transcriptions and translated and typed them as English transcriptions (see Appendix B). As a Korean-English biliterate, I felt fairly confident about the accuracy of my translations. When I was not certain about the accuracy of the translation, I consulted a Korean-English or English-Korean dictionary, and also requested my husband, who is also bilingual, to check over my translation. For purposes of confidentiality, I did not want to ask someone in the Korean community to check my translation.

*Portraits.* As I collected data on each of the students, I wrote portraits of each of the students (see Appendix A for Amelia’s portrait). I wrote these portraits to help myself organize my understanding of each of the students. I then read aloud each portrait to the teachers individually. I shared the portraits with the public school teachers to obtain their reactions to what I was observing. I also hoped that by sharing this information they would tell me stories about the children. In most cases, the teachers provided additional information about the students, which was used as part of the data.

*Guiding Questions*

Five guiding questions were developed as a way to explore my central question, How do Korean bilingual students engage in literacy activities in three contexts (home, school, church)? Originally, there were six questions, but the first two questions, which were identical in wording except for the words “English” and “Korean” were combined. Thus, the five guiding questions were as follows:

(a) What are the students’ attitudes about their developing English and Korean literacies?
(b) Are there changes in their preferences and usage of one language over the other?

(c) Are there evidences of transfer of literacy skills from their L1 to L2 and vice versa?

(d) Do their literacy practices in their homes and their Korean language classes influence their level of engagement in their classrooms?

(e) What are some difficulties students face in their process of developing second language literacy skills?

Data Analysis

Erickson’s (1986) method of inductive analysis was used to analyze the data. There were two phases of data analysis: generating and testing assertions, and writing narrative vignettes. I describe the details of the process next.

Phase One: Generating and Testing Assertions

According to Erickson (1986), the first step of his inductive analysis is to review the full set of data and to generate assertions. The second step is to test the assertions generated by looking for “key linkages” (p. 147) across each of the data sources. A key linkage is the main focus of the major assertion that subsumes subsidiary assertions the researcher makes. A key linkage connects many instances of the same phenomenon across the entire data set. Erickson provides a metaphor that helps to illustrate this analytic process:

An appropriate metaphor for this kind of pattern discovery and testing is to think of the entire data set (fieldnotes, interviews notes, site documents, videotapes) as a large cardboard box filled with pieces of paper on which appear items of data. The key linkage is an analytic construct that ties strings to these items of data in the corpus. When one pulls on the top string, one
wants as many subsidiary strings as possible to be attached to data. The strongest assertions are those that have the most strings attached to them across the widest possible range of sources and kinds of data. (p. 148)

To test the validity of the assertions, I systematically searched each piece in the data set for disconfirming and confirming evidence. If key linkages came only from one data source or a discrepant case challenged the assertion, the assertion was reworded to better reflect the data.

Even if most of the evidence confirmed my assertions, discrepant cases were noted for further analysis. Erickson (1986) stated that an analysis of discrepant cases is important because such cases can illuminate the subtleties in how local meanings are established. In other words, doing subsequent analysis of discrepant cases may yield additional data that may reveal insights into understanding the complexities of the phenomena observed.

*Phase Two: Writing-Up Narrative Vignettes*

Narratives vignettes were written to support and illustrate the assertions. Through the use of a natural sequence of events and language, the vignettes provided evidence that a reader can use in determining whether the major assertions are indeed valid. Direct quotes from the participants were used in the narrative vignettes to convey the various points of views of the participants. Also, sections from my field notes were used in writing the narrative vignettes. Through the use of particular descriptions and quotes, I wrote the narrative vignettes to convince the reader that such events could and did occur. By doing so, I tried to convey to the reader my interpretive commentary.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

Today, after the service, my husband and I decided to invite the Sunday school children to our home for pizza and the last session of his class (my husband taught the advanced class). We had invited only his class, but as it turned out, a few of the younger siblings came along too. We had two little girls sitting in the back seat of our car. They were worriedly chatting under their breath, and the only thing I was able to catch was that someone was really mad that he couldn’t come along. Then they started saying that they heard him curse. When I heard this, the Sunday school teacher in me came out. I blurted out, “What are you talking about? Who said what?” Then Angelina, who is always quick to tell who is doing something they’re not supposed to be doing, said, “We’re talking about you know who! Let’s just say we heard him use very strong language!” The other girl, Emily, the more quietly observant one, nodded in agreement and added that he once got mad at her—pushed her in the chest and called her a “f—a—.” Well . . . my husband and I stared at each other in disbelief. He and I share a common interest in the church kids, and have had an on-going discussion about how
these kids who seem like the ideal students at school tend to get very rowdy
when they gather at the church, and they act in ways that you wouldn’t
imagine them doing at school. However, we had no idea that these kids were
using obscenities in secret. I know that none of the parents knew that this
practice was going on. It was one of those moments when I was able to take a
glimpse into their world, and I was given a hint that it was anything but
innocent and safe. Judging by the looks on the two girls’ faces, it’s dangerous
and filled with anxiety-producing moments, at least from their perspectives.

[Journal 5/14/01]

When I think about the above story, I have many thoughts and
feelings. I try not to think of it all negatively, but mainly to understand. It is
very troubling for me to think that this boy, a participant in this study, treats
other kids this way. What’s more troubling is that he, along with other kids,
thinks that such behavior is acceptable in his Korean community and not in
his “American” community. I know that it isn’t just in school that they are on
their best behaviors; it seems to be also in contexts where they are with
American people. For instance, when the older kids occasionally went to the
English service at our sponsor church, they were quiet and behaved
themselves. It seems that only when they get together with other Korean
church kids that they become almost “out of control” and just very loud—it’s as if they are holding all this energy inside, to release it in one gush at, of all places, the church! I first tell myself that they need to relieve their stress, and they probably feel most comfortable among their Korean peers. However, I believe there is more to it than that. There seems to be an underlying thinking that their two worlds are not just different, but are valued differently by the church children. Their English/American world seems to be considered more real, powerful, and important, while their Korean world is, well, less-real, less-powerful, and less-important. Or, is it that they themselves feel more powerful in their Korean community than in their American community? Perhaps they find their Korean community to be less constraining and a little more forgiving of a certain discourse experimentation? It is difficult to tell for sure. In either case, they definitely seem to value their English literacy over Korean literacy.

[Journal 9/20/01]

Introduction

This chapter consists of two sections that were developed around answering my main question: How do South Korean bilingual students in the United States engage in literacy in three different contexts—home, school, and church? In the first
section, I introduce each of the four student participants by using excerpts taken from narrative pieces, which I call “portraits.” I wrote these portraits while I was still in the field, as a way to make sense of how I was getting to know them as students in their bilingual world. Also in this section, I present assertions about each of the four student participants drawn from the data. In the second section, I present assertions from my analyses across the four cases. Throughout the case-by-case analysis, I include narrative vignettes, which I wrote in an attempt to support and illustrate the assertions.

Case-by-Case Analysis

Carey, the First Grader

Initially, Carey was not happy about having to attend a school in the United States. In first grade, he cried for several weeks before he began to adjust. His mother recalled that Carey came home one day and tearfully asked her why the other kids were talking to him in English. He said, “Why are they talking to me in English? Don’t they know I’m Korean?” [Interview transcript 3/8/01]. When his brother and he accompanied his mother to come to the United States a year ago, Carey did not know the English alphabet. In Korea, he had attended only “play school” and was just beginning to read in Korean. Therefore, Harvard Elementary School became his first formal school experience.
At the beginning of the study (February 2001), Carey was in the middle of a transition from a boy who cried everyday to a “good” student who was learning the everyday routines of the classroom. His behavior and attitude were in direct contrast to how he interacted at church and in his home. In the latter two settings, he was a rambunctious talker and sought attention from everyone. He would often get kicked out of the Korean-language class because he frequently disturbed the class. However, as the year progressed, Carey became more confident and even became one of the experts/authorities on classroom routines; he often told others what they should be doing. This was also true for his Korean-language class.

Toward the end of the study, Carey and his brother were conversing with both their school and church peers in English, as it is the preferred language of the latter group. I would often hear Carey shouting, “Come here, Peter!” or “Where is Peter?” [Field notes 8/1/01]. However, when he spoke to adults he would typically speak in Korean. Once, when I asked him why he never spoke to me in English, even though he knew that I understood it, he answered, “Because [you’re] Korean….”/“한국 사람이잖아요.” [Field notes 4/8/01]. Carey was very aware of his own identity as a Korean, and he knew when and to whom he should speak Korean or English. He knew that, at the least, two distinct discourse communities existed in his new world. It was not a simple rule of speaking Korean to Korean people and English to American...
people. Carey knew the complex rule: use Korean to Korean adults and other older children who have recently arrived in the United States, but use English with other Korean children. At church, he would speak to me in Korean one minute and then would quickly switch to English (albeit broken) when he turned to one of the Korean children.

Assertion 1: Carey confuses similarly spelled words in both languages. Carey confused similarly sounding words when he read English texts. For example, while reading, he confused the word “planet” for “place,” “meet” for “met,” “full” for “flap” [Field notes, 2/14/01], and “lamp” for “lamb” [Field notes 3/5/01]. And, when he wrote, he made errors in spelling “trock” for “truck,” “suck” for “sock” [Field notes 3/8/01], “saddy” for “saddle,” “angel” for “-ag,” “gag” for “jag,” “grag” for “drag,” and “hump” for “jump” [Field notes 3/9/01].

In Korean Language School, Carey had trouble writing. He said, “I forgot all my Korean.”/“한국말 다 잊어버렸어요.” However, he did not have a strong grasp of Korean literacy when he came to the United States. Carey’s confusion about the Korean alphabet is clear. He confused the Korean words for “bird” (새/“sae”) and “dog” (개/“gae”). The two words are very similar in sound and spelling. Carey also had trouble with the Korean words for “taste” (맛이/“maat-ee”) and “many” (많이/“man-ee”). Again, both are very similar phonetically [Field notes 2/25/01]. As the
following vignette will illustrate, Carey confused the word “satan” with “santa”:

**Vignette 1:** Carey is playing a *Dragonball Z* game with his brother. Carey’s character is “Mr. Satan.” While Carey vigorously punches the keys on his keyboard to fight the opponent, he yells, “Santa, ho, ho, ho! Everybody’s flying!” Carey thinks Mr. Satan is Mr. Santa. They are two very similarly spelled words, but contrary in concept.

**Assertion 2:** Carey has nearly mastered school Discourse and now forces the rules onto others. In his classroom, Carey moved from one task to another seamlessly. He knew the routines so well that when the teacher began to ask Carey to do something, he completed her sentence. When the teacher asked, “Carey, would you please collect. . .” Carey added, “The crayons?” He spent most of his classroom time working independently at his desk. He copied the spelling words from the board onto the paper the teacher provided, handed the paper to the assistant teacher for check-up, went back to his desk and copied down a penmanship exercise, completed a math worksheet, took out his journal and wrote, and looked through his word book if he did not know how to spell a word. This was his everyday routine during his class’s “reading” time.

He did not seem to make a mistake when following the classroom routine. He knew exactly what he needed to do, and he forcefully reminded others about what
they should be doing. For example, various groups of students moved in and out of
his classroom for resource services. Carey remembered who was scheduled to go at
various times, and he told those kids when they had to go.

Sometimes, following the classroom routines too closely did not provide the
best educational experience for Carey. When writing in his journal, for instance,
Carey often became stuck on the spelling of a word. He followed the procedure the
teacher had apparently instructed the class to follow: (a) check their book of words (a
bank of alphabetically ordered words, which are accumulated in each student’s book
based on their individual writing needs); (b) check the dictionary; then (c) check
books they have read. Sometimes, Carey spent as long as 30 minutes searching for a
word he did not know how to spell. It appeared that using invented spelling was an
option given to students, but not emphasized in this classroom. Therefore, Carey did
not apply his phonetic knowledge when attempting to spell new words on his own.
Often, his journal entries were limited to words he knew how to spell or could identify
and copy from books he had previously read.

**Vignette 2:** Carey gets his journal and writes, “Peaches is,” then looks on the
Q page of his word book for the word “cute.” He does not have the word in
his word book. He gets the classroom picture dictionary and looks for Q.

When I ask whether I may see it, he says, “After I write a little more . . . ”/
“조금만 더 쓰고 . . .” Not finding what he is looking for, he walks around the room and looks around for the word. I wonder if students can ask each other for help. It seems that they were told to work independently. A group of girls at the next table have created a small fortress with books to cover their writing. If they need help, they can only ask one of the teachers in the room. However, the two teachers in the room are too busy with their small reading groups at the moment.

Carey tells his friend, “Quentin, you’re done [you have to do] this book.” Quentin ignores him. Carey looks over at the teacher, but she is still talking to someone. Quentin finally looks up and asks Carey, “What do I do now?” Carey says, one more time, “This book . . . Peaches.” [Write about Peaches in this book.] Quentin says, “Not about that hamster, again.” The teacher has written the class pet’s name “Peaches” on the board and had instructed the students to write about the pet hamster in their journals. The students have been writing about Peaches for several days in a row, and Quentin does not want to do it again.

Carey then gets his journal and resumes his search for the word “cute.” I tell him to look on the C page of his word book. He does not have “cute” in the C section of his word book. Carey takes his book and continues
to walk around. He then goes to the teacher because she is finally alone, and
she spells the word for him. This is the story of how Carey spent 30 minutes
trying to write the word “cute” [Field notes 3/6/01].

Carey’s interest in classroom routines was observable in his KLS class. Prior
to March 2001, Carey was often thrown out of his KLS class because he was
disruptive and did not want to stay in class. However, he seemed to gradually accept
his KLS classroom routines and opted to stay in the class. He was participating in the
lessons successfully. He was often found monitoring the class time. He looked at the
clock and said to himself, “거의 끝났다.”/ “It’s almost over.” Or, he told another
student in class, “Do your work” [Field notes 4/8/01].

Assertion 3: Carey has developed a bank of English sight vocabulary words,
but does not always understand what he reads. In Carey’s classroom, there were many
opportunities for students to develop sight vocabulary. For each book they read in the
class, a list of key words was presented and read first. Also, there were weekly
spelling words for them to memorize. Such classroom practices helped Carey learn
many sight words during his first few months of attending school in the United States.
When he first came, he had a shaky knowledge of the English alphabet, but after
several months in the school, he learned many sight words. By the end of the school
year, Carey became one of the best readers in his class. He was able to read his entire
reading group book aloud, although neither fluently nor with full understanding of what he had read. His teacher was perplexed about where in her reading groups to place him. Although he was reading well orally (that is, his sight word and decoding skills were very good), she knew that he did not fully understand what he read. Hence, she did not know whether he should be moved up to a higher reading group or remain in his current reading group, which was just below the highest group.

When asked questions about what he read, Carey often did not respond. He said merely, “I don’t know.”/“몰라요.” When he took the AR test, he passed the test about half of the time. For Carey, a book was something you read and left alone. He did not like talking about books, but he did read aloud to his mother, as an oratory performance. He also viewed reading as an independent activity. He did not like being in a reading group where he had to read along with others. He liked reading his books quickly and getting it done.

When writing in his journal, he reused words that he already knew. For instance, he wrote

Quentin found Peaches.

Peaches is cute.

Children like Peaches.

[Field notes 3/8/01]
The same words appeared repeatedly throughout his writing journal. However, toward the end of the school year, Carey was able to recycle the small group of words to compose the following reiteration of the Cinderella story [shown exactly as it appeared in his journal]:

Cinderella

Once upon a time there is Cinderella.

Cinderella stepsisters go to the Ball and Cinderella said can I go to the Ball ask Cinderella.

No said stepmother.

Stepmother and stepsister got to the Ball.

Cinderella is sad.

Cinderella see grand grand mother.

Grand grand mother make Cinderella beautiful.

Grand grand mother said you can go to the Ball.

And Cinderella go to the Ball.

Cinderella and Prince love and dance.

Cinderella see the clik it is 12 o’clik and Cinderella run to the home.

Prince said find that girl and prince go to the Cinderella home.

First prince do it stepmother prince said not you and prince do it stepsisters
prince said not you and prince do it Cinderella and Cinderella is right and

Cinderella and prince married.

[Artifact 4/4/01]  
This journal entry won Carey much praise and encouragement from his classroom teacher. It was the longest entry he had written up to that point in time. He was restricted to retelling the story using only the words he knew how to spell correctly. When he did not know the correct word in English, Carey showed creativity by combining known words to express ideas for words he did not know in English. For example, he called the fairy godmother “Grand grand mother.” At first reading his story, it seemed that Carey may have thought the magical being was simply quite old. Alternatively, he may have known that in Korean folktales, the heavenly fairy tale being is usually old and wise. Carey may have tapped into memories from both Korean and English storytelling/storybook reading experiences to generate his retelling.

**Vignette 3:** Carey takes out the wordlist for the book *Blast Off!*, from a zip-lock bag. The words are *after, before, cloud, didn’t, eat, friend, got, hard, know, last*. Carey reads aloud all the words correctly, except “cloud,” which he read as “could.” The teacher asks him whether he had studied them at home. Carey nods “yes.” The teacher then opens the book *Blast Off!* Carey
reads as the teacher points to each of the words in the book. His reading is accurate, but not fluent. It is choppy, as though he is identifying a series of unassociated words. He gives the impression that he is reading a long list of words rather than a continuous story. The teacher asks him questions, but he does not answer. Instead, he shrugs his shoulders.

The above vignette illustrates that although Carey has memorized the sight words assigned to him by the teacher, he did not always understand what he read.

Assertion 4: Carey had a difficult time adjusting to the school culture, and he was often a loner. Carey did not seem to get along with his peers, and he liked doing his class work alone. Carey’s classroom teacher recalled, “He didn’t seem to ever find one particular person that he was friends with. So, he was more of a loner” [Interview transcript 8/30/01]. She added that Carey was shy, and when his peers tried to tell him what he should be doing, he thought they were bothering him.

Carey’s mother thought that he had trouble making friends as well. She said, “He doesn’t have his own friends. His brother’s friends let him hang around with them”/ “제는 자기 친구가 없어요. 다 자기 형친구들이 끼워주는거에요.” [Recalled conversation 6/12/01]. Carey’s classroom teacher learned that he had difficulty adjusting to his own group in his after school program:

[H]e didn’t like the after school program. He cried so often that they put him
in the group with his brother who’s in the third grade at the time. So, he was always playing with the older boys instead of younger boys.

[Interview transcript 8/30/01]

Vignette 4: Carey’s classroom teacher decided to work independently with him because he did not work well in the small group settings. During a small group reading, Carey would flip through his small book and finish reading it instead of reading together with the other children. Therefore, Carey reads and works alone while his classmates gather in groups around his teacher. Unlike some other students, Carey does not need to be reminded about what he should be doing during his reading time. He moves through various activities prepared for them by his teacher and finishes his work before anyone else. He is reported by his teacher to be making remarkable progress in reading.

For Carey, gaining acceptance from his peers did not appear to be important. Toward the end of the school year, however, he did begin to interact a little more comfortably with his peers. In Carey’s case, being unsociable did not seem to hinder him from learning the school routines.

Assertion 5: Carey has broadened his English use to his school, home, and church. Throughout the study, Carey used his English to communicate in various
contexts. At home, his mother proudly reported that Carey was sometimes communicating with his brother in English. At times, she was surprised that he knew some of the verbal expressions his brother was using. When he first came to church, he was not able to join in on conversations with the other children because they were speaking in English. He asked, “Why aren’t they speaking in Korean even though they’re Korean?” “왜 한국 사람인데 한국말 안 해?” [Journal 2/22/01]. However, a short time after the study began, Carey seemed to have changed his views dramatically, and he was trying to use his English literacy as much as possible.

Although Carey’s communication in English was minimal when he was with his public school classroom teacher, he was quite talkative with his peers out on the playground and with children in church. At home, when talking to his brother while playing a computer game, he switched from Korean to English with brief interjections of “Give me, that’s mine” [Field notes 3/24/01] or “They’re flying!” [Field notes 3/18/01]. At home, Carey’s literacy practices were similar to Joey’s. He watched TV, played computer games with his brother, or read books he brought home from school. However, he did not yet use e-mail, and he had only partial knowledge of how to use the computer. Instead of using the Internet, for instance, he would put in CDs of downloaded games. Usually, Joey had set up the games and invited his brother to play with him.
At church, Carey joined a group of boys that ran around rambunctiously on the playground and inside the building. Carey did not have a separate group of friends, but instead played with his brother’s friends. Since all of the boys spoke English, Carey participated speaking only in English. While playing, he often yelled out “Give me the ball!” or “Catch me!” [Field notes 5/20/01].

**Vignette 5:** Carey seems to be a lot more willing to communicate in his ESOL class than in his regular classroom. Could it be that he is more comfortable with his ESOL peers? Today, the teacher shows a series of small square cards with pictures of different animals. She tells them to identify the animal and then say something about it. Carey appears to really like this game. He participates enthusiastically, even interrupting other students’ turns to talk.

Below are Carey’s responses to the picture cards:

- **Snail**—his back is house.
- **Goldfish**—gold.
- **Rabbit**—bunny.
- **Polar bear**—white bear.

When the teacher shows a picture card of a hamster, Carey enthusiastically offers this story:

Danny has hamster and he runs around and around at night. He
[is] . . . hungry and eats and runs around and around. The hamster is this small [makes a little circle by joining his thumbs and forefingers].

[Field notes 3/5/01]

It was evident that Carey was really willing to communicate with every resource he could find.

*Joey, the Third Grader*

Joey entered Harvard Elementary as a third grader a little less than a year ago. Joey and his younger brother, Carey, came to the United States a year ago with their mother for the sole purpose of learning English. Upon entering school, Joey knew only the alphabet in English. He was an average reader and writer in the Korean language, but was “not a studious type,” according to his mother.

Joey looked for many ways to fit in with his peers, and he was accustomed to transitions. He moved seven times while he was in South Korea. With each move and each new school, he learned to adapt quickly and effectively to his new environments. He learned what each new setting required of him and what he needed to do to be accepted. He had put his survival skills into use here in the United States, as well. He said that he thought kids in the United States were more “child-like/유치해요” and “less serious” than kids in South Korea. Therefore, he thought he earned his friendships by being someone who was funny, athletic, and a good fighter. His
strategy seemed to have worked. In school, he was usually surrounded by a group of popular boys.

At home, Joey was independent. Rarely did he ask his mother to help him with his homework. This meant that sometimes he misunderstood directions, and he did not do his homework correctly. However, he did not like asking his teachers for help, either. It seemed that the most important people in his world were his friends—not adults. In fact, he really disliked being treated like a kid. He did not like reading his language arts textbook (a first-grade text) in his ESOL class. He said he did not understand why he had to read such “baby stuff.” Instead, he was eager to read on his age level. He had sped through reading his AR books. His younger brother, Carey, and he compared the number of points earned thus far. Both were competitive and more interested in accumulating AR points than comprehending what they were reading. If he could read the books orally and pass the comprehension test, he was satisfied.

Assertion 1: Joey’s home literacy practice consists mostly of computer skills.

As soon as Joey arrived home from school, he sat in front of his computer playing games, surfing the Net for games, downloading and copying a game for a friend, or, at times, sending e-mail messages. His e-mail messages were usually to his Korean language teacher, to friends, or to his father in Korea. He did not like to write very often, but when he did it was to fulfill a specific need. For instance, he e-mailed his
father when he needed something. Below is an e-mail message, exactly as he wrote it, to his father:

From: joey 10

Sent: Monday, April 16, 2001

Hi dad I love you

and I love grandpa and grandma.

And I want to buy BIG MAMA’S HOUSE movie because it is very

funny movie. I saw the BIG MAMA’S HOUSE in my Korea friend’s

house but only me and Carey. My church friends also didn’t see

BIG MAMA’S HOUSE but they want to see that movie. but my mom

Don’t want to buy that. can you buy that! [Shown exactly as it appears on his

e-mail message.]

Despite grammatical errors, Joey was able to communicate his thoughts fairly clearly when he had a strong motive to write. Joey preferred writing (or typing) on his keyboard to writing traditionally, with paper and pencil. In fact, Joey was so skilled in keyboarding that he was able to type in both Korean and English. (He reported, however, that he is faster typing in English). Though the keys on his keyboard displayed only the English alphabet, he memorized which keys coordinated with which Korean characters, and he was able to type Korean texts. That is, he would
press the “Alt” key, and the text on the screen switched from English to Korean. If he
pressed the “A” key, the screen would show “ㅁ.” However, the English/Korean
coordinating keys were not matched phonetically. Just as there is a rationale behind
how the English keyboard was designed, the Korean keyboard also had its own
system. Joey was able to switch back and forth from the two systems easily and
whenever necessary. At home, reading and writing e-mail were Joey’s primary
literacy activities.

When using the Web, Joey jumped from websites in English text to those in
Korean text. He usually visited www.yahoo.com first. He had learned, however, that it
was easier for him to download Dragonball Z games from a Korean website. For this
purpose, he typed www.yahoo.co.kr. However, the Korean Dragonball Z websites
were not all in Korean text; about half of the sites were in English. Presumably, the
Korean students who visited these sites knew how to read in English. Joey usually
skipped the English texts and skimmed through the Korean. His other favorite site
was www.foxkids.com, which he discovered from watching TV programs and other
kids on the computers at the public library. At home, Joey did not keep the TV on all
day. He said he watched only Dragonball Z, which was on at 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. on
weekdays, and then at 12 p.m. on Saturdays. He has learned that downloading games
off of the Web is a very slow process, so he preferred to play copies of CD-ROMs he
obtained from his friends from church. As stated before, the church children formed two groups divided along gender lines. The boys exchanged information about the latest *Dragonball Z* sites when they gathered together. With the exception of one girl, most were not at all interested in *Dragonball Z*.

Toward the end of the study, Joey discovered the game site www.crazyarcade.com, where he was able not only to download and play as many computer games as he wanted, but also to go into chatrooms on the site. According to Joey, his cousin in Korea would send him a private message (or whisper/귓속말) to him to meet him at a certain game room. They would then virtually meet each other in one of the rooms and play games.

**Vignette 1:** The two brothers, Joey and Carey, are playing a computer game in their computer room. They borrowed the *Dragonball Z* game from Kevin, a middle school boy from church. Each boy selects a character to fight against each other: Broli vs. Vegeta Normal 2, and Goku SSJ2 vs. Broli. Goku SSJ2 is an embodiment of two characters, because Goku’s son can be teleported when help is needed.

This time, they play team battle, where each player selects two characters, instead of one, and engage in battle. The team battle involves more complicated maneuvers as each of the players controls the movements
of both characters with keys on the keyboard. The four characters selected engage in battle: Majin Vegeta and Broli vs. Mr. Satan and Majin Vegeta. The boys punch the keyboards feverishly—the characters punch, flip, and fly all around the computer screen. At times, the game is confusing to follow. For instance, the same character can be in either one of the teams and can battle itself. The character “Majin Vegeta” is on both sides of the battle and, at times, battles himself. When I inquired about this impossible scenario, I found it did not seem to bother the two boys. They explained that if the game allows you to battle Majin Vegeta with another Majin Vegeta, then it is possible. More single battles are played: Mystic Gohan vs. Goku SSJ4 (with a “super-powered tail”); Future Trunks vs. Freeza; Racoom vs. Mr. Boo (a fat character who fights and dances ballet); and Cell Junior vs. Mr. Boo. They continue playing match after match. The game does not require reading of any written text (except for name-labels for each of the characters) [Field notes 3/18/01].

Assertion 2: Joey has not fully mastered his classroom Discourse. Joey’s ESOL classroom was a highly structured one where the teacher had very specific goals for how her lessons would be conducted. Anything brought up by students that did not adhere to her plans was rejected. Joey would often not give the answer for
which the teacher was looking. For example, after reading a selection in their reader (a first grade level reader from the Literature Works series) about an animal community near a river, the teacher asked the question, “Why is river important?” A student responded, “To drink.” Joey responded, “Ocean,” “No, we’re talking about river now!” The teacher sharply corrected him. Under his breath, Joey said, “Rivers make ocean.” However, the teacher did not hear him. Then he quickly covered his mouth. Joey’s answer did not fit into the question-and-answer script that the teacher wanted her students to follow [Field notes 2/9/01].

In addition, Joey did not seem to know how to determine the appropriateness of what he said. For instance, in the middle of a class discussion on birds and nests in his ESOL class, Joey excitedly told a story: “In Korea, I found an egg, and I do like that [makes a motion as if he is throwing something on the ground] and the baby was dead” [Field notes 2/9/01]. The teacher and the students just looked at him, ignored him, and went on with the lesson.

In a similar incident, a student teacher introduced the Venn diagram of John Henry and Paul Bunyan, and Joey was the first to raise his hand. He responded, “John Henry is black people and Paul Bunyan is white.” Others rushed to stop him, “You can’t say that!” For some reason, others in Joey’s class did not think that mentioning a person’s color was appropriate [Field notes 3/1/01].
Furthermore, Joey sometimes had difficulty determining the nuance of his teacher’s questions. For example, one of his science homework assignments was to write about what he would see if he were to dig through the center of the earth. Instead of talking about the layers of the earth, Joey responded that he would see China if he dug through the center of the earth. His response suggested he did not understand the content of his science book. Or, he did not understand the context around the question. Later, when questioned about this incident, Joey stated that he did not understand the assigned readings very well, and he did not realize that the question related to an earlier class reading on earth science.

**Vignette 2:** In his ESOL class, the teacher wants to check their homework from the previous night. Joey raises his hand and says, “Ms. F., I didn’t understand.” The teacher is very upset and holds the worksheet close to his face and says, “No, Joey, you forgot to do your homework. I explain[ed] it to you.” Joey says, “No.” The teacher says, “I explain[ed] it to everyone in class.” She keeps saying, “Look at me. You didn’t understand?” Then she goes over the homework with the class. Ms. F. is still very upset and seems to think Joey is not being truthful. The teacher calls on him to make a sentence with one of the spelling words, “can’t.” Joey says, “I can’t do my homework.” The teacher adds, “Because?” A boy responds, “Because he can’t
remember?” The teacher says, “Because you did not pay attention.” Joey does not say anything else. The others laugh. Ms. F. does not seem to accept that Joey might not have understood the assignment [Field notes 4/17/01].

Assertion 3: Joey does not always comprehend what he reads. According to his mother, Joey was not an avid reader. Although he had no problems reading Korean texts, he almost never read a book at home. When he came to the United States and entered Harvard Elementary School, he learned to read quickly by memorizing sight words. Eventually, he was able to participate in the school’s Accelerated Reader (AR) program where he read higher-level books and took multiple-choice tests on the computer.

Joey had difficulty comprehending Korean literature he read for his KLS class. Since he was placed with the middle school (advanced) group, the class reading selections were geared toward the middle school students. Although Joey was able to decode the texts, he had difficulty catching all the nuances of his readings. One of their assignments involved reading a Korean short story, “Rain Shower/소나기” that is considered an upper-elementary to middle school reading level, and writing a summary in English. Joey sent his summary as an attachment to his KLS teacher. He wrote:

joey 10
home work
Fri, 05 Oct 2001

[T]his story is about….

There was a girl who came from Seoul and a boy who lived in country.

But they both liked each [other]. She always came to the creek and play. One day they decided to climb up the mountain.

Farmer said “go home before it start raining.” but they were to [too] late so that boy made a igloo it [in] hays. Next day she was sick.

[T]he day after that she died but before she die[d] she said wear me a pink sweater [put a pink sweater on me]. [Artifact 10/5/01]

Although Joey was able to get the basic gist of the story, his KLS teacher felt that Joey did not completely understand some of the subtle nuances of the story that are as important as the factual events. Joey seemed to have misread at least one part of the story. He says that the boy and the girl in the story built an “igloo in hay,” when in fact, they don’t. In the story, the boy and the girl just go inside a shelter to get out of the rain.

In English, his oral readings were not yet fluent, and he appeared to be word-calling rather than reading for meaning. Although he might have been able to decode a text completely, it did not necessarily mean that he comprehended the content. Often, there were words that he did not know, even though he could pronounce them. When
reading a book, he encountered the following words and phrase, which he identified as parts he did not understand: hope, lay, instead, chased, all of a sudden, shining. He would often confuse words that were spelled similarly. For example, he thought that the first word on the list, “hope,” was the past tense for “help.” As the different meanings behind these words suggest, confusing such words would alter the meanings of the texts. Similarly, when he read Captain Cat, he thought “fixed” meant “mixed.” That is, when I asked him what the word “fixed” meant, he responded, “Isn’t it when you mix like this?”/“이렇게 섞는거 아니에요?” However, when he took the AR tests, he often got passing scores. As the vignette below will illustrate, even though Joey read with an incomplete understanding of the text, he somehow managed to answer most of the AR comprehension questions correctly. When asked whether he understood the questions, he shrugged his shoulders, moved the mouse around the text (perhaps looking for words he recognized from the reading), then marked his choice.

**Vignette 3:** Joey goes to the classroom computer and takes an AR test. He answers four out of five questions correctly and gets an 80% accuracy score. He goes to the library and looks through the section with green stickers. He takes a book off the shelf, looks inside, and checks the book out. I ask Joey if he wants to look around for a book he likes. He says, “No. It doesn’t matter.” He does not really care what the book is about. He just reads it. He walks
back to his classroom and begins to read the book silently. In a few minutes, he closes the book; he says he is finished. He wants to reach 250 AR points. I ask him how many points he has obtained. He says, “50.” When I ask him if he likes the book and whether he understands everything, he answers, “Not really.”/“아니요.” But, he goes to take the AR test again and scores 80%.

[Field notes 5/24/01]

As the vignette illustrates, Joey did not necessarily read for pleasure; nor did he seem to have a personal engagement with his readings. He read alone and did not discuss his impressions about the book with anyone. For Joey, reading the words in the books and taking AR tests were certain parts of the classroom routines he did very well.

**Assertion 4: Peers are most important for Joey as they help him learn the Discourse of being a “smart student.”** Joey was very popular among his peers. On the playground, Joey was usually surrounded by a group of boys wishing to participate in his game of soccer. In the classroom, his friends nudged or quietly corrected Joey when he did something wrong. His classroom teacher attributed his acceptance from his peers to an event that occurred during the beginning of the school year. One of Joey’s classmates had a birthday party, and he was invited. At this time, Joey was new and was not popular among the boys. It was a skating party, and Joey impressed his peers. When everyone returned to school the next day, his classroom teacher recalled,
“Everyone wrote about Joey being a great skater and being so funny” [Interview transcript 5/24/01]. After this break-through incident, and especially after he was selected to join the Spectrum math class, Joey was accepted by a group of very popular and “smart” boys.

When Joey did not understand something in class, he usually asked his peers instead of asking the teacher. His classroom teacher reported that he rarely spoke to her about anything. Or, if he did, he would not talk much, and he used gestures.

**Vignette 4:** Joey can’t wait to go to church. As soon as he gets out of the car, he runs to the backyard to join the group of boys playing ball. His mother says that he gets up on Sunday mornings looking forward to meeting his friends. When he is with them, he speaks in his broken English, just as he would if he were at school. While Joey is somewhat reluctant to speak English in front of adults, he tries out phrases, such as, “If you want to be in my team, sit here!” or, “I’m the best! No one beat[s] me.” He is more animated and confident when he is with his peers. Although he often looks confused and uninterested in an adult-controlled classroom, he springs to life when he interacts with peers. In both school and church, Joey is always surrounded by a group of boys. In school, the boys form the group that goes out of the regular classroom to the gifted (Spectrum math) class. According to
his classroom teacher, Amy, Joey’s group of boys is considered the smart
group in the class, and are “respect[ed] by their peers” [Interview transcript
5/24/01]. Joey’s ESOL teacher agrees. She said, “He’s popular with . . . all the
American boys. They want to work with Joey. He’s very popular. He’s very
cool” [Interview transcript 5/30/01]. By gaining acceptance into this peer
group, Joey seems to have found a way to acquire the Discourse of the “smart
student.”

Joey’s mother said that he has always been independent. She recalled that one day
Joey came to her and said, “Don’t worry about me because wherever I go I know how
to adjust”/”엄마 내 걱정은 하지마. 나는 어디가도 잘 적응할거니깐”
[Translated interview transcript 2/20/01]. For Joey, adjusting to the new environment
involved gaining acceptance by his peers.

*Danny, the Fourth Grader*

Danny, Amelia’s younger brother, is in the fourth grade. He came to the
United States three years ago, and, at the time, he did not know the English alphabet.

Danny has had a lot of help from his parents, teachers, and friends to get where he is
in school. When he was in the third grade, he was selected for the Spectrum (gifted
and talented) program because he met three of the four criteria: mental achievement in
reading, creativity, mental ability, and motivation (rated by his classroom teacher at
the time). His Spectrum class teacher did not reveal which three requirements Danny had met.

Unfinished work and not quite “getting it” seemed to be among Danny’s consistent patterns across different contexts. Even though he received good grades and was part of a gifted program, he was often confused about what he was required to do in both his regular classroom and his Spectrum class. When asked about his work, he had trouble articulating clearly. When he wrote, misspelling and grammatical errors got in the way of expressing his ideas. This was also true in the Korean Language School (KLS) class. He had trouble expressing himself fully in Korean and spoke mostly in English.

His parents decided to take remedial measures so that it would be possible for him to hold onto his Korean literacy. Toward the middle of the study, his mother began working with him in Korean reading and writing at home, in addition to sending him to the Korean class. Danny was not fully competent in either of the two languages.

Despite issues in his English literacy development, Danny seemed to manage well at Harvard Elementary School. Somehow, he inspired a lot of compassion amongst his peers. He received help and support from them when doing his school work. He was popular and liked by his peers. Danny’s strength seemed to be in his
social skills with his peers. He exhibited strong leadership skills when he engaged in producing a dramatic play as a class project in his Spectrum class. While much of reading and writing work involved individual seat work, Danny seemed to thrive when the work involved discussions or collaborating with others. Four assertions about Danny’s engagement with literacy across the three contexts are presented below.

**Assertion 1: Danny shows a strong preference to speak English in all three contexts.** Danny’s primary language of communication in the three contexts is English. At home, his parents spoke to him in Korean and Danny’s response was usually in English or a mix of both. For example, his mother asked, “Did you do your homework?” or “What are you doing?” in Korean. Danny’s responses were, “Yes, I finished.” And, “I’m watching TV” [Field notes 3/12/01]. Danny and his sister spoke to each other almost exclusively in English. When he gathered with his friends at the church, all their communication was in English. Even when adults spoke to Danny in Korean, his response was in English. At the Korean Language School where the students were reminded to speak in Korean, Danny chose to respond in English. When asked why, Danny responded, “I don’t know. I sometimes speak Korean. English is easier” [Field notes 11/2/01].

When asked about his English literacy, Danny seemed to think that he had been immersed in the English-speaking culture for a long time. He said, “... I’ve
been here about three years and in Korea the rest of my life, and it feels like I’ve been
in America the same time as Korea” [Interview transcript 4/9/01]. Even though Danny
felt he had been in the United States for a while, he seemed to, on the other hand,
think that he had not yet mastered the English language. He did not seem to realize
that he had problems native English speakers did not have. For instance, the following
excerpt from an interview [4/9/01] shows that Danny did not think anyone was
perfect:

Danny: When I first came here, people were like, “Woah, look at that kid

speak English!” And now, I’m like half-half. I’m okay in Korean

and I’m okay in English. But, I’m not that perfect.

Jennifer: You’re not perfect in English?

Danny: No. I have a long ways to go until I’m perfect. I mean, nobody’s

perfect.

Jennifer: Nobody who’s Korean-American or Americans?

Danny: Nobody who’s . . . Actually, nobody, nobody’s perfect. Einstein is

perfect, sort of. Right? He’s like the smartest man ever.

Danny had a strong preference for communicating in English, even though the context
and the speaker called for him to switch to Korean. One day, there was a weekly
gathering of church families at Danny’s home and he spoke to a woman in English; he
was completely ignored. While others in the study were aware of which language is appropriate for which situation and group of people, Danny seemed neither to understand nor to care. Every Discourse community has rules that people must adhere to in order to become a member. In the case of the Korean Discourse community, it was an often strictly enforced rule that children speak to adults in Korean and in honorific. Honorific is a form of addressing someone who is older or is higher in social status than the speaker. For example, a student should not address a fellow student and a teacher in the same way. At the end of the sentence, a student might say, “Did you eat?/먹었니?” to another student but say, “Did you eat?/잡수셨어요?” to a teacher. As the example shows, there is no difference in English between the two ways of asking the question, but there is a significant difference in Korean. In short, Danny’s speaking English to a Korean adult can be seen not only as inappropriate but also as rude behavior.

Danny was strongly resistant to having to learn Korean again. His mother recalled, “He kept complaining why he needs to learn Korean if he is going to live in America?”/“미국에서 사는데 왜 한국말을 배워야 하냐고 불평했어요” [Translated interview transcript 3/6/01]. She had to force him to sit down with her each Saturday morning to get him to read Korean texts. When asked why he was resistant, Danny responded, “Cause, like, they’re forcing us to do it. They’re forcing
us to, and we feel like we have to do it. And, like, we say, ‘We have to do this again?’” [Interview transcript 4/9/01].

**Vignette 1:** It is President’s Day, and Amelia and Danny have been home all day. When I get there, they are watching a Korean video. Usually the TV is on with Danny’s nose almost glued to the set. Amelia and her mother are sitting comfortably on the rug, while Danny frowns and walks past the TV screen several times. When his mother tells him to stop, Danny says, “I don’t want to watch this.” Danny tries to get them to turn it off so that he can watch his TV shows, claiming, “I don’t know what they are saying.” His mom tells him to try and listen. He asks if they can go and borrow *Three Men and Three Women* [a videotaped episode of a Korean soap] next time. It is a show geared for the young adult/college audience in South Korea. He must have heard about it from someone in church. Danny finally settles down on his mother’s lap, not looking too satisfied about having to watch a Korean video instead of his usual Disney channel.

**Assertion 2:** Danny has problems with his spelling and writing skills in both languages. Interaction between Danny’s Korean and English literacies was observable when Danny showed difficulties with a given task. It appeared that difficulties he had in one language were also evident in the other language. For example, he often
confused similarly spelled word pairs in Korean, and he had trouble with spelling when he wrote in both languages.

Danny confused many Korean words that have similar phonetic parts. For example, he saw the character, “ㅊ”/“ch” in the Korean word for ceiling/천장/“chun-jang” and confused it with whip/채칙/“chae-chik.” Or, when he saw the word “duk”/“덕,” he confused the name of one of the Korean castles/찬덕궁/“chan-duk-goong” for cake/떡/“dduk.” Danny heard the “-ng”/ “ㅇ” and “oo”/ “♀” patterns and confused the word hero/영웅/“young-oong” with lucky/행운/“hang-oon” [Field notes 2/25/01].

Danny’s writing in Korean print indicated that he wrote by using invented spelling rather than the conventional form, even for the simplest words. Some examples of his errors are as follows: “그리치”/ “correct” (correct spelling: 그렸지) and “비슷해요”/ “similar” (correct spelling: 비슷해요) [Field notes 3/18/01]. And “나는 TV 보면서 공을 던저미다” (correct spelling: 던집니다)”/ “I watch TV and throw the ball” [Field notes 4/8/01]. Although the Korean script is phonetic (i.e., one would be able to spell most words by matching the sound to the corresponding alphabet), Danny still did not have a mastery over the Korean alphabet; thus, he made very obvious mistakes.

In English, some of Danny’s misspellings in his language arts workbook were
He mixed up the order of letters in many of his misspelled words. In addition to spelling errors, Danny also had problems with several writing conventions. From his notes on his writing project on George Washington, Danny wrote:

He had a good, fansy life.

He also had a hard life, he owns slaves when he was 10.

His fame was he was a genral.

He also was a president and became a president unesedly [unexpectedly].

Although he worked on his research paper for months, Danny was still not able to identify and correct his own errors. In addition to spelling errors, Danny showed some difficulty with using correct forms of tenses and following writing conventions.

Below are a few examples of sentences from his grammar workbook:
The Food would be soak [soaked].

Do a other [another] one.

Watch before [Watch before] the movie.

As the next vignette will show, Danny was unable to identify grammatical errors in his own narrative, on which he had been working for months.

**Vignette 2:** In his Spectrum class, Danny has finished a handwritten draft of his report on George Washington, and he is now typing up his report. He types on the computer, while looking at a completed draft he has been working on for months. He still makes mistakes. For example, he types:

John Adam’s was the vice-president that time.

When asked if this sentence seems correct, and a suggestion is made about taking out the apostrophe, he does not seem to think it would make any difference. Next, he types:

And people needed his leadership skill’s people wanted him to be the president For his 3 year but he refused, and went and live with his family.

Again, he was unable to identify his own mistakes. He omitted punctuation marks where they were needed and added them in the wrong places (e.g., “Adam’s,” “skill’s”), and the sentence constructions were awkward [Field notes 3/30/01].
Assertion 3: Danny has low vocabulary skills and often struggles to find correct words to use. Unlike his monolingual peers, Danny seemed to lack a wealth of English vocabulary. When asked for a synonym and an antonym for the word “joyful,” Danny offered only “happy” and “sad.” And he offered the word “nice” as a synonym for “beautiful” [Field notes 3/8/01]. Not only were his vocabulary words simple, they were also more general than specific. When Danny worked on his writing with another student, Danny seemed to have difficulty coming up with more precise words for his own story. The topic of Danny’s story was “the beach” and he was able to come up with only the word “bird” while his writing partner suggested “seagulls.” When his teacher asked him what he could smell in the air, Danny said “nothing,” while his partner suggested “salty air” [Field notes 3/9/01].

When using Korean, Danny used easy words to make sentences simple in structure. In his Korean-language class, the teacher provided the sentence pattern, “I am _____.”/ “나는 _____ 해요.” Danny leaned over to me, and whispered, “나는 생각해요.”/ “I am thinking.” It was his usual simplistic sentence. He typically did not write long sentences. Meanwhile, his classmate, Carey, the first grade boy in this study, wrote a longer and more sophisticated sentence, “나는 한국에 계시는 할머니와 할아버지의 생각해요.”/ “I think about my grandmother and grandfather in Korea” [Field notes 3/18/01].
**Vignette 3:** Danny is in his reading class, and the teacher is explaining vocabulary words that are in their *Wordly Wise 300* workbook. The teacher asks for an example of something that has a “distinct” sound. Danny points to the heater and says, “The refrigerator, I mean the air conditioner has a distinct sound.” The teacher pauses for a moment, but accepts his response.

[Field notes 2/14/01]

Danny often struggled to use correct words in his speech.

*Assertion 4: Often, Danny seems to be confused about what he should be doing in class.* In his KLS class, Danny did not seem to understand the teacher’s instructions. He often looked over his classmates’ shoulders to figure out where they were in their workbook. In his reading class, Danny had to work frantically to make his poster book report about his book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Dahl, 1983). While his classmates had finished their homework assignments, Danny placed his poster under his desk and began to erase and add more text. When the teacher began talking about the two paragraphs of text for the poster, Danny seemed to realize that he should have written two paragraphs instead of two lines. To the poster he added, “I like the story because it had lots of details and neat things in the book. It is very fun, Exciting” [Field notes 2/12/01]. His reading teacher said that this was not an isolated case. She said, “Well, that’s typical of Danny. Last week he had to make a poster and
he only wrote one sentence. Even though he was instructed to write at least two paragraphs” [Field notes 2/12/01].

**Vignette 4:** In Danny’s Spectrum class, there are nine students. They are writing about “leaders.” Danny chose to do his report on George Washington. Everyone seems busy looking through print materials and writing their references on index cards. Danny is the only student holding an index card but not looking through any books or magazines. The suspicious teacher comes over to him and asks what he is doing. When Danny begins to say something, his teacher interrupts him and looks at his index card. She is upset because Danny copied down the example she wrote on the board, instead of writing his own references on George Washington.

Although Danny was placed in a gifted (Spectrum) class, it seemed that he had continuous difficulty with figuring out the right way of doing class activities. Teachers reprimanded him often, and they were eager to share their disapproval of him with me.

*Assertion 5: Danny is social with his peers and receives much help from them in acquiring the school Discourse.* Danny’s Spectrum (gifted) class teacher, Mrs. Tanner, believed that he had well-developed social skills that often helped him to be popular with his peers:

Tanner: He’s very much a leader in that way. A social leader. And they’re
willing to listen to him, so.

Jennifer: He does seem to get a lot of support from his peers.

Tanner: He does. I think he does. And I think *that* pulls him through a lot of his academics.

Jennifer: And he’s popular too, right?

Tanner: Yeah. And they’re willing to help him to get his work done. And I think that’s why he keeps his grades up. I don’t know. But, that’s part of his—he’s actually getting a tutor all the time, in his peers.

[Interview transcript 5/25/01]

Danny attributes learning the English language to a Korean American friend Amelia and he met when they first came to the United States:

Danny: Ruth helped us a lot. Ruth, she helped us the most because we played a lot together. She talked a lot of American words.

Jennifer: Yeah, I don’t remember her speaking Korean that much.

Danny: Yeah, so we learned English so much faster. And, I was better in English [then], before she went to Korea.

[Interview transcript 4/9/01]

**Vignette 5**: Danny and his friend Chris found a spot in the hallway to sit and help each other’s essays. They exchange papers and take a few minutes to
read. Chris is finished first and waits for Danny to finish reading. Danny looks up from reading and asks, “Well, do you have any suggestions?” Chris nods and answers, “You need to put more words that are descriptive and imaginative. For example, you just say you went Greenwood Gardens and that it was boring. You should write more about what you saw and felt. You know, like use more adjectives like Mrs. M. told you to do.” Danny says, “Okay, fine.” Chris asks, “You have suggestions for me?” Danny says, “No, just keep writing.”

As the above vignette illustrates, Danny seemed to always receive help from his peers while not being able to reciprocate the deed.

*Amelia, the Middle School Student*

Three years ago, Amelia came to the United States with her mother and her younger brother, Danny, to rejoin her father, who came earlier to pursue his studies. Amelia transitioned into her first year in middle school with a lot of anxiety. Just when Amelia became accustomed to the routines of her elementary school in the United States, she had to move on into her current middle school. As her mother would say, Amelia just does not like change. In the middle of her school year, her parents tried to transfer her to a private school, but she tearfully protested. By then, she had made friends and had become familiar with life at Cornell Middle School.
Amelia seemed happy with the routines of her reading and language arts classrooms. She memorized her vocabulary words for the week and aced the test. She read her book chapters for homework as she was told to do and answered the comprehension questions. She read her Accelerated Reader (AR) books and took the test, always getting a passing score. In doing all of these activities, she worked quickly, seriously, and efficiently. She was almost always one of the first students to finish her classrooms tasks. She seemed to feel comfort in knowing exactly what was expected of her in these classes. In church and at home, she knew precisely what she had to do, and when she started her tasks, she was focused on getting her work done.

Amelia’s teachers at Cornell Middle School described her as being very motivated, and they were surprised upon learning that she has been in the United States for only a few years. At the end of her first year at Cornell Middle School, her teachers were so impressed with her work that plans were made to admit her to advanced classes in both reading/language arts and math when she begins seventh grade. She had received many achievement awards and was regarded by her school community as one of their top students.

Initially, Amelia was very resistant to having to adjust to a new environment. She recalled:

I thought, “Why [did] I have to come here?” I mean, I could have just stayed
in Korea and not [have] to learn English and not [have] to go through all this, but I had to come here and not . . . other people. I felt kind of bad.

[Interview transcript 9/7/01]

Despite her earlier misgivings about having to learn a new language and culture, Amelia felt that she was in a comfortable place in her life. Immediately, her family and Amelia focused on her acculturation into school life and acquiring English literacy. In fact, so much so that her Korean was falling behind, and she needed to shift her focus toward maintaining and further developing her latent Korean literacy.

Four assertions were created regarding Amelia’s literacy practices in her two languages.

Assertion 1: Amelia feels that it is important to be literate in both languages, but it is a struggle to be biliterate. I asked Amelia to provide her assessment of her own developing biliteracy. The interview transcript [9/7/01] below indicates that she was fairly attuned to her current status in maintaining her biliteracy:

Amelia: I mean, I want to learn Korean more, but since I’m staying here, it’s kind of hard to. So . . . but I definitely need to learn more Korean.

Jennifer: What are your thoughts about your English?

Amelia: I have to study a lot more to catch up.

Jennifer: Do you think you still have to catch up?
Amelia: I mean, not catch up, but you know, just study more, I guess. I mean it’s not the same as if I was born here. I just came a couple of years ago, so, that’s still a lot of difference.

Amelia felt developing her two languages took energy. She said, “… Sometimes I feel pressure and sometimes it’s not fair. ‘Cause, like, some people only have to talk in English, but I have to talk in both?” [Interview transcript 9/7/01]. But, at the same time, Amelia added that she needed to learn Korean because she wanted to continue to communicate with her parents. When asked what it would be like if she were to forget Korean completely, she said, “That would be a problem” [Interview transcript 3/26/01].

In addition, Amelia seemed to make a conscious effort to maintain her Korean, so that she could communicate with her parents:

Amelia: They don’t make me, I mean, I just choose to.

Jennifer: You just choose to?

Amelia: I just feel more comfortable talking in Korean with my parents.

Jennifer: Hmm.

Amelia: I don’t know why, but when I talk in American—I mean, English [laughs]—

Jennifer: It just doesn’t seem appropriate?
Amelia: No, no, not *that*. It just doesn’t feel right. It makes me feel like, it isn’t making any sense.

As the above excerpt from Amelia’s interview indicates, she believed that she needed to maintain her Korean language to continue communicating with her parents. For Amelia, there was a clear distinction between her Korean discourse community (mainly consisting of her parents) and her English discourse community. Even if it was just for her parents, she felt that it was important to maintain her Korean literacy.

**Vignette 1:** When Amelia came over to my house, we had a nice, long conversation about being Korean and living in the United States. I was struck by how important she thinks maintaining Korean is for her and her peers.

When I told her about my many Korean friends who spoke only in one language or the other, Amelia seemed to be surprised.

She indicated that she sometimes feels “lonely” about having to struggle with two languages. She said, “... [A]nd you know, Sandy and Dana, they lived here their whole lives and then when I see them, like, um—I kind of like feel different too? Because, like sometimes, like Rachel and Mary, don’t know anything? And I think they have more American inside of themselves than Korean.” She also added that although she speaks to her parents a lot about the struggles, they don’t understand it all. She said,
“Because, like, they went to college in Korea and almost half of their, I mean more than half of their life was in Korea. I know they’ll understand what I’m saying, but the feelings, I don’t think—sometimes they can’t understand.” I found myself resonating with her feeling of having to do it all. [Journal 9/10/01]

Assertion 2: Amelia does not always get the nuance of texts around her, and she interprets literally. During classroom observations, Amelia raised her hand to answer the teacher’s question, only to be told that her response did not answer what the teacher was asking. Her reading teacher was also her science teacher. When the teacher asked the class why salt or sugar mixes faster in hot water than in cold water, Amelia raised her hand and answered:

Amelia: Maybe they dissolve faster in hot water.

Teacher: Yes, but that’s what I’m getting at.

Amelia: Oh!

[Field notes 3/27/01]

Amelia always appeared to be attentive and following the lesson, until she sometimes raised her hand and revealed that she did not understand completely.

Another incident involved answering comprehension questions on Gilly Hopkins (Paterson, 1987) in her reading class. Although Amelia was able to answer
most of the literal comprehension questions, she had trouble answering one of them, which asked what Gilly and her Grandmother had in common. When her teacher came over and read the question to her aloud, the following conversation followed:

Amelia: I don’t know what they have in common. Their hair?

Teacher: No. Who left both of them?

Amelia: Courtney. Oh, I thought she meant physical appearance!

[Field notes 2/16/01]

Ms. Powell, her reading and science teacher, noticed many other times when Amelia would make only literal interpretations of what she had read [Journal 5/28/01].

**Vignette 2:** Amelia is working on a vocabulary work sheet in her reading class. She has trouble matching the word “kaleidoscopic” with its definition, “characterized by series of changes.” Amelia looks up the word in the dictionary, and finds two definitions: (a) a tube containing loose bits of colored glass or plastic and two mirrors at one end that shows many different patterns as it is turned and (b) a changing pattern or scene. Although the second definition better matches the definition provided in the work sheet, Amelia selects the first one, which is a more concrete definition. She looks over at me and says, “I don’t know if this means that.” I ask her if she looked up the word in the dictionary. She says, “It says it’s a tube thing. With little
bits of color things. I guess this is this” [Field notes 2/27/01].

**Assertion 3: Amelia has some difficulties with writing (grammar and richness of vocabulary).** Amelia’s struggle with English grammar was evident only when she turned in a lengthy writing assignment for her language arts class. Since classroom work in her reading and language arts classes consists of taking vocabulary tests and answering comprehension questions in a short written form, Amelia did not make mistakes with these tasks. However, when she had to write a 10-page paper on Helen Keller, Amelia made many grammatical (along with spelling and punctuation) errors. Some of her sentences containing errors were as follows:

1. James *exactly wasn’t* her real blooded brother . . .

2. When Captain Keller heard about this he did not like the *though[t] that [of]*

   a blind child teacher teaching another blind one.

3. Annie *wasn’t still* satisfied . . .

4. Polly Thompson[,] who’s been by Helen’s side for half of her life[,] died in 1960 . . . [commas missing]

[Artifact 5/22/01]

Amelia reversed the order of words (e.g., “exactly wasn’t,” “wasn’t still”), omitted punctuation marks (e.g., commas) where needed, or misused words (e.g., “though” instead of “thought,” “that” instead of “of”). Her language arts teacher was surprised
to find Amelia’s grammatical mistakes, and observed that they might be related to her being bilingual:

> Usually kids are raised by parents who speak their language, like rules that you need. The stuff that she missed on that paper, she would have gotten it right if she is an A-student . . . you can read the sentence to yourself and make sure it sounds right. Or to see whether that verb fits. But she hasn’t had the practice. She wouldn’t know that. [Interview transcript 5/22/01]

When asked about her report, Amelia was aware of her weakness in writing, and she said:

> Writing is certainly the thing I have to work on. Because, like, sometimes, when I read my paper and, like, I don’t read it after I wrote it. And then when we read out loud in class, like, I made mistakes, but I didn’t see it when I was writing it. So, I definitely need to change that.

[Interview transcript 9/7/01]

In addition to having difficulties with grammar, Amelia lacked vocabulary knowledge. Her reading teacher wanted to recommend Amelia for the advanced reading class in the following year, but she had some reservations about doing so because of her vocabulary knowledge. Her reading teacher explained:

> And, just because, like for example . . . [shuffles through pages of Amelia’s
written work and reads] um, “Maniac felt very happy to have an address.”

Well, like she still is using, um, less complicated words. [Reads] “Some of the reasons why I can say that Mr. and Mrs. Bill are nice people is because they let a strange kid live with them and they treat him like he is their own child.” Well, she doesn’t use higher-level words. You know? [Interview transcript 5/22/01]

Amelia lacked the strong foundation in vocabulary that, for her monolingual peers, is naturally built through many years of living in a English-speaking world. Her reading teacher felt that Amelia did not have the kind of vocabulary knowledge expected of students in an advanced reading class.

**Vignette 3:** Much of school literacy instruction involves filling-in-the-blanks, selecting the correct answer, and identifying the adjectives or the verbs in a list of sentences. Such activities require students to identify rather than generate answers to questions. Amelia aced her language arts and reading classes. The activities in these classes did not require Amelia to generate and produce long, connected texts that generally are complicated. The awkwardness of her sentence construction pointed to her second language development. Amelia stated continuously that her class work was easy. No doubt, she was not being challenged enough through these assignments. She
kept saying to me how easy her classes were. Indeed these types of tasks were
easy. For anyone who looked over the vocabulary words the night before or
paid a little bit of attention in class, the work was easy to do. Although
receiving a C on her research report might have disappointed Amelia, I was
glad, in part, to know that Amelia became more aware of the areas she could
work on, instead of thinking that there was nothing much left to learn.

Certainly, her grades do not reflect this weakness. Even with the one low
grade, Amelia still pulled off an A in the class [Journal 6/12/01].

Amelia’s language arts teacher, Wilma, spoke about discovering Amelia’s
grammar difficulties as the school year ended:

Jennifer: How [are] Amelia’s reading and writing?

Wilma: She’s definitely above average. She’s about 98, 99 every quarter.

The only time I noticed it was not above average was . . . um, I read
her research paper.

Jennifer: Uh-huh.

Wilma: And it was not as high as I would have expected from her. Um,

there were, um some subject and verbs [that did not] agree. Improper
uses, just when they don’t agree with each other. And there were
some spelling mistakes, I believe.
Assertion 4: Amelia’s home and church literacy practices are mostly in **English**. Most of Amelia’s written text-related practices at home were in English. Writing e-mails and searching her favorite site (www.google.com) for her music were done through English text. The songs she listened to were in English (Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Mandy Moore, and Michelle Branch). When she went to the public or school libraries, she read English books and teen magazines with her friends. The few readings from her Korean Language School (KLS) class were the only Korean written texts she encountered at home.

At church, I noticed that Amelia and her friends exchanged notes when they were not in the Sunday service or in their KLS class. This practice seemed to occur only among the middle school girls. There was a sharp divide along the gender lines. There were two distinct groups of children: the girls and the boys. Amelia kept all of the letters and notes from her church friends. They were elaborately decorated with words and pictures. The letters and notes from Rachel, Amelia’s friend, almost always included words with meanings understood mainly by her peers. Some were as follows:

“dis”—this

“UR (hopefully) BFF!”—Your hopefully best friend forever!

“Yo BF 4-eva!”—Your best friend forever
These letters and notes were very colorful and were folded differently each time. Some had tiny stickers and others were written with milky-ink pens. Still others included hand-drawn illustrations of Amelia “staying cool.” Amelia carefully collected and preserved these letters. She said she loved reading them again when she was in her room. She preferred these hand-written notes over e-mails because the letters and notes were “more creative.” Amelia’s personal literacy practices at home and church seemed to involve English and not Korean. The vignette below provides an example of how her most private literacy practice was done in English:

**Vignette 4:** I went into Amelia’s room many times before but it took me a long time to see evidences of Amelia’s home literacy practices in areas that I had not paid close attention to before. With a new lens, I revisited her room. Amelia kept a journal next to her bed so she would remember to write in it every night. Her journal was a six-by-eight-inch hardcover book with repeated pictures of two angels playing the harp and violin. About 20 pages had writings on them. I asked her when it was that she started writing the journal. She said, “About 1999,” then added, “I guess I wasn’t writing that much.”

She was very reluctant to share a section of her journal with me. She
said it was “stupid” because “It sounds like I’m talking to myself.” For
instance, she would write “bye” to herself. She described her entries as things
that were highly personal. She wrote about things that made her angry or
events that happened with friends in school or church. Amelia’s journal was
something she did not share with anyone. I honored her privacy and did not
ask to see it any further. She did, however, let me glance generally over
several pages (while the journal stayed in her hands). I noticed that the
majority of the writing was in English with a few words in Korean. She also
had tiny stickers all over the pages. I asked her first about the Korean words.
She said that she usually wrote people’s names in Korean. (This was a bit
different from her mother’s interview statement in which she reported that
Amelia practiced her Korean by writing in her journal. Amelia kept two
journals—Korean and English. The Korean journal was kept to show her
mother. Since Amelia did not share her English journal with anyone, her
mother had no idea what she wrote in it.) The tiny stickers were bought at a
Korean school supply store in the city, called “Morning Glory.” Almost all
Korean students have items from this popular manufacturer. The tiny stickers
had pictures of little cartoon characters with words, such as the Korean
equivalent for “happy,” “sad,” or “party” on them. I asked Amelia if the
words had anything to do with the entries. She said they did. The words on the stickers reflected the content of the entry. There was a sticker that had the word “party” next to an entry about a party she went to. She also formatted each entry by beginning with the date and the weather. Even though Amelia did not have many entries in her journal, it was clear that she gave a lot of time and personal investment to journaling [Field notes 3/21/02].

Interestingly, Amelia later told me that she keeps a second journal where she writes in Korean, as her mother asked her to do in her effort to get Amelia to practice her native language. The second journal did not serve the same personal purpose for Amelia. She wrote down only “factual” information, such as the date, weather, and what she had done that day. Amelia’s private thoughts and feelings were conveyed through English, not Korean.

Assertion 5: Amelia is very social with her peers and adults, and she is motivated to master the Discourse of being a “good American student.” In school and church, Amelia seemed to have well-developed social skills, and she was liked by both her peers and by adults. Amelia’s reading teacher, Jane, asserted that she was very “adult-friendly” and would “approach you and speak on an adult level.” When asked to describe Amelia’s reading, Jane responded:

I think that um, she reads just as well or better than any other kids in my
reading class. I would put her more to the top because she is so motivated.

She is always pushing herself, always focused. She doesn’t think she is here
to play around. Although she has plenty of friends. Everybody loves her and
she is very motivated and she is very focused.

[Interview transcript 5/23/01]

Both of Amelia’s teachers perceived her as a student who had mastered the school
Discourse of the “good student.” The two teachers compared Amelia with two
Chinese students in her classes who were not adjusting to the school culture:

Wilma: She [a Chinese girl] never opened her mouth. She never understood

anything.

Jane: It was very, very hard and all she was concerned [with] was—I

guess Amelia is more—

Wilma: Cooperative!

Jane: Cooperative. She doesn’t—with Amelia, you can sit there and she

looks at you, you’re an adult. You’re teacher. You’re figure-head to

her and she respects whatever you say . . .. There’s another guy, I

guess it’s off the subject of Amelia, but it’s a comparison. He came

in this snoopy [unintelligible]
Wilma: In his snoopy [unintelligible]

Jane: [laughs softly] It was so sad. He’s really clueless. He doesn’t pick-up on the social at all. I guess that’s why Amelia really stands out to me. Because she realizes that in order to—I just think that she has goals. She knows where she wants to go and she knows what she has to do to get there. And she’s got to adapt socially and be interactive.

[Interview transcript 5/24/01]

Amelia’s teachers reported that she seemed to really want to fit into the school culture, and she seemed to feel that she was different from other students who came from other countries. Amelia’s language arts teacher, Wilma, said, “[S]he’s really Americanized. Like you wouldn’t think of her as coming from another country . . .. She doesn’t act culturally different” [Interview transcript 5/22/01]. When asked to explain what being “Americanized” required, Wilma replied, “She dresses like all other kids. She’s always up-to-date” [Interview transcript 5/22/01]. Interestingly, Wilma, pointed out that two Chinese students who were in Amelia’s class and had been in the United States for around the same time were drastically different; they were seen as lacking social skills, were unpopular with peers, dressed inappropriately, and had a far more difficult time acclimating to U.S. school culture.
**Vignette 5:** Amelia is wearing her latest jewelry creation. She loves going to Claire’s, and can make most of the necklaces and earrings on her own. Although Amelia does not buy excessive amount of clothes, she looks through *YM* and *CosmoGirl* to get some fashion tips. Amelia moves through her school hallway and wave hello to her friends. She sometimes stops to chat with her teachers who are leaning against their doors in between sessions. The teacher says, “Look, Amelia, that boy is so cute. He’s perfect for you.” Amelia laughs and says, “Nah, I’ve seen better.” The conversation turns to her work. The teacher comments on how well she did on the last test. Amelia smiles and listens to the praise. She asks about her friends, “How did Cathy and Remy do?” “Oh, they did very well, too,” the teacher responds. As they continue to talk, Mimi, a Chinese student in the class, passes by, not looking at the teacher or anyone else. Mimi is dressed in a long dress with ruffles that seems to swallow her small frame. A few students pass by her and snicker. Amelia’s teachers reported that she seemed to really want to fit into the school culture and felt that she was different from other students who came from other countries. My observations of Amelia confirmed the teachers’ perspectives of Amelia as a social student was quickly learning the unspoken rules of being a successful American student.
Assertion 6: Amelia needs Korean peers more than her parents to help her acculturate into the schools. Even though Amelia reported that she had many close friends in school, she attributed to her Korean friends her perceived success in acclimating into the U.S. society. She identified a Korean American friend, Ruth, as a key factor in her learning English. Below, Amelia talks about Ruth’s influence:

Amelia: And probably the way I got adjusted to school? Probably because, Ruth, probably?

Jennifer: Uh-hmm.

Amelia: We saw each other, like, everyday and, in America, we don’t speak Korean, you know, between friends? So, I learned a lot from her, I guess.

Jennifer: Because you guys only spoke English, right?

Amelia: Yeah.

[Interview transcript 9/7/01]

Although Amelia was close to her parents, she was beginning to realize that there were matters she felt her parents would not understand because they did not have the same kind of experiences she had. Since her parents did not go to school in the United States, Amelia found that there were some areas she would not be able to fully share with her parents.
**Vignette 6:** Amelia likes to chat with me often. Usually, she likes to talk about seemingly trivial things such as hairstyles, jewelry, or movies that she watched recently. Today, Amelia seemed to be in a melancholy mood. When I asked her if something was bothering her, she did not want to talk about it, but just that she did not want to go to school on Monday. When I probed further, she said that her parents don’t understand how she feels. I thought I should share my story that may help her to know that she was not alone in feeling this way:

Jennifer: I used to be not able to tell my parents because I didn’t know I was supposed to and they never asked.

Amelia: [Sighs]

Jennifer: Like, do your parents ever ask you?

Amelia: But, like, um, they still understand a lot of stuff, but I don’t think they understand like *all* this stuff? But, how did *you* feel when you first came here?

Jennifer: When I first came here, I was so lonely.

Amelia: So was I. I felt so . . . lonely, too.

Jennifer: And, you know, I didn’t know what was going on? And, one day, I was walking home from school because it was close to our house. And, these boys came after us. And they were
throwing snowballs at us. And then I said, “T야, H야, 빨리 집에 가!/T and H, hurry up and go home!”

Amelia: Ha-ha!

[Interview transcript 9/7/01]

I felt a close bonding with Amelia when we were sharing our experiences of living in the United States. It became clear to me that she was not able to convey the feelings of occasional loneliness and sorrow to her parents, but was able to relate to another Korean American like me.

Cross-Case Analyses

Data from each of the four cases were collectively analyzed to generate assertions that reflected the group’s literacy practices and issues. Because I found each of the cases to be different from one another, it was difficult to make assertions that reflected all the students. Discrepant cases were included in the analyses, and wording of the assertions were changed to reflect them. For example, for group assertion 3, Carey was the discrepant case, and for group assertion 6, Amelia was the discrepant case. A total of seven group assertions were created and are presented below.

Group Assertion 1: For All Four Students, English Is Becoming the Language of Choice for Their Literacy Practices
Data seemed to reveal that students had different attitudes toward their two literacies. While Amelia valued both her literacies, Danny did not feel that maintaining his Korean literacy was important. All four students seemed to have positive attitudes toward their developing English literacy. Except for Danny, students also drew clear lines around when and with whom they would speak Korean or English.

Throughout their three contexts, all four students seemed to choose to engage in literacy activities using the English language. Table 3 shows the students’ out-of-school literacy practices in English and Korean. It illustrates that the majority of their literacy practices involved English. In some cases, such as their public school classes, there was no choice but to use English. However, at home and church, where the students had a choice, they usually chose to use English. While the two younger boys communicated using both English and Korean at home, Danny and Amelia almost always spoke to each other in English at home. During KLS class sessions, the students often talked in English with their peers, though the teachers reminded them to use Korean. Except for Danny, the other three students spoke to the teachers and adults in English. Their verbal and written correspondences with their peers were almost always in English. Apparently, their literacy practices across the three contexts shifted heavily toward English.
In addition, all of the church children, including the four participants, had English names and referred to each other using them. As soon as children came to the United States, they were given an English name by their parents. Amelia had strong feelings about using her English name in school. When the teachers asked her which of her two names should be put on her awards, she wanted her English name. Amelia finally agreed to have her Korean name written down on her award, but asked her teachers to call out her English name when it was presented.

*Group Assertion 2: Peer Groups Are Important in the Three Older Students’ Social and Academic Lives*

Joey, Danny, and Amelia were identified by their teachers as very social students. They each gained acceptance by a group of students considered at school to be very popular and smart. In the cases of Joey and Danny, their peers offered assistance with academically related activities. It is not certain whether the difference was due to Carey’s young age or due to his personality, but he was the only student among the four who was described as “shy” and who did not belong to a group. Being a member of their peer groups partly required Joey, Danny, and Amelia to be successful in school.
Table 3

*Literacy Practices Outside of School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amelia</th>
<th></th>
<th>Danny</th>
<th></th>
<th>Joey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English journal writing (personal)</td>
<td>Korean journal writing (not personal)</td>
<td>Talking to all friends</td>
<td>Talking to parents</td>
<td>Talking to his mom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking to brother</td>
<td>Talking to parents</td>
<td>Searching and downloading <em>Dragonball Z</em> images</td>
<td>Reading and writing in his KLS workbook</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking to all friends</td>
<td>Talking on the phone with relatives in Korea</td>
<td>Reading comic books</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading magazines</td>
<td>Reading a Korean newspaper</td>
<td>Bible reading</td>
<td>Watching Korean videos</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading novels</td>
<td>Reading church program</td>
<td>Listening to music</td>
<td>Reading in her KLS class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing and reading letters and notes to</td>
<td>Singing hymns</td>
<td>Surfing on the Net</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emailing friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bible reading</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emailing homework to her Korean language teacher</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening to music</td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing summaries for KLS class</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surfing on the Net</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emailing friends</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Talking to his brother
Talking to friends at school
Talking to friends at church
Emailing his father in Korea
Using chatroom with his cousin in Korea
Emailing homework to his Korean language teacher
Searching the Internet
Reading books
Watching movies
Playing computer games
Talking to himself
Writing summaries for KLS class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to his mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to his brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to his friends at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading picture books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing computer games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to himself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to his mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to his brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talking to his friends at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading picture books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing computer games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to himself</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Group Assertion 3: Students Appeared to Have Mastered the Dominant Discourse but Actually Had Not

All four students experienced varying degrees of difficulty in understanding what they read. Although Danny was in the gifted class for reading and Amelia was considered one of the top students in her reading class, they both showed signs of not fully understanding various texts (both written and oral) around them. They were still struggling to discern the nuances and inferences behind written and spoken texts in their everyday lives. Amelia often interpreted texts literally. Danny was often confused about following the teacher’s directions during a literacy project (e.g., book reports and his research report on George Washington). Danny also had difficulty understanding Korean texts in his church Korean Language School (KLS) classes. They were both willing—even eager, in the case of Amelia—to complete literacy tasks correctly, but it was evident that not all of the meanings behind these texts were accessible to them.

Group Assertion 4: Vocabulary Knowledge Is a Challenge for Students Who Are Learning a New Language

For Joey and Carey, it was not surprising to find that they lacked English vocabulary knowledge. They both needed to learn many new words in English, most of which they knew in Korean. For example, I saw Joey struggling to communicate
his ideas to his teachers. It was frustrating for him because he knew the words in Korean but not in English. It happened so often that the teachers frequently said to him, “I know you know, Joey” [Field notes 4/17/01]. It was expected that Joey and Carey needed to build both their spoken and written vocabulary. However, it seemed that vocabulary remained a problem for Amelia and Danny who had more experience with the English language. On the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), the two older students scored a year behind their peers who were the same age. The two younger students scored more than a year behind their age peers. The table below shows the students’ scores and their age at the time of testing:

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carey</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joey</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>10.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amelia and Danny were still struggling with vocabulary, and they used words that were “simplistic,” “unsophisticated,” and below their teachers’ expectations.
Group Assertion 5: Students Without a Firm Grasp of Phonemic Awareness Had

Confusion With Discerning Between Similarly Spelled Words

While Amelia seemed to have developed an impressive knowledge of sight vocabulary, which enabled her to have automaticity in reading, the younger students did not. All three boys had some difficulty discerning words that were spelled similarly. Joey’s difficulty was only in English and was not as prevalent as the other two boys. For Danny and Carey, the difficulty was evident with English and Korean words. Danny came to the United States when he was in the first grade and at a time when he had very limited knowledge of Korean literacy. When Danny came to the United States, he had to switch to learning a new language before he had obtained a strong foundation in Korean. Carey came to the United States with no formal schooling in Korea. Reportedly, he was beginning to learn to read in Korean just before he arrived in this country. Thus, for students who did not have a strong grasp of phonemic awareness, spelling and decoding texts in both languages posed a significant challenge.

Group Assertion 6: Students Had Difficulty With Areas of English Grammar That Had Different or Incomparable Rules in Korean

The drastic difference in grammar between Korean and English was found to be a cause of confusion for the two older students. They had difficulty with word
order, article use, and using different cases. In examining Carey’s “Cinderella” story, he did not seem to have confusions about word order, but had confusions about using the correct article (e.g., “the”). It may be that Carey’s sentence structures were simple and that writing connected prose for him was to assemble words that he knew.

Group Assertion 7: Classroom Teachers Saw Students as Highly-Motivated and Had High-Expectations for Students’ Academic Performances

Throughout my visits to the public school classrooms, teachers’ perceptions of three of the four students were very positive. All teachers had a perception of the three students as being very motivated and expected them to do well academically. One teacher noted:

As soon as we hear that we’re getting an Asian student, you know, the first reaction is excitement, that we’re getting a student who is a real academic student, who is used to work and won’t complain, but will be very good. You know, will do the job and will exceed expectations.

[Interview transcript 5/25/01]

There is such an overwhelming expectation by teachers that Asian students will succeed in academic work that when a student does not meet those expectations, the teachers are surprised. For example, Danny’s teachers often rebuked him for not doing his work or not performing up to their expectations. As one teacher stated, “Danny
‘broke the mold!’” [Interview transcript 5/25/01] By this statement, the teacher meant that Danny dispelled her expectations of Asian students. Except for Danny’s teachers, all other teachers saw the participants in this study as being very motivated. The teachers used the students’ high level of motivation as a reason for moving them up to a higher reading group or into a gifted program.

In general, this overwhelmingly positive view of Korean students seemed to benefit three of the four participants significantly. On numerous occasions, however, I heard teachers reprimanding Danny for his lack of performance. They said that he “could do better if he tried” [Field notes 4/4/01]. For them, Danny did not fit the image of what they viewed as the typical Asian student (e.g., he’s not in gifted math like most Asian students). In other words, from the teachers’ perspectives, Danny was not demonstrating the Discourse of the typical Asian student. Amelia seemed to practice the “correct” Discourse to fit into the group of popular and smart girls.

**Summary of Findings**

This study examined the literacy practices of four Korean bilingual students in their public school classrooms, their homes, and their church Korean Language School classes. Findings revealed that it was a struggle to be bilingual for these students. Amelia and Danny, who had been in the United States longer than the two brothers, Joey and Carey, had lost much of their Korean literacy and had to work to
maintain it. Joey and Carey had to interrupt their lives in Korea and learn a new language and culture in a short period of time.

Data from this study also showed that the students’ public school teachers believed that the four participants had more advanced literacy skills than I later determined to be the case. Although all of the students were able to read English texts orally, they had varying degrees of difficulty in understanding textual meanings. They all had some difficulty fully understanding both written and verbal texts around them. The older students’ writings revealed that English grammar rules that were different from or incomparable to Korean grammar rules posed problems for them.

In addition, the study showed that acquiring an adequate knowledge of English vocabulary was a major problem for all four students. Unlike their monolingual peers, the students in this study tended to use only simple words and phrases to express their ideas, even after three years of living in the United States. Danny and Carey, who did not have a good grasp of phonemic awareness, had difficulty discerning similarly spelled words in both English and Korean. Only Amelia, who was beyond the decoding stage of reading, did not confuse word patterns.

When the students went to church, there were two distinct groups—divided along gender lines. The boys usually liked to exchange information on the latest *Dragonball Z* games while the girls wrote and exchanged elaborately hand-written
and hand-made notes. At home and church, the students’ literacy practices were
different from those of their public school classrooms. Their home literacy practices
were more nontraditional. They chose to play video games, surf the Web, watch TV,
or listen to music. Although the three boys used technology extensively, Amelia
preferred to stay away from it. Similarly, although the boys spent many hours playing
games on the computer, Amelia chose to write letters to friends or listen to music.
Peers played important roles in the four participants’ lives.

Finally, the study showed that students seem to have more positive attitudes
toward their English literacy and chose to use it much more often than their Korean
literacy. English was quickly becoming the dominant language in these students’
everyday literacy practices in their public school classes, in the KLS classes, in their
church, and in their homes.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Limitations, and Implications

I didn’t have too many good nights of sleep during this study. I often woke in the morning feeling very tired and weighed-down by what I needed to do to finish my dissertation. Writing was difficult for me, but it was only when I wrote that I was able to think. . . . Sometimes I was awakened in the middle of the night by surging thoughts of all the things that were left unsaid. . . . I realized that this study was too close to home for my comfort. One family was almost an extended family to me and the other was part of my community. I worried about embarrassing these children by revealing too many details about their bilingual/biliteracy issues. The children all wanted to show that they were doing so well in school. . . . They’re such strong, unique, and brave children. But, I knew I had to write the study by considering all the data, as evidence of both their successes and problems.

I have not yet shared my data with the children’s parents. They asked me, once I have finished with the doctoral program, if I might sit with them and discuss how best to help their children succeed in school. I think the


information will be important for them to know. They will be surprised to hear about aspects of their children’s lives they have not seen before. I know they will take the information in the same spirit it was intended, the same heart-felt concern that embraced our conversations over the years about the future of their children living in a new land.

I know that some Korean folks will not like my study. They’ll think it’s too close to home, too. Those individuals, I know, will be curious as to why I didn’t do a more “mainstream” type of study. After all, I could have done anything because I grew up here. They’ll wonder about this. My quick answer will be that I wish I had done that. Then, it would have been easier for me to write about it. My more thoughtful answer will be because I wanted to know more about an area of biliteracy/bilingualism that is so deeply a part of me. Being biliterate is the biggest factor that shaped my identity. The bilingual/biliterate issues of these students are the same as mine. So I feel a real connectedness with them and what they were able to do and continue to do each day.

I want the students to know that negotiating two languages in a world where one is more powerful than the other is a complex task. They should not feel badly whenever they discover that they are not doing as well
as they wish in improving or maintaining their two languages. I want them to know that they are not alone in their journey toward finding their places in this world. I am still trying to find a place myself, and it is an issue that becomes more real each day that I see my baby girl taking her first tiny steps toward our front door. [Journal 3/22/02]

Discussion

The purpose of my study was to describe and interpret how four young Korean bilingual students in the United States engage in literacy practices in their home, school, and church. In viewing literacy as a social practice, I sought to learn about students’ ways of thinking, valuing, and using their two literacies—literacies that are seemingly unequal in terms of their prestige and power on the world scene. In addition to exploring the sociocultural aspects of biliteracy, I also wanted to learn about some difficulties students may encounter in learning and mastering a new language. Below, I first frame my discussion around this two-pronged interest, discuss implications, and then identify limitations.

Going Against the Wave: Being Biliterate in an English Dominant World

It is impossible to ignore the ubiquitous nature of English-dominance in the four participants’ lives. English is the language of power in our modern world. As Gunderson (2000) has observed:
English has become a world language, one that dominates business and science. In many respects it is hegemonic. To participate in the world economy and to benefit from the advances of science, it is believed, one must know English. . . a language and a culture that have seemingly conquered the world. (p. 694)

Gunderson describes English language proliferation in the world as “hegemonic,” and knowingly or unknowingly, the Korean families in the United States and in South Korea have embraced this trend. So much so that families are investing valuable resources to educate their children in the United States. There is currently such an urgency for learning English in Korea that a recent article on a major Korean newspaper Website (www.usa.chosun.com) described how an increasing number of desperate parents have turned to tongue surgery so that their children would be able to better pronounce the /l/ and /r/ sounds in English. Except for engaging in such an extreme measure, Korean parents in the United States are still willing to do what it takes for their children to acquire English literacy. Although most parents believe that maintaining Korean literacy is important, such maintenance is nevertheless compromised for the sake of English literacy because they see acquiring the latter as a way to increase chances for social mobility.
When students are rewarded for acquiring a literacy that holds such value in the world and in their ethnic community, they undoubtedly continue to develop a sense that English is more desirable than their first language. For example, when Joey, Carey, and their mother went back to Korea for a month at the end of the school year because their grandfather had passed away, the boys attended English language school. When Joey came back to the United States, he proudly reported that he was popular with other Korean students because he spoke English so well. In addition, his father praised him whenever he sent email messages in English. These kinds of peer and parental praises for using English influence the students’ literacy practices.

The milieu of prestige and power of English literacy in the global scene permeates into the schools, Korean communities, and the students’ homes. With these environments combined, a powerful force is created that influences students’ language shift from Korean to English. In the Korean community, acquiring English literacy is perceived as a necessary prerequisite to survival and an improved quality of life. Although many parents value Korean literacy, maintaining it is often sidelined by their perceived pressing need to master the dominant language. Korean parents are willing to invest in out-of-school resources, such as private tutors and educational materials, to help their children achieve this mastery. Information on such resources are shared and quickly taken up by parents in the Korean community. Such familial
support for one of the students’ literacies must make profound impressions on the
students’ valuing of their two literacies.

As Wong-Fillmore (1991) proposed, seeing the value of English and being
motivated to learn, while accessing help from native language users, are two of the
key components in learning a second language. Most Korean students have not only
the motivation to acquire English but the resources both in- and out-of-school to meet
their needs quickly. Both factors may not hold true for other language-minority
groups. Institutional factors, such as the school’s unspoken policy to use only English
for classroom instruction and the school personnel’s perceptions of Korean students
as high-achieving students, also influence the students’ appropriation of the
Discourses of being “good American students.” And, why not? After all, becoming a
good American student means that one is popular, respected, and treated favorably in
one’s world.

As shown in group assertion 2, being socially active seems to have helped the
students join secondary Discourse groups easily. The students’ secondary Discourse
groups in school and church were largely comprised of their peers. Moreover, being a
part of these peer groups provided guidance in how to become good students who
were learning to master English literacy. Peers took up increasingly important roles in
these students’ lives. If Amelia’s occasional feelings of melancholy toward her
bilateral circumstances are any indication, sharing common experiences with a
compassionate peer group will become increasingly important for these students.

As indicated in group assertion 1, the worlds of students who participated in
this study were quickly becoming saturated with English use. For example, all of the
children at the church spoke English when they gathered. Being able to communicate
in English seemed to be a status marker, which indicated they were becoming more
Americanized. In school, the three older students’ teachers pointed out that the
participants were all very popular with their peers. It seemed that acceptance by a
social group was an important factor for these students in achieving success in U.S.
schools.

The students’ peer groups at church seemed to be actively adapting their
social identities. One way of adapting their social identities was evident in their
practice of changing their names. All of the children at church had English names and
referred to each other using those names, even though they all knew each other’s
Korean names. Rymes (1996, 2000) proposed that name change is a type of a social
practice, and that it can be a significant way of creating different social identities.
Gaining an English name may be seen as a type of a “baptismal” event in that it
signifies entering into a new society with a new social identity. By appropriating
English names and referring to each other by these names only, the students were signaling that they were no longer just Koreans, but Korean Americans.

Why is maintaining one’s first language important? Studies examining the effects of language loss (Fillmore, 2000; Hinton, 1999; Tse, 2001) have shown that communication between parents and children is detrimentally affected when the first language is lost. Many people from language-minority homes often do not see the value in their primary Discourse until they have lost it. Tse (2001) found that participants in her study did not have interests in learning their home language until they realized its value later in life. Although Amelia seems to be at approaching the age where she realizes the values of maintaining her Korean literacy to maintain her relationship with her parents, the younger participants did not seem to feel the same way.

More importantly, our various Discourses shape our social identities. When there are tensions between our primary and secondary Discourses—that is, when there are tensions between the two languages—our social identities attached to the two Discourses may be affected. If our secondary Discourses are valued by society over our primary Discourses, we might infer that our social identities attached to the secondary Discourses are more important or relevant than that attached to our primary Discourse. According to Gee (1996), our first sense of who we are is shaped by our
primary Discourse. He says that our “primary Discourse defines [our] ‘home’ identity” (p. 146). It is, arguably, the most important social identity we form. Therefore, if the social identity attached to our primary Discourse is challenged or devalued, this tension may lead to a deep existential confusion, or what is often referred to in Korean American communities as “identity crisis.”

In the case of the two younger boys, there did not seem to be a big issue about who they were. After being in the United States for a year, they still seemed to identify themselves as Koreans visiting the United States temporarily. Although they spoke English to most of their peers at church who had been in the United States longer than themselves, they code-switched to Korean when briefly speaking to me or another older boy who had been in the United States about the same time. Seemingly, the two younger boys who had recently arrived from Korea knew the tacit rules of the Korean Discourse. That is, they switched their use of the two languages in response to their perceptions of the people they addressed. Amelia also showed that she was a part of this Korean Discourse, as she spoke Korean to her parents and other adults. However, Danny seemed to reject this aspect of the Korean Discourse. Although he seemed to be aware that Korean adults were not happy about his attempt to slip by without switching codes, he did not adjust his language for the addressee. His decision not to switch codes is significant. In Korean, he would have to use honorifics
to address adults, but he would not have to worry about it when he communicates in
English. In choosing to use the dominant Discourse when the context and the
addressee clearly require him to use Korean, he may eventually view Korean adults as
not much different from the way he views his peers. This view, of course, is in direct
contrast to the Korean Discourse that requires children to speak to adults respectfully.
It is commonly said in Korean communities that once Korean children live in the
United States for a short time, they become disrespectful. Not using honorifics is
usually a major reason for this thinking. It is interesting that Korean students are
respectful to their public school classroom teachers, but not always to Korean adults.
In other words, they know how to display respect in both contexts, but they choose
not to do so in the Korean community. This practice may be another example of the
students’ different ways of valuing their primary and secondary Discourses.

**Toward a Mastery of School Discourses**

The students successfully engaged in school Discourse despite not having
fully mastered it. From a general observation, the students seemed to excel
academically, but under a closer observation, they had several difficulties unique to
their biliteracy. First, I want to talk about two specific areas of difficulty in relations to
Gee’s (1996) notion of Discourses and Cummins’s (1979, 1981) theories of linguistic
interdependence and threshold. Gee (1996) said that our primary Discourses are the
“framework” for our secondary Discourses. If the primary Discourse is in Korean and the secondary Discourse is in English, Korean serves as the framework for new English literacy learning and serves to shape and form the latter. Some evidence for this proposition can be seen in the older students’ struggle with connected prose. They had difficulty in the areas of English where there are different or incomparable rules in Korean. They often reversed the order of words in a sentence. Students also had difficulty using certain writing conventions in English, such as apostrophes to signal possessives, commas, and capitalization, all of which do not exist in the written Korean language.

Gee’s (1996) concept of “mushfake” as a way of thinking about what students do when they encounter areas of difficulty in English language was considered in an effort to understand students’ ways of doing school Discourses. Mushfaking means to “make do with something less when the real thing is not available” (p. 147). Because language-minority students are obviously not born into the dominant Discourse, they have to make do until they master it. As shown in group assertion 3, although the students in the study were often confused by the texts around them, they were good at mushfaking it. Mastering the school Discourses did not necessarily mean that they needed to master the English language. There were many other ways in which they were able to convey to the school community that they were good students.
Demonstrating valued school practices, such as showing motivation toward school work, learning classroom routines and following them, and being socially active, seemed to have impressed upon the school community the image of these students as having no problems. And, of course, the excellent grades they received also (falsely) signaled to the parents that there were no problems. The participants in this study were so good at demonstrating these valued practices that their difficulties were almost undetectable until one took a closer look. The teachers’ view of these students as being motivated and academically excellent students, as shown in group assertion 7, may have also masked the students’ difficulties with certain skills in using English grammar and phonemic awareness. This preconceived notion seems to have played a significant role in placing students in higher level classes when, in one case (i.e., Danny), the student might not have been ready.

Specifically, some evidence of mushfaking can be observed when looking at the students’ ways of handling their problems with vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and grammar (group assertions 4-6). Although students had clear difficulties in these three areas of literacy, they were recommended for the gifted program. Danny was already in a gifted program when I conducted this study. Amelia was placed in a gifted program the following year, and the two younger boys were on their way to being placed in gifted math classes. It should be noted the elementary school used
many pieces of information about the prospective students considered for the gifted program. The body of information was divided into four categories: mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation. Along with the classroom teachers’ assessments of the students’ motivation, there were various standardized tests (e.g., WISC III, ITBS, Stanford) that were used to make the decision. The students had to meet three of the four criteria to be admitted. I was only able to observe Danny’s gifted class, which was composed of only European American and Asian students. Therefore, I cannot confirm or disconfirm whether the practice of placing students in gifted programs is similar to the dividing trend in the gifted and regular high school classes described by Lee (1996).

However, it is interesting to note that plans had been made for all four students in the present study to be placed in gifted programs. Although they seem to have met three of the four criteria for being placed in the gifted programs, they had not demonstrated advanced skills in literacy. Their ability to mushfake the dominant Discourse by showing motivation and making do (the best they can) with what they knew about English literacy seems to have helped them. Again, the teachers’ perceptions of participants in this study as hard working, social, and good students have helped them further their mushfaking school Discourse.

In this study, some support was found for Cummins’s (1979, 1981) linguistic
interdependence hypothesis and the threshold hypothesis. When students did not have a firm grasp of phonemic awareness in one language, their difficulties showed up in their second language. The students had difficulty spelling words and distinguishing between similarly spelled words in both languages. However, it seemed that when the students were beyond the stage where they were sorting out the phonemic awareness, they did not have this confusion. It seems, therefore, that phonemic awareness (or lack thereof) is transferable from one language to the other. This finding can serve to extend a similar finding by Durgunoglu, Nagy, and Hancin-Bhatt (1993) that showed an interdependence between two alphabetic languages. It also supports Geva, Wade-Woolley, and Shany’s (1993) work that showed that phonemic awareness does transfer across two very different orthographies.

When certain skills are not well developed in one language, literacy uses in both of the languages of a biliterate suffer. Danny is the case in point. He had difficulties in both grammar and phonemic awareness skills. Because Danny was in the fourth grade at the time of the study, not having a firm knowledge of phonemic awareness seemed unusual—especially for a student in a gifted (Spectrum) program. However, the school’s exceptionally positive perception of Korean students may have played a powerful role in classifying Danny as a gifted student; or, he and the other students in this study may have been good at mushfaking their school literacies. In
other words, they were able to demonstrate to teachers that they achieved mastery of the dominant Discourse when, in actuality, they had many loopholes to attend to. As Danny moves up in grade level, I fear that his incomplete skills in the areas specified above will become problematic.

Kitano and DiJiosia (2002) cited the 1998 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) report, which showed that Asian American students had the highest representation (17.6% vs. 9.0% White, 7.9% African American, 6.7% Hispanic, 2.1% American Indian) above all ethnic groups in public school gifted services. My participants supported this data. When the study ended, three out of four students were receiving gifted services. Carey, the youngest student, was on his way to being recommended for the Spectrum (gifted) math. As a family friend to these students, I was proud and happy for them. On the other hand, the overwhelming percentage of Asian students in the gifted program is not a comforting thought when I reflect upon students I have taught in the South Bronx district of New York City. I know that not as many of those students are receiving such services. Although I do not believe that not receiving gifted services is detrimental to literacy development and school success, the imbalance in representation seems problematic. It is even more problematic when considering that the students in this study were recommended for gifted services because their teachers believed that they could partake successfully (e.g., due to
motivation) in high-performing classrooms. For example, in her second year in the middle school, Amelia was placed in the gifted reading class even though her two literacy teachers identified her vocabulary and grammar skills as inadequate. Such benefit of doubt is probably not available to students in other ethnic groups who do not have a positive image in their school communities.

Limitations

Being a Korean American studying members of my own community influenced this study immensely. In hindsight, I was often harsh in my judgment of the students. I often saw myself in their struggles and in the mistakes they made. Therefore, while a non-Korean researcher may have focused on the remarkable success of recently arrived language-minority students, I tended to focus on the difficulties these students faced, on their failures. I expected the four students to do better than they were doing, an expectation fueled by my own frustration of having an incomplete mastery of the dominant Discourse. Therefore, as with any other interpretive research, I was much a part of this study.

My presence in the homes influenced and sometimes seemed to interrupt the families’ normal literacy practices. When I initially visited the two homes, the parents felt that they had to alter their normal activities to accommodate me. For example, when I first visited Amelia and Danny’s home, their mother had them turn off the TV
and quietly read novels. Based on my previous visits to their home, I knew that this was not what they normally did when they came home from school. I noticed that their mother attempted to enforce a stricter schedule of their after school activities than usual. In addition, my presence also seemed to affect her attempt to maintain Danny’s Korean literacy. A short time after the study began, she started to teach him on Saturdays. In the two younger boys’ home, their mother sometimes asked me to do things with them, such as helping them to select children’s literature from a bookstore.

As a former classroom teacher, I initially focused on the school context. I spent a lot of time in the schools. I observed each of the students in several classrooms (e.g., in their regular classroom, in their pull-out programs, and in other places, such as the library, lunchroom, and the playground). A typical day at the students’ schools involved observing as many as four different classes. I observed the students in their homes and during their KLS sessions weekly, but the main emphasis was on the school in the beginning. Gradually, I saw that the students’ literacy practices in their church and homes provided more insights into their values and attitudes toward their two literacies. Initially, therefore, I was validating the dominant Discourse over their home and community Discourses. As a regular member of the local Korean community, I had more contact with the families than merely visiting their homes and their KLS classes. In order to take advantage of these encounters, I
observed and took notes on events and observations outside the official contexts for field observations. Therefore, the initial limitation of focusing on one context (the school) was addressed by my collecting supplemental data in the participants’ homes and church.

Finally, another limitation of the study was that its findings could not be generalized to other contexts. Sociocultural and linguistic factors are different for the different languages being studied. Also, people may encounter the second language during different points in their lives under varying circumstances. Some biliteracy studies deal with students who have already learned their first language and later have acquired a second language. Other biliteracy studies involve people who have been exposed to both languages from birth or those who are native-English speakers learning a foreign language. Thus, Bialystok (1991) cautioned that such differences should be taken into account when conducting biliteracy research.

**Implications**

Biliteracy researchers in the future might want to explore specific sociocultural contexts and specific relationships between the two languages under study. Sociocultural factors are different for each group, and the dynamics of valuing, attitudes, and usage shape the unique relationship between the first and second languages of different language-minority groups. Other factors typically include
socioeconomic differences or the immigration history of the group. It is extremely important to consider the sociocultural contexts in which students live, work, and play if one’s goal is to study language-minority groups for the purpose of better understanding their biliteracy.

Linguistic relationships between the two languages under study may be explored in an effort to identify specific ways for structuring literacy lessons. What is instructionally beneficial to learn for one language-minority group may be different for another. As mentioned previously, Korean bilinguals cannot reap any benefits from learning cognates (and this is contrary to the case for Spanish bilinguals) because cognates do not exist in the Korean language. Thus, it is a challenge, but arguably a necessary one, for future researchers to seek out relationships between the two languages. It is a daunting task given that there are so many home languages that have not yet been studied. However, pedagogical approaches that ignore differences among language-minority groups and that do not look for relationships between the languages involved may prove to be not very useful to students. Future studies aiming to learn about specific relationships between the two languages are necessary if we are to better understand and anticipate the difficulties students encounter when reading and writing in a second language.

Individual differences within the same language-minority group do exist.
Thus, more in-depth explorations of selected individuals may be useful. Such studies might provide a better understanding of the specific social practices of individuals and might, at the same time, trace their histories of being biliterate across several contexts.

A compilation of such personal narratives might be a valuable resource for researchers with an interest in biliteracy. For example, Merriam (1998) wrote about “The Human Relations Area File (HRAF),” a database that exists in anthropology where researchers can retrieve this kind of information. Alternatively, such personal narratives may be a valuable history for future generations.

Code-switching behavior was often not observable among students in the present study possibly due to the contexts in which I observed. In their schools, there seemed to be an unspoken, but strict, rule about not speaking a foreign language in the school. On the first day of observing in the elementary school, I was instructed to not speak to the student participants at all. It was revealed later that the ESOL teacher thought that I would be “helping” the students if I spoke to them in Korean. Therefore the supportive learning context that Hornberger (1990) describes where students are able to code-switch was not available to these students. There was a strong institutional factor that required bilingual students to assimilate into the dominant Discourse.

Similarly, in the church context, peers required them to use English, even
when the two languages were allowed. For the student participants, their peer groups played an important role; the students needed to participate by using the dominant Discourse. In the church context and at home, the addressee was the most prominent factor in determining whether some of the students spoke English or Korean. The point is that contextual factors may determine whether bilingual students speak English or Korean. Researchers in the future might examine different contexts where students exhibit language choice and code-switching behavior. It would be worthwhile to inquire into why students choose to use one language over another, or why they choose to code-switch.

In addition, it was interesting to observe that my participants did not demonstrate the fluidity of biliteracy suggested by Hornberger (1990, 1992). Even when the context was less restrictive (e.g., in the church and at home), they often chose to speak in English. This is a curious finding since code-switching is a commonly observed phenomenon. It should be noted that in their classrooms, the students were the only Korean students, and thus they did not have the opportunity to exhibit code-switching behaviors. Future research studies might focus on comparing the degree of fluidity in biliteracy among different bilingual groups.

One of the important implications in this study is the tremendous sociocultural influences of world, institutional, and family supports on students’ English
development. Even though many Korean parents want their children to quickly learn the dominant Discourse, at the same time they want them to maintain their Korean literacy. These contradictory agendas may cause struggles in these families. It would be fascinating to examine how the dual (and arguably opposed) literacy requirements are perceived by the children. A related question might be: How do the parents feel about placing their children in such contradictory positions?

Finally, it should be noted that all classroom teachers have to deal with the challenge of meeting the needs of a large number of students. It is, therefore, difficult for teachers to assess bilingual students’ abilities very closely. However, such close examinations are necessary. The students’ teachers in this study had only general ideas (probably constructed both by their beliefs about Asian students and what they actually observed) about the students’ literacy skills. Although these students were placed in high performing groups, their current abilities to moshfake the dominant Discourse may not be enough in the future. Hornberger (1990) seemed to applaud a teacher who had accepted grammatical errors in Cambodian students’ writings, but I argue that the issue needs to be addressed differently. Although I agree that creating an environment where bilingual students feel free to express themselves is crucial, it is equally important that such environment includes the guidance of the teachers. Without some careful guidance from knowledgeable teachers, bilingual students may
not have many other opportunities for addressing needs in academic English literacy.

Teachers have the monumental task of knowing individual needs of all students and addressing those needs sensitively. Contexts in which the teacher knows the individual struggles of the students and provides a supportive structure will encourage literacy development in the bilingual students.
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Association and National Reading Conference.


Appendix A

Portrait
“Portrait of Amelia”

Amelia began her first year in middle school with a lot of anxiety. As her mother says, Amelia just does not like change. In the middle of her school year, her parents have tried to transfer her to a private school, but she tearfully protested. By then, she had made friends and was familiar with life at Cornell Middle School. When I began observing Amelia in her reading and language arts classes, she seemed happy with the routines of the classrooms. She would memorize her vocabulary words for the week and ace the test. She would read her book chapters for homework as she was told to do and answer the comprehension questions. She would read her Accelerated Reader books and take the test, always getting a “passing” score. In doing all of these activities, she worked quickly, seriously, and efficiently. She was almost always one of the first students to finish her tasks. She seemed to feel comfort in knowing exactly what was expected of her in these classes. In church and at home, she knows exactly what she has to do, and when she gets, started, she is focused and quick. Unlike her younger brother who seemed to always need her parents’ assistance and reminder about doing homework, Amelia self-manages well.

However, she seemed less ready to talk about what she was thinking or feeling personally in these settings. Or, she did not know how. For instance, when I asked her about how she liked a particular book she had just finished reading, she did not have
much to say. She would usually reply, “Oh, I liked it. It was interesting.” When I tried to get her to say a little more, she was not add much more. It is difficult for an outsider to know what Amelia is thinking. Is she being a fairly typical middle school student who does not know how to talk about what she has read? Or, is she very protective of her private self. Even to me, who has known her socially for a long time. I recall several times when Amelia stopped her brother from doing something inappropriate or saying something while I was over at her home. She certainly is not as forthcoming and open as I once thought she had been.

Not only does she not seem to relate personally to her readings, she did not seem to like being singled out and being noticed. One day, when her language arts class was going over contents of the book, *In the Year of Jackie Robinson and the Boar*, they came across the part where one of characters, who was not native speaker, spoke in broken English. The class giggled at her speech. Meanwhile, Amelia seemed disconnected and looked down at her book. She did not comment, but seemed to me as if she just wanted the moment to pass. They then got to a part where Shirley, the main character who had just arrived from China, spoke very eloquently. Amelia leans over to me and says, “She can’t speak like that after a few months.” Referring to the dialogue: “They are worthy. They come from an illustrious clan from the ancient civilization of China.” I ask her why not, although I agreed with her. Amelia says,
“She can’t learn that fast. You have to be here at least like 2 years?” Like you?, I ask.

Amelia nods. “Can you talk like that?” She answers, “I guess.” Clearly, she used her personal experience to make the judgment about the authenticity of Shirley’s language use, but did not add anything further.

She seemed more demonstrative in expressing her personal thoughts and feelings in her writings. One poetry selection from her poetry project for her reading class is titled, “Why me?” And she wrote the following:

Why do people always make fun of me?

I mean I might look a little different and a strange voice.

But in the inside I’m same as you.

So why does it have to be me?

And she drew several frowning faces under it. Her reading and language arts teacher have never seen anyone making fun of Amelia and has no idea where the source of her unhappiness might lie. Amelia certainly has a private side that she does not usually reveal.

While one teacher says Amelia is very personable with her, another says, she is “just a teacher” to her. Amelia seem to want to define herself differently in school from who she is at her home. In school, she wants to be “Amelia”, and not “Dong-won”. At home and at church, she is almost never called Amelia. Why would Amelia
want to be called “Dong-won” at school? It sounds so foreign and different from all other names.

When I think about Amelia, I am first proud that she has paved a way to a comfortable place for herself in school. However, there is also a feeling a little sadness toward her inability or unwillingness to express her private self. She does not talk about her school and what she is thinking to her parents. She does not seem to talk about what she is thinking deeply, with her church friends. She has yet to speak to me about those thoughts and feelings. There just seem to be no outlet for them. I wonder how she would handle her thoughts and feelings about difficult situations that will arise from navigating herself through her biliterate world. Would she confide in someone or would she keep it all to herself?
Appendix B

Translated Transcript
Interview with Amelia and Danny’s Mom
Date: 5/21/01

J: 방금 말하는 거에... 한국말에 대해서 더 말씀해 주실래요? 처음에 왔을 때 어밀리아가 3학년이었죠? 그림 읽기 쓰기 문제가 없었겠죠?
(When you just said. . . Could you say more about Korean? When Amelia first came here, she was in the third grade? Then, she had no problem reading and writing?)

M: 그렇죠, 사실 그때 대니도 읽고 쓰기 하는 거는 거의 다 하고 왔는데. 우리가 처음 왔을 때 영어가 급하니까, 한국말 하는 거는 엄마 아빠가 쓰는 말, 한국 사람이 만나면 쓰는 말 크게 다였어요. 그래서 한국말을 구체적으로 교육시키는 것이 없었거든요. 없었는데 아이들이 조금씩 인제 이년 삼 년 되니까 영어가 편해지جاد어요.
(Right, actually Danny also did almost all the reading and writing at the time. But, when we first came, English was urgent and all the Korean they got was words used by their mom and dad, and when they talked to other Koreans they met. So, there was no formal teaching in Korean. There wasn’t any. The kids slowly, now that it’s been 2, 3 years, English has become more comfortable [for them].)

J: 그게 언제였어요, 영어가 더 편하다고 느끼기 시작한게?
(When was it? When they started feeling more comfortable with English?)

M: 영어가 편해졌다고 하면서 저희들끼리 영어를 쓰기 시작한 게 한 이년 정도 지나니까 그런 것 같더라구요. 또 우리 어밀리아 같은 경우는 특별히 뛰 한국말을 하던가...한국에는 사자성어 같은 것이 많잖아요. 고령 거 말고는 이해하는 거는 쉬운 말로 하면 다 이해하고 어떤 내용이나고 몸을 때 대담을 해주면 대충 이해하는 다 하는 것 같아요. 그런데 어밀리아는 단 어 자체를 잘 모르는 것 같더라구요. 그래서 영어로 뭐다라고 얘기한 해주 어나지 아 그렇구나 하고 이해를 하는 것 같고. 그리고 일단은 한국말을 해야 된다고, 우리가 배워야 된다고 아빠 엄마는 다 생각하고 있기 때문에....
(It was about two years ago that [I think] they said English is more comfortable and began speaking to each other in English. And, in Amelia’s case, when she talked in Korean, there wasn’t anything especially. . . . There’s a lot of [Chinese-derived] idioms in Korean. Except for those, if I used easy words, she understood well and when she asked me what it meant and I explained it to her, she seemed to understand. And also, if I explain to her in English, she would go, “Oh, right” and then seems to
understand. And first of all, she knows she has to learn Korean. We say she has to learn, [she knows] both her mom and dad think she has to learn Korean, so . . .

J: 그리고 얼마 전에 말하기를, 토요일 날, 애들일 한글 학교도 가지는, 토요일 날은 어떻게 애들한테 한글말을 가르쳐 줄려구...?
(And you said a while ago, on Saturday, although the kids go to Korean Language School, on Saturday, you were going to teach them Korean. . . ?)

M: 토요일 날은 최소한 30분에서 한 1시간정도, 한 사람 앞에. 우리 대니 같은 경우에는 지금 한글 학교에서 하는 교재를 가지고 읽고 첫째. 지금 주로 읽는 거를 많이 하고 있어요. 대니 같은 경우는.
(On Saturday, about, at least 30 minutes to an hour per person. In Danny’s case, we first read from the workbook from Korean Language School. In Danny’s case.)

J: 교재를 갖고 읽는다고요, 그냥 배울 거를요?
(You read from the workbook? The part he’ll learn the next day)

M: 미리 했던 거를 읽고 할거를 읽어요. 그리고 지금 그렇게 하면서 조금 쓰는 걸 들어가거든요. 동원이 같은 경우에는 개네 들이 하는 건 아닌데 교재를 하나 따로 구했어요.
(We read the part he had done and the part he will do. And as we do that we are going into writing a little bit. In Amelia’s case, it’s not the workbook they use [in KLS class] but I found a workbook [for her]).
Appendix C

Sample Assertion

Evidence for Amelia:

Excerpt from interview with Amelia’s reading teacher, Jane Powell:

Jane: She’s definitely had gotten a lot more friends as the year gone on. And she’s chosen her friends, I think, consciously.

Jen: What do you mean?

Jane: Well, the girls that she’s ended up being friends with—I, I don’t really know if it’s because she’s a very pretty girl. And she is smart and motivated and fits into that…. um, stereotype. But the girls that she has chosen to be friends with are very smart. They’re very motivated. They’re the girls that are going to go ahead and go onto college. Um, and, they’re all pretty, they’re all, but it’s not, they’re not snobby.

Jen: Very fashionable.

Jane: Well…. no. No. They’re nice-looking. They’re not like dumpy-looking. Does that make sense? Like, they dress well.

Jen: Okay.

Jane: And, they take care of themselves. Um….

Jen: So, what makes you think. . . ?

Jane: It’s only been within past few weeks she has become good friends with these girls. It’s kind of like she waited to see who was going to do what?

Jen: Hmmm.

Jane: And how, and how they did. And she would, she would ask me about people from other classes. You know, “How did so and so did on this quiz?” You know did other people do well or not. [interrupted by a student who comes in to speak to Jane] So, anyway, I mean, she, not being nosy, was, you know, ask me questions, “How did other people do in this?” , you know. [interrupted again]

Jen: She was sort of evaluating?

Jane: I think she chose where she wanted to be and she made herself fit in there. I mean she, to SOME degree, I mean I wouldn’t say tons, but I mean to some degree, she even changed the way she dressed just a little bit.

Jen: Uh-huh.
Jane:  Became a little more hip. I’m not sure that was more becoming a teenager or if she decided, “This is the group I wanted to be with. I’m going to make myself fit.”

[Interview transcript 5/22/01]

Evidence for Danny:

Although Danny might not be a competent user of his biliteracy skills, he seems to manage to do well in his school. Somehow he seems to inspire a lot of compassion from his peers. He gets help and support from them. He is popular and liked by his friends, while not as much from his teachers. Unlike many Asian students who are praised by their teachers about their school work, Danny’s strength seems to be in his social skills with his peers. He exhibits a strong leadership when he is involved with producing a play as a class project. He seems to thrive when he is involved with production involving people than when he has to sit and work independently. He likes to talk rather than write. Therefore, going from one classroom context to another where he has to sit quietly and work, is by all means too restrictive for him.

[Excerpt from “Portrait of Danny”]

I shared the portrait with Danny’s Spectrum (gifted) class teacher, Mrs. Tanner:

Tanner: He has to struggle more
Jennifer: Uh-huh.
Tanner: to be a leader. So, he has to make sure that people like him. So, he’s very much a leader in that way. A social leader. And they’re willing to listen to him, so.

Jennifer: He does seem to get a lot of support from his peers.
Tanner: He does. I think he does. And I think that pulls him through a lot of his academics.

Jennifer: And he’s popular too, right?
Tanner: Yeah. And they’re willing to help him to get his work done. And I think that’s why he keeps his grades up. I don’t know. But, that’s part of his—he’s actually getting a tutor all the time, in his peers.

Tanner: He’s verbal. As a leader, he understands what needs to be done to move the group. And, in that, to me, he’s a gifted person. And a gifted person that way, takes a long time to develop because they don’t have those academic strengths.
Evidence for Joey

Excerpt from interview with Joey’s classroom teacher, Amy Gallo:

Amy: And Cain was very helpful in telling him everything he needed to do. And he seemed to really listen?

Jen: Uh-huh.

Amy: You know, what we’re doing in classroom and what he needed to do. And he kind of followed him around.

Jen: Is he the blond boy?

Amy: Yeah, real blond. And then when Joey ended up being in his math class, they kind of got closer. So, that was kind of good for him. He had somebody right away that helped him. And, um, he just seemed really observant and trying to figure out everything that was going on. He didn’t talk to me at all. That was hard [laughs] He didn’t talk to me at all. He couldn’t.

Jen: He didn’t ask you anything? I mean if he needed something?

Amy: Um, no, not really. He talked to. . . He figured out how to communicate with his peers more than he did with me. I don’t know exactly how that happened, but, um, anytime we have an assignment to do, or, um, any kind of thing that was in class, or, we had letters that went home, or any rules, I had the kids explain it to him. And somehow they have a way of doing that better than a teacher can.

. . .

Amy: It’s really amazing. I think, I have a feeling it’s because he’s in that really high math group? And, um—

Jen: Are all of them in there?

Amy: The whole group is in there together. But kind of the kids that are in gifted? And they kind of, in our school, overall, respect you more if you’re, you know, the smart kids are respected?