NAVIGATING A BILINGUAL/BILITERATE CHILDHOOD:  
A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THREE SECOND-GENERATION YOUNG LEARNERS IN THE U.S.

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This qualitative ethnographic inquiry examines the longitudinal journey of three Asian-American young learners in becoming bilingual/biliterate. With a view of language and literacy acquisition and development as naturally interactive and culturally embedded processes of socialization, I longitudinally investigated three siblings’ bilingual and biliteracy acquisition and development in their natural daily setting for six years. I also explored the focal children’s situated and reformulated linguistic and cultural identities as second-generation Korean-Americans in the United States. This case study of three children growing up in one immigrant family attempts to capture the multi-layered and interwoven socio-cultural and educational experiences of early bilingual and biliteracy development.

Three research questions were examined:

1. What were the language and literacy practices of these three second-generation children in the United States? What kinds of language and literacy events occurred in this family? What factors influenced the literacy practices of these young children in their daily lives?

2. What were the goals and beliefs of the focal participants, parents, educators, and community members about early bilingual/biliteracy development? What processes did they implement to achieve their goals in daily practice? What were their difficulties and obstacles in achieving these goals?

3. How did the participants construct and negotiate their identities when learning the primary language of the society they lived in while maintaining their heritage language?

Vygotsky’s (1978, 1986) social-constructivist theory explaining early learning and development as a socially collaborative procedure, and Wenger’s (1998) theory of communities of practice were used as the basis on which to investigate bilingual and biliteracy practices within and across diverse communities, including the home, school,
church, playground, heritage language school, and neighborhood. These socio-cultural theoretical frameworks fit the nature of my inquiry because of their focus on socio-cultural influences and reflective discourses in early bilingual and biliteracy development as well as identity formation of early bilingual/biliterate learners within and across different social settings.

Based on these theoretical frameworks, extensive qualitative data from multiple sources was collected in the following forms: in-depth interviews, participant observation, document review, and informal/narrative assessment that measured focal students’ bilingual and biliteracy development in two different socio-cultural contexts. In order to analyze various situational discourses; social and educational activities; and written artifacts and documents, I coded both oral and written data and looked for emerging themes. In each chapter, major characteristics and issues are explored, such as similarities and differences among all participants within one family context and across each individual characteristic in the course of acquiring and developing another language and literacy as second-generation immigrant children. The findings were generated from comparative, cross-case, and holistic analysis of multiple sources of descriptive and qualitative data (Yin, 1989).

This study makes the daily practices of young second-generation bilingual/biliterate/bicultural young learners visible as I look into their socio-cultural influences over the course of six years. Forming bicultural and bilingual/bliterate identities via daily heritage linguistic and cultural experiences, as well as maintaining linguistic and socio-cultural motivations, are vital. High-quality dual immersion programs including heritage language/cultural schools should be available to every young
diverse learner. Continuous longitudinal research on those programs along with family literacy research for specific language and ethnic groups should be systemized for early multi-lingual/literate and multi-cultural education in the United States.
Dedicated to my parents and young diverse learners in the world
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My graduate school career at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has been one of the most enriching and exciting periods of my life. I met the focal family of this study when I began my journey through the master’s program here, and our long-term relationship became deeper and more trusting throughout this seven-year longitudinal dissertation study. I feel truly thankful that their role extended beyond that of research participants; they were indeed my second family as well, and this dissertation would not have been possible without their constant interest, encouragement, and advice.

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and details, and achieving a balance between being insider and outsider, as well as caring about my general welfare.

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How can I forget my family’s unconditional support and belief in me, especially when I struggled with so many responsibilities? I will never be able to repay their limitless love and understanding, but I hope to make it up to them in part by dedicating my dissertation to all of the diverse children of this world and to my parents, Young Bo Ro and Hyun Soon Kwon, whose unconditional love was the cornerstone of the loving family in which I was privileged to grow up.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

With the enormous growth in the number of both temporary and permanent immigrant children in the United States, there are many culturally and linguistically diverse children who speak a language other than English as their mother tongue. Bilingualism is a world-wide phenomenon, representing all classes of society and every country in the world (Grosjean, 1982). With the large numbers of bilingual or multilingual language/literacy users in the 21st century and the related demands in school settings in the United States, the need for longitudinal ethnographic bilingual/biliteracy research has become increasingly important.

As a result of the increasing Korean immigrant population including students, scholars and professionals, the development of their children’s language and literacy in both English and Korean has become an important issue, although it is not often directly addressed in the literature. This qualitative ethnographic inquiry examines the longitudinal journey of three Korean-American young learners in the United States toward becoming bilinguals and biliterates. As a case study of three young learners growing up in one immigrant family, this research endeavor attempts to capture the multi-layered and interwoven socio-cultural and educational experiences in early bilingual and biliteracy development based on the notion of “literacy as a social practice” (Gee, 1995; Heath, 1983, 1989; Li, 2002; Moll, 1990; Purcell-Gates, 1996, 2000; Street, 1995; Teale, 1986). With a view of language and literacy acquisition and development as naturally interactive and culturally embedded processes of socialization, I investigated the bilingual and biliteracy acquisition and development of three second-generation
young learners in their natural daily settings over the course of six years. I also explored
the focal children’s situated and reformulated linguistic and cultural identities as second-
generation Korean-Americans in the United States.

In order to represent the six years of this study in a systematic way, the
introductory chapter contains five sections of background information for the study: (a)
statement of the problem, (b) research population, contexts and background, (c) pilot
study, (d) definition of terms, and (e) research questions. These sections explain how the
research inquiries have emerged, what research population, backgrounds and situated
contexts the reader should be informed of in order to understand this study, why this
research is necessary and important in this 21st century, and what the details of the pilot
study are, followed by description/definition of each term used in the study and the three
main research inquiries.

Statement of the Problem

Socio-cultural and historical needs. About 22% of the 45 million school
children in the United States in 2000 came from linguistic backgrounds different from the
English-speaking monolingual majority, and this number is expected to exceed 40% by
the year 2050 (Lindhome-Leary, 2001). This new group of linguistically and culturally
diverse learners in the United States school system has received many labels, including
diverse children, minority students, bilingual children, learners of English-as-a-Second-
Language (ESL), English Language Learners (ELLs), or Limited English Proficient
(LEP) learners (Garcia, 2000).
Facilitating English language acquisition, as well as maintaining heritage language and identity, is the most significant issue for teachers who serve these learners’ immediate needs every day in the classroom. In order to serve these students better in terms of their emotional adjustment, academic performance, and language learning, educators continue to search for the optimal language policy, theoretical knowledge, methodological information, and practical applications. In addition, academic scholars have been pressured to present evidence-based theories and research-proven methodologies to inform educators about the best practices to serve diverse children.

Today, many Korean and Korean-American parents believe that acquiring English at an early age is very important, so they send their children to English speaking countries to acquire native-like pronunciation and fluency. This new phenomenon of young children acquiring English proficiency has brought many emotional and educational issues to the field of early bilingualism in Korea (Park & Abelmann, 2004). Educators and scholars are searching for the most effective way to become fully bilingual/biliterate; parents are confused about how to support their children’s language and literacy education; researchers are investigating the most productive teaching methodologies; and students are struggling with identity crises when they are away from Korean culture and language (Li, 2003; Shin, 2005; You, 2005).

Therefore, both second language acquisition and bilingualism for young learners have become important issues in the United States, where diversity is a prominent, yet controversial, concept in every aspect in society. This longitudinal ethnographic case study of three bilinguals can help to inform both educators and scholars about bilingual and biliteracy practices of young learners in the United States.
**Academic needs.** In the 1980’s and 1990’s, many bilingual studies used cognitive perspectives to understand the acquisition of two languages; however, many researchers in early bilingualism have become interested in using socio-cultural perspectives to understand language and literacy development in two languages (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999; Gregory, 1996; Gregory & Williams, 2000; Li, 2002; McCarthey, 2007; Tabors & Snow, 2001, 2008). Some studies using social perspectives in examining bilingual and biliteracy proficiency were conducted at home, while others were conducted in the classroom. A few in-depth ethnographic longitudinal studies explored the complex process of becoming (bi)literate (Gregory & Williams, 2000; Li, 2002; Volk & Acosta, 2001); there are also studies that were conducted at home with the researchers’ own children (Bauer, 2000; Bauer, Hall, & Kruth, 2002; Kim, 2004). If the researcher is the mother of the focal participant(s), more detailed and intensive data collection would be possible; however, the research itself could be interpreted and analyzed less objectively than by an outside researcher.

Much early bilingual and biliteracy research has been conducted in Latino communities (Barrera, 1984; Chiappe & Siegel, 1999; Durgunoglu, 1998, Durgunoglu et al., 1993; Garcia, 1998; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995, 1996, 1997), but studies in Asian-American/Canadian homes have been scarce. Among those studies, several describe Chinese students’ daily literacy practices (Chang, 1998; Li, 2002; McCarthey & Garcia, 2005). In terms of research with Korean children, Shin (2005) investigated the discourse practices of 12 Korean-American children in the classroom. Several dissertations (Joo, 2005; Kim, 2004; Park, 2006; Ro, 2002) and papers (Baker, 2005; Cho, 2000; Cho & Krashen, 1998; Finch, 2008; Kim, 2003; Lee, 2008; Lee, 2002; Min,
2000; Ro, 2002; Yi, 2008) have addressed Korean heritage students’ bilingual and biliteracy development. Although the studies inform scholars and practitioners about Korean heritage children in each context, ethnographic multiple case studies, which draw a holistic picture of early bilingual and biliteracy practices in various contexts, are almost non-existent. With the imperative to inform scholars and practitioners about young Korean heritage students’ language and literacy practices, the rapidly growing population of Korean-English bilinguals, and the importance of bilingual education for the success of bilinguals/biliterates in the mainstream classroom, my study focuses on early bilingual and biliteracy acquisition and development occurring in many natural contexts in the United States and Korea. I conducted this research to contribute to the success of young learners who have been and will be exposed to two or more languages within various social and cultural environments in this world.

**Research Population, Contexts, and Background**

According to the United States Census Bureau (2000), Koreans represent the fifth largest Asian/Pacific Islander immigrant group in the United States (approximately 1.3 million people), and for a decade, South Korea has been ranked in the top ten countries of origin of United States immigrants. The state of Illinois, the main location of this study, has the fourth largest Korean population, at 51,453, following California (345,882), New York (119,846), and New Jersey (65,349; United States Bureau of the Census, 2000). This statistic will be updated next year, in 2010; however, even without official numbers, the experience of scholars and educators points to a rapidly growing Korean population both in school settings and in their daily lives.
There are two types of Korean immigrants in the United States: permanent and temporary. The children of permanent residents are usually born in the United States and try to learn two languages at the same time. They are called “second-generation” Korean-Americans (Ogbu, 1998); but to shorten the term, people simply call them “Korean-Americans.” On the other hand, children of temporary immigrants have usually acquired Korean proficiency before they learn English during their stay in the United States. They are English language learners, but many children in this group lose their Korean language proficiency because they are immersed in an English-speaking environment. This population is called “1.5 generation” Korean-Americans, usually having been born in Korea (Danico, 2004). The research participants in this study are “second-generation” immigrant learners who were born and raised in the United States.

There is no official statistical data for how many Koreans reside in the research setting, but over 2000 people of Korean-origin (Korean-Korean and Korean-Americans) live in the community, the majority of whom are study-abroad students. According to the International Student and Scholar Service (ISSS), the number of Korean students at the university in this community is currently 1,467 (866 undergraduate students and 601 graduate students; ISSS online, 2010).

Korean community events and communication channels have been well organized by the Korean Student Association and the Korean Cultural Center. These two units play a vital role in helping Koreans maintain their physical and mental health by sharing intellectual and practical information and providing cultural opportunities to gather as one ethnic group. These social and cultural factors intersect with many religious groups in the town as well. Whether it be through a religious organization, an academic
department, a company, or a club, most Koreans are able to connect with one another either personally and professionally.

As in other towns in the United States, especially any mid-sized city with a major university, there are many community churches in this town. There are 8 Korean Christian churches and one of the Christian churches is Catholic. The biggest Korean church has 635 members and houses the Korean heritage language school. The language school is open to members and non-members of the church and serves about 100 students, ranging from 3 years old to eighth grade; there are about 20 teachers and staff members. There is also a Buddhist association and a few unofficial religious meetings in town.

Saturday Korean heritage language school was the major option for students to be exposed to Korean language and literacy. The parents mentioned their desire for a more intensive program that would meet as often as every other day. I mentioned the case of a full-Korean K-6 elementary school in Los Angeles, but the mother told me that seemed like too much. She preferred sending their children to an intensive program, but not to a regular Korean school program.

There was one elementary school in town where bilingual education was provided, but that school was located in a low-SES neighborhood and was therefore not very attractive to these parents. In addition, it was far from the focal home. Thus, the parents indicated that they never considered sending their children to this school. Earlier in the study, the parents seemed to believe that their lifestyle, including interaction with extended family members in Korea, sending their children to Saturday Korean language
school, and their daily interaction would be enough exposure for the children to their heritage language, literacy, and culture.

When second-generation Korean-American children who might be English-monolingual or Korean-English bilingual children are placed into mainstream classrooms in the United States, problems with heritage language and literacy maintenance and development might occur. This happens because most classroom teachers come from European-American middle class backgrounds, and they do not share the same socio-cultural, educational, and linguistic frames of reference as the children. These differences are often reflected in school discourse and literacy, expectations, curriculum, and classroom culture (Rogers, 2002). Most classroom teachers in the United States know little about young Korean-American learners’ socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g., language practices at home) and have limited knowledge of how to help them form their identities as Korean-Americans living in the United States.

Hence, young Korean-American immigrant learners are unlikely to get social, emotional, and instructional support at school in order to maintain and develop bilingual/biliteracy proficiency. This phenomenon often pushes young Koreans to speak English only; as a result, they fail to maintain their language and literacy in two languages. Many scholars (Chall & Snow, 1982; Heath, 1983; Li, 2002, Purcell-Gates, 1996; Taylor, 1983; Teale, 1986) have asserted the strong necessity for researchers to conduct research on children who have different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds than those of their educators in order to help students from diverse backgrounds achieve success in the classroom.
My data were collected in a mid-size university town in the Midwestern United States. As a Korean international graduate student at the university, I became interested in linguistically and culturally diverse learners’ bilingual and biliteracy development and the influences on bilingual maintenance. My personal academic program allowed me to be an in-depth and longitudinal ethnographic researcher who consistently interviewed and observed the focal students and their families. I observed Korean children in their regular classrooms as well as in their Korean classrooms at a Korean language school during the academic year. As a personal heritage language tutor and the head teacher at the Korean language school, I was able to visit the children’s home two to three times per week (2003-2005), and monthly (2006-2008) for more than six years. In addition, visiting the children’s home country during summer or winter breaks also allowed me to follow the participants’ extended linguistic practices in both countries, Korea and the United States. Below, the research context is described within the larger context of life as a Korean-American bilingual immigrant in the United States.

**Pilot Study**

The pilot study, which initiated my strong motivation to conduct my current study, examined one Korean-American second-generation kindergartener’s biliteracy practices and development over a course of one year, 2005. In 2003, I met the focal participant in my pilot study, Kevin, in the Korean heritage language school. He was my student in the Kindergarten-level Korean language and literacy course. Not surprisingly, recently immigrated ESL students in the United States usually speak, read, and write best in Korean. Kevin was born in the U.S., but he was the best among the students in my
series of classes, in terms of Korean language and literacy ability, and he also identified as a Korean. All of the faculty at the language school complimented the focal family’s efforts to help Kevin maintain his Korean heritage language, literacy and identity, and this was why Kevin caught my attention; I became interested in finding out more about the socio-cultural and educational factors that affected his Korean fluency as a young, U.S.-born Korean student.

In the meantime, Kevin’s mother asked me to tutor him in their home twice a week, to maintain his linguistic proficiency and heritage identity. This was a priceless opportunity for me to learn more about Kevin, as well as his family, environment, and other influential factors. When I explained the purpose and intention of my study to the focal parents, they gladly expressed their willingness to participate and gave me permission to attend events, social gatherings, and church meetings to observe Kevin.

Using ethnographic qualitative methods (i.e., conducting semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and informal assessments), this pilot study examined how a second-generation bilingual child (Kevin) maintained and developed his first language and literacy—i.e., the kinds of natural bilingual and biliteracy events that occurred in his daily life, especially in the home setting,—as well as the influence of social and cultural factors on his first language and literacy development.

Visiting Kevin’s home twice a week to observe his language/literacy usage and socio-cultural environment exposed me to the natural bilingual lifestyle of a Korean immigrant family. In order to ensure that I analyzed my observations with regard for what the parents believed about their own lives, constant cross-checks and conversations,
as well as regular in-depth interviews with all participants in this pilot study were necessary.

The findings of this pilot study suggested that Kevin’s language and literacy skills in his first language increased after his home literacy experiences and language classes became a part of his daily life. However, despite the parents’ efforts to help him maintain his home language and literacy in the United States, I hypothesized that Kevin would be an “at-risk” bilingual/biliterate. Finally, I made extensive and practical recommendations for Kevin’s teachers, caregivers, and community leaders regarding how to promote first language and literacy development. I also made recommendations for maintaining his Korean ethnic identity in the classroom, community, and especially the family/home setting.

The pilot study provided me with hands-on qualitative research experience and valuable input and recommendations for how to develop the study further. Encouragement from colleagues and faculty members, personal experience with qualitative research and scholarly papers and conferences, and my findings motivated me to expand this single case study about one child into a longitudinal, multiple case study including the focal child’s two siblings. In addition to expanding this study, I also decided to investigate deeper and more complex socio-cultural factors related to language and literacy development, and identity formation.

**Definition of Terms**

**Early literacy.** The definition of early literacy in my study includes both the conventional view and the socio-cultural view, which not only refers to children’s ability
to read and write, but also refers to the factors that influence how children acquire, use, and expand literacy within social contexts.

**Literacy events/literacy practices.** Literacy events or practices refer to any written activities, such as reading or writing at home, at school or on the playground. Furthermore, not only physical and cognitive written activities but also psychological thinking processes were considered (i.e., decoding, encoding, and thinking processes involved in written language). Conceptualizing literacy as a social practice, I considered all kinds of linguistic events and practices in the written mode as literacy events and practices.

**Home/family literacy.** I define “family/home literacy” in this study as literacy-related activities that occur naturally at home and in the community among family members and other individuals related to the families.

**L1 & L2.** L1 refers to a person’s first language or “native language.” The L1 is the language that native speakers acquire in the natural context of their childhoods (Kachru & Nelson, 2001). The L1 is also called the “indigenous or heritage language” (Olvando, Collier, & Combs, 2003, p. 5). The L2, on the other hand, is the “second language,” which indicates any additional language that users acquire after their L1 (Mitchell & Myles, 2001).

**Diverse learners/students.** This refers to students/learners who are linguistically, ethnically, nationally, socially, economically, and/or culturally different from mainstream learners in the United States.

**Socio-economic status (SES).** As literally stated in the full phrase, SES refers to components such as social class, educational background, family history and income, and
parents’ jobs. Since the social contexts of education have been examined in the area of bilingual and biliteracy education, linguistic and academic performances depend on the quality and quantity of linguistic practices generated from users’ SES. Rather than operating out of the SES deficiency model (Auerbach, 1989), this study has identified home literacy practices in middle-high SES group that can aid our understanding of the literacy acquisition and development of a bilingual/bicultural and transnational family.

With this ethnographic effort to answer the following three major questions, I hope to contribute to filling the gap in the academic literature related to the bilingual and biliteracy practices of diverse groups, including their complex identity negotiation.

**Research Questions**

1. What were the language and literacy practices of these three second-generation children in the United States? What kinds of language and literacy events occurred in this family? What factors influenced the literacy practices of these young children in their daily lives?

2. What were the goals and beliefs of the focal participants, parents, educators, and community members on early bilingual/biliteracy development? What processes did they implement to achieve their goals in daily practice? What were the difficulties and obstacles in achieving these goals?

3. How did the participants construct and negotiate their identities when learning the primary language of the society they lived in while maintaining their heritage language?

A review of the literature surrounding the socio-cultural theoretical framework, socially shaped literacy, and early bilingual and biliteracy acquisition and development is presented next, in chapter 2. The research design and methodology is provided in chapter 3, followed by the findings, organized by participant: parents and extended family members (chapter 4), Kevin (chapter 5), Mary (chapter 6), and Shelly (chapter 7). I
present the findings for the parents and extended family members first, in order to familiarize the reader with the people supporting the children’s education. The children’s chapters are then arranged in order from oldest to youngest, which is also the order in which I got to know the children.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Socio-Cultural Theoretical Framework

During the last three decades, the perspectives in early literacy have shifted from the learner’s psycho-linguistic process to the meaning-making process, which focuses on the socio-cultural purpose situation (Gee, 2002). From the socio-cultural point of view, language acquisition and development are valued as a group socialization process to which individuals belong. In the process of language learning, language and literacy are tools for sharing social values, inquiries, beliefs, thoughts, and common culture (Mitchell & Myles, 2004; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). Sociocultural theories, along with empirical research, have illustrated how young bilinguals systematically construct and negotiate their linguistic and socio-cultural identities in new social and educational contexts (Gee, 1996; Gregory, 1996; Li, 2002; McCartney, 2007; Street, 1995).

Vygotsky’s social-cultural theoretical framework in family literacy. Through interactions in daily lives in homes and communities, children are becoming socialized and absorbing the surrounding cultures as they create their own ways of meaning-making, behaving, interacting, thinking, believing, and living (Heath, 1989; Gadsden, 2004; Gee, 2001). I delineate Vygotsky’s social-constructivist theoretical frameworks—his basic beliefs including assisted performance within zone of proximal development (ZPD), tools and signs, learning and development, and word meaning and written language on early learning and development in the social-cultural contexts of home literacy acquisition and practices in the following section.
Major principles. The role of caregivers and teachers on students’ development is deeply reflected in Vygotsky’s social-constructivist theory applied to the social sciences and education. In his elaboration of Vygotsky’s work, Bruner (1978) asserts that Vygotsky’s educational theory is a conceptualization of socio-cultural transmission of early learning and development. Family literacy studies and practices have drawn from Vygotsky’s interactive and meaning-based literacy perspectives (Moll, 1990, 1994).

Young children are active agents who have the internal ability to engage in pedagogical activities in the educational process; as such, we should examine how the external social world influences children’s lives to understand their development (Blanck, 1990; Gallimore & Tharp, 1990; Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Literacy development of young children occurs within contextualized practices and is used as a tool for leading children’s learning and development.

Assisted performance within ZPD. Family interactions, mediated for the reciprocal relationship between young children and surroundings such as home and community, generate and facilitate learning. These interactions occur daily when parents or older siblings model purposeful tasks, assist in problem-solving, or monitor young children’s learning and development as facilitators (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978).

According to Blanck (1990), “pedagogy creates learning processes that lead development, and this sequence results in zones or areas of proximal (nearest) development” (p. 50). Vygotsky (1978) originally explained this zone as the area between the real and potential level of development, called the zone of proximal development (ZPD): “It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by
independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adults' guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). In other words, when they interact with more competent and capable people in their surroundings, such as caregivers, teachers, siblings, and even peers, children will develop and expand their new capabilities within various potential zones of development.

When young children achieve their own purposeful tasks with the assistance of capable people, such successful achievement is called *assisted performance*. Various types of assisted performance show the dynamic developmental state within the zone of development, and accelerate children’s mental ability and maturation (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, Vygotsky (1956) asserts that teaching can occur only when the assisted performance awakens and rouses to life the process of maturing and scaffolding in the ZPD (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1984). When adults or older children provide scaffolding—giving advice, letting children know the sequence of activities, guiding children’s attention, and providing appropriate knowledge by presenting the crucial elements of the task—children are able to perform their own tasks (Vygotsky, 1978; Wasik, 2004). Thus, children learn through interactive scaffolding with competent people in a socio-culturally specific way (Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Wasik, 2004).

The adults’ role in scaffolding in the ZPD leading to children’s independent performance is the most basic but important theoretical concept for family literacy education and development for two reasons. First, parents are the first and the most powerful influence on children’s literacy learning and development in home settings. Second, capable people in homes assist young children in acquiring literacy through
socio-cultural interactions. Vygotsky’s theory supports the social components of
learning, especially the role of scaffolding by parents or older siblings as instructors,
facilitators, or educators at home. As assisted performance within children’s
developmental zones, the quality of time spent in family literacy events and the parents’
scaffolding will be important to young learners in becoming literate.

**Tools and signs.** Literacy scholars perceive child development as being mediated
by socio-cultural interactions, signs, and tools. In other words, people use speech,
literacy, and number systems to internalize social relationships with other people and the
environment. Vygotsky’s (1978) work examined the relationships between human mental
processes and historical, social, cultural and institutional environments. He emphasized
the use of *tools of mind* or *sign systems* in human communication and speech to mediate
relationships between humans and the environment (Moll, 1990; Wertsch, 1990). These
tool and sign systems have been effective in accelerating learners’ abilities to become
more adaptive and independent problem solvers (Vygotsky). Acquiring and developing
these tools, e.g., mathematics, language, or literacy, are the purposes of learning from
Vygotsky’s point of view. He believed that behavioral transformation and development
of individuals are deeply rooted in the internalization of culturally generated sign systems
and tools. Acquiring literacy is one of the most important intellectual and cultural tools
and signs to transform the higher psychological processes (Perez, 1998; Vygotsky).
Moreover, young learners begin to acquire tools in their close surroundings, from family
members in the home.

**Learning and development.** Koffka and the Gestalt school of developmental
theorists assert that “the learning process can never be reduced simply to the formation of
skills but embodies an intellectual order that makes it possible to transfer general principles discovered in solving one task to a variety of other tasks” thus, learning how to solve tasks interactively leads to development (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 83). According to this developmental view, learning cannot be limited to the specific acquisition of habits or skills. Furthermore, learning is interrelated with development in complex ways from the child’s birth (Vygotsky, 1978). Schematically, development is depicted as a concentric circle in which the smaller circle of learning lies; more specifically, development procedures never coincide with learning processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Young children acquire written forms of signs to improve the ways of using those forms as socially appropriate communicative written tools. This way, young learners become socio-culturally competent human beings, considered as development (Vygotsky, 1926, as cited in Blanck, 1990).

**Word meaning and written language.** For Vygotsky (1978), the acquisition of oral and written languages enables us to reconsider the relationship between learning and development as follows: (a) language is a basic tool for children to communicate with others; and (b) the use of written language enables children to build foundations “for the subsequent development of a variety of highly complex internal processes in children’s thinking” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). Vygotsky conceived children’s learning to be literate in the most general sense as helping children to read, write, speak, reason, manipulate verbal and visual symbols and concepts. Such learning occurs in three ways: teaching, schooling, and education. Among these three avenues of learning, ZPD forms the cornerstone for the theory of teaching; activity settings provide the key for the theory of
schooling, and literacy supports the educational theory, and word meaning is the main concept for a theory of literacy (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990).

Vygotsky (1986) defined word meaning as the un-analyzable unit of verbal thought, “found in the internal aspect of the word” (p. 5). He considered word meaning as the basic unit of thought and language that children can develop through social interactions with experts, and as both an intra- and inter-mental phenomenon useful in the analysis of consciousness (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Depending on the communities, language users, and activity settings, word meaning can be generated as ongoing and evolutionary development; in addition, it is accelerated by proper interactions with experts (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Thus it is important for family literacy scholars to conceptualize word meaning not only as part of the theory of literacy, but also as a component of written languages that should be acquired and developed through home literacy activities and education.

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) believed that written language development differs from that of oral language development. First, children acquire written speech more consciously and produce it more deliberately than oral speech. Hence, activities that involve written language accelerate young learners’ intellectual development by rendering their immediate needs abstract and indirect (Vygotsky, 1986). Second, written language holds the characteristics of second-order symbolism, that is, understanding written language is first possible through spoken language as an intermediate link that would disappear; then, written language is converted into a sign system that shapes the entities and the relationships between them (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning how to manipulate complex sign systems as acquiring written language is not a mechanical
process. Rather, it is the “culmination of a long process of development of complex behavioral functions” within the entirety of the child’s cultural development (p. 106).

The mastery of languages in the written form allows young learners to develop culturally and socially appropriate methods of literacy usage. This is the reason that the reexamination of written language in a social-cultural context is inevitable as young learners become socially-appropriate written language users. Vygotsky (1986) emphasized that signs of writing, written speech, and their usage are more deliberately and consciously produced and developed than oral language. Young children’s concepts of words and conventionally accepted characters of written speech are gradually developed by parents’ or adults’ scaffolding within the collaborative learning process.

In conclusion, Vygotsky (1978, 1986) theorized early development as a socio-cultural transformation supported by the scaffolding that competent people provide in the children’s zone of proximal development. In addition, he emphasized the relationship between the caregiver and the child as central to learning within the family as a part of the larger socio-cultural system (Wasik, 2004). He situated the socio-cultural components of a child’s development in the family system, and he argued that they can be expanded and enriched within the instructional structure. Family members in homes and practitioners in family literacy programs need to support children by initiating, modeling, prompting, and scaffolding new skills to facilitate children’s learning and development. In this procedure, suitably challenging language and literacy interactions and exposure to texts can be the key for young children to become literate in our society (Li, 2002).

As one of the most major theories, Vygotsky’s (1978, 1986) social-constructivism has been employed in the scholarly works of early literacy learning and development.
Below, I synthesize the application of Vygotsky’s theory to the multi-lingual and multi-sociocultural learning contexts of young bilinguals.

**Vygotsky’s social-cultural theoretical framework in early biliteracy development.** Language and literacy learning are fundamentally social processes and cultural practices because one’s learning and development is influenced by one’s interactions with others within socio-cultural contexts (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990; Gee, 1996, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1998). In early literacy development, social-constructivists claim that young literacy learners construct written language experiences from being immersed in social and cultural experiences. More capable peers, parents, or teachers play an influential role in young learners’ literacy development through adequate and challenging interactions and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). This is especially applicable for the experiences of young bilingual learners who are immersed in a new and complex social environment. Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism has historically been applied to the studies of diverse children who possess different socio-cultural backgrounds as well as to mainstream American children (see Au, 1993; Dyson, 2003; Gregory, 1996; Heath, 1983; Moll, 1990).

Vygotsky’s social theory is divided into two facets: (a) cognition is socially constructed and shared; and (b) language/speech is a mediator between both the interpersonal/social and the psychological planes of human function (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Vygotsky (1978, 1986) described cognitive development as the transitional procedure from basic, biological processes to higher, mediated, and self-controlled psychological functions. During the process of cognitive development, thoughts and
language play the main roles in stepping up to higher levels of mental function (Vygotsky, 1986).

This cognitive development begins during early childhood when children begin to use *private speech* (Diaz & Weathersby, 1991). Private speech is talking to oneself out loud when a task is regulated by others; on the other hand, *inner speech* is unspoken and occurs when a task is self-regulated. In other words, when the control of task moves from being regulated by others to being self-regulated, one’s *private speech* (social) turns into *inner speech* (personal; Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Inner speech is not equivalent to ”verbal thought” but recognized as non-dialogical discourse that precedes cognitive function (Francis, 2002). This procedure is the result of a subdivided and transformed constitution, and this transformation takes place in the process of social interactions, such as solving problems, monitoring activities, and absorbing daily life situations (Vygotsky, 1986). Language inevitably is an important mediator in transforming children’s knowledge to the next step of learning and development. In other words, young ESL learners or bilinguals construct their linguistic knowledge and identity through appropriate and challenging socio-cultural interactions within supportive learning environments.

Vygotsky (1962) claimed that the ability to represent the same thoughts in a different language allows a child to be able to “see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations” (p. 110). This assertion is the basis of my study focusing on young bilinguals’ language acquisition and development in two languages. Many research studies, based on Vygotsky’s claim of the possibility of processing one
thought in two languages, confirm that young bilinguals present more systematic
orientations to language compared to monolinguals (see Cummins & Swain, 1986).

Based on Vygotsky’s (1978) conceptualization of language and literacy as a
social construct, scholars and educators create collaborative and interactive learning
activities for young diverse learners as they construct their own meaning-making
processes. For students to be involved in scaffolding and collaborative learning
conditions, these activities should be meaningful, interesting, culturally-responsive, and
involve problem solving (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990). Constructing interactive and
supportive social environments for early bilinguals has been emphasized by numerous
scholars to promote the development of identities as dynamic language learners, while
helping learners to adjust to new socio-cultural contexts (Styslinger, 2002).

Vygotsky’s (1986) emphasis on social interaction is related to dialogue.
Appropriate or challenging dialogue facilitates young children’s ability to learn about the
world surrounding them. Developing written language through school-based instruction
is the basic social system to construct the meaning of discourses “that create both the
inter-mental and intra-mental capacity for verbal thinking” (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990,
p. 195). Socially-interactive dialogue and inner speech are the most important tools in
Vygotskian socio-cultural points of view, and the importance of forming individual
identity by participation in communities is directly connected to Wenger’s (1998)
communities of practices.

**Wenger’s theory of communities of practice.** Wenger (1998) theorizes the
*communities of practice* as self-conceptualization, surrounding unofficial socio-cultural
organizations generated by mutual human engagement. According to Wenger (1998),
everyone belongs to communities of practice as an integral part of daily life, which change over time and allow people to construct their identities. Furthermore, human learning develops through the process of “fashioning identities of full participation” in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 43). Participants acquire official or unofficial membership when they have common beliefs, values, activities, and discourses during their interaction as well as shared resources like tools, symbols, and concepts (Wenger, 1998). For example, people from all over the world might visit the same (world-wide) website, and then they congregate, share, and develop the same interest as members of one community in different virtual spaces. The learning and development of an individual’s cognitive attainment are articulated in socio-cultural practices referring to “learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51).

In other words, socio-cultural experiences involve members in multiple groups that facilitate one’s cognitive and social learning and development.

Bilingual children engaging in new linguistic, social, and cultural contexts as new immigrants have no choice except to be involved in several different communities, such as their homes, mainstream classrooms, peer groups, after-school activities, native language classes, and religious services and activities. Being immersed in and adapting to many different communities allows young diverse children to build various identities interrelated with socio-cultural characteristics. In this process, the complex identities of young children shift and reform so they can fit into the target socio-cultural ways of life. As a result, the young bilinguals represent a total package of “nexus of multimembership” (Wenger, 1998, p. 158). Without self-recognition of shifting hybrid
identity formation, many young diverse learners construct and shape evolving identities as they are engaged in the process of *reconciliation*, which is finding ways to coexist across boundaries of multiple communities of practice. The transformation of *multimembership* into a personal identity, the unique and private work of reconciliation, is achieved through negotiating boundaries across many communities (Wenger).

For example, a young Korean immigrant who has recently moved to the United States is an outsider who struggles with self-negotiation as an Asian, a Korean-speaking student and an immigrant. He is unable to speak the language of the majority and looks different from others in the mainstream English-speaking classroom. It is obvious that everything is new to the outsider until this student absorbs new socio-cultural contexts. On the other hand, this student may become one of the core members who maintain a high level of Korean language proficiency in a Saturday Korean language school for a while. In many cases, the identity of minority students is shaped and influenced by the degree of involvement in each language group and by the interactional and communicative characteristics of social communities (Corson, 2001). Given adequate time to adjust to his many communities of practice, this student negotiates how to become a member in each community while reconciling *multimembership* among many communities of practice.

In light of early bilingualism, two different theories have been presented, and they share the same important perspective, the “socio-cultural” perspective, as well as the importance of the role of language. Vygotsky (1978, 1986) viewed language as a tool to process higher mental processes, and Wenger (1998) believed learning is one of the generative phenomena shaping a learner’s identity within communities of practice. These
two main theories share the perspective that learning is a social practice and that discourse plays a crucial role in one’s development within socio-cultural contexts. Although these theories do not necessarily relate only to young diverse children, three theories are presented below to frame the issues of early bilingual and biliteracy learning and development. In order to investigate the deeper and complex meanings and contexts of early language and literacy learning in two or more languages, it is important to understand the concept of literacy as a social practice.

**Language and literacy as social practices.** In our literate society, many young children are exposed to various kinds of literacy practices before attending school. Research confirms that children’s linguistic development starts long before their first utterance (Bruner, 1978; Teale, 1986). By interacting with and adapting to different social-cultural environments, children continue to accumulate linguistic experiences through family activities even at a young age.

Theorists conceptualize literacy as a socio-culturally embedded written practice by emphasizing that literacy acquisition and development are fundamentally structured in culturally situated settings (Gee, 2001; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978). The definition of early literacy has been described as a child’s ability to read and write in a conventional way; however, scholars with a developmental view have recently added socially constructed procedures as important to children’s literacy (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Gee, 2002; Wasik et al., 2001). Hence, researchers define literacy not only as the functional processes of reading and writing symbols, but also as the thinking, interpretation, and construction of meaning from interaction with printed text in social-cultural contexts (Bruner, 1984; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1994; Heath, 1983, 1989; Moll,
1990; Perez, 1998; Pucell-Gates, 1996, 2000; Teale, 1986). Thus, no literacy practice can be examined without addressing larger social, cultural, and historical perspectives.

Language and literacy reflect the knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors of social groups, and these reflections are evident in both homes and the larger social communities (Heath, 1983; Moll, 1990). Since literacy is embedded in all aspects of one’s life, its use is a major facet of culture in this society (Au, 1993; Christie, 2005; Li, 2002; Neuman & Roskos, 1997, 2003, 2005; Rogoff, 2003). By conceptualizing early literacy as a social process, scholars argue that young learners’ language and literacy practices are socially situated activities that are fundamentally inter-related to socio-cultural/historical/environmental factors. These factors include age, gender, schooling, birth order, availability of literacy resources in homes, environmental factors, and family history as part of children’s linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds. Thus, literacy in the lives of young learners functions as a tool to understanding their social world (Heath, 1983; Moll, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Young learners’ socio-cultural backgrounds influence their literacy practices and development, and their background knowledge is an important source for their literacy development.

**Early Bilingual and Biliteracy Development**

Learning how to read and write in two languages may be stressful for young children. Many scholars and researchers, however, assert that early bilingualism has more advantages than disadvantages, including linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural development (Cheatham, Santos, & Ro, 2007). In order to investigate these three dimensions emerging in early bilingualism, the meaning of “bilingualism,” “bilinguals,”
“biliteracy,” and “English language learners” should be carefully defined. “Bilingualism” is defined as “a person’s ability to process two languages” (William & Snipper, 1990, p. 33). Some scholars use this definition of bilinguals to expand developmental and social contexts—they define bilinguals as people who can functionally utilize two different languages for different purposes in various situations in order to meet given needs (Bialystok, 2001). “Early biliteracy” refers to young children’s written language development in two or more languages to some degree, either simultaneously or successively (Garcia, 2000). “English language learners” refers to students who already maintain proficiency in their first language, but learn English as their second language according to situational needs (Baker, 2001). Language proficiency in two languages refers to young bilinguals’ functional and communicative competence in any context in both languages (Bialystok, 2001). Biliteracy development reflects both the cognitive procedure of individuals and the involved family, community, and society, using two written language systems (Romaine, 1995).

Bilingual education does not refer to a single methodology or program; rather, it is an educational approach that encompasses various kinds of programs or curricula that promote distinctive goals for language minorities (Olvando, Coller, & Combs, 2003). The goal of bilingual education in the United States is to maintain and develop the heritage language while also developing English proficiency (Shin, 2005), and students learn best when learning experiences are embedded in their natural society, culture, and language (Gumperz, 1996).

However, bilingual education has been recently viewed as a way to transition into English-only classrooms in the United States, especially after the implementation of “No
Child Left Behind” (Baker, 1988, 2001). There has been heated controversy over the implementation of bilingual education as the best way of facilitating English language learners’ social and academic success, defined as assimilation into mainstream society in the United States (Cummins, 2000; Crawford, 2000; Orvando & Perez, 2000). In homes within the United States where parents insist on using their native language, children are already beginning to have exposure to both languages. “English . . . is a powerful influence in the United States, particularly through the medium of television and other aspects of the popular culture of the country. It cannot, therefore, be assumed that the child’s language exposure excludes English.” (Tabors & Snow, 2001, p. 161). As children move out of the home for education and socialization, English is the main language in the United States. Thus, young children are compelled to use English even in preschool settings as much as possible to assimilate to the dominant language.

With this linguistic environment within the United States, in situations in which a child is raised in a bilingual home where family members use both English and the heritage language daily, Tabors and Snow (2001) characterize these children as “at-risk bilinguals.” Because of the link between oral language development and literacy, this means that the child is also less likely to be biliterate. Tabors and Snow suggest that some parents could attend to English literacy to such an extent that the child has little native language and literacy support at home. Moreover, they suggest that in early childhood education settings and elementary school programs in which teachers and children speak English only, the child will develop English language and literacy while little to no maintenance of the child’s native language will occur. “Bilingual children in a mainstream English classroom are faced with the task of learning to understand and
speak English, and beginning simultaneously to learn to read and write English, without the benefit of academic instruction in their first language” (Tabors & Snow, 2001).

With these growing concerns about early bilingualism, I will describe the socio-cultural perspectives of early bilingualism, especially focusing on early biliteracy development. The socio-cultural dimensions that profoundly affect early bilinguals have been explained in light of several influential case studies revealing several dimensions of the lives of young bilinguals. The purpose of this section is to review the major studies that examine young learners’ literacy acquisition and development in two languages.

**Bilingual/biliteracy development in diverse social contexts.** Gregory and William (2000) reveal a multiplicity of literacy practices in the lives of young children at home, and in their community and classrooms, through their longitudinal study of thirteen Bangladeshi children and their parents. The authors took a unique perspective of contrasting various types of literacy practices across several cultures, ethnic groups, and generations in Spitalfields, London. They also illustrate the teachers’ collaborative scaffolding, which revealed the *wealth* of literacy traditions and *funds of knowledge* that children bring to school from their homes and community (Moll, 1990; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). Scaffolding literacy practices at home and at school helped students develop literacy skills in a continuum rather than in contrasts. Their study suggested that the teacher’s role is to help students to become aware of their knowledge and skills (i.e., what they already have) and to connect and facilitate various languages and literacy practices. Literacy practices were mostly perceived as fun activities for the English monolingual families; on the other hand, literacy usage was considered as stressful work for the Bangladeshi families.
The authors stress the role of a “mediator of literacy,” which means literacy can be used not only as one of the important skills available to others and useful in accomplishing specific literacy purposes, but also “any resources for literacy learning” (Gregory & William, 2000, p. 11). Language and literacy play an important role as tools for the mediation of early learning and development, and this conceptualization reflects Vygotsky’s socio-cultural views of language and literacy. In addition, the synthesized concepts of literacy as a cultural mediational model of reading and syncretism were emphasized with the role of educators to provide scaffolding experiences and rich environments (Gregory & William, 2000).

This study emphasized the importance of providing “syncretic literacy,” which means literacy usage which “merges not simply linguistic codes or texts, but different activities,” especially during the interaction of siblings (Gregory & William, 2000, p. 13). For example, when siblings read books at home, the older sibling used reading strategies that he or she learned in the mainstream English school, but the use of strategies also reflected what occurred in the community classes, such as Qur’anic or Bengali classes. Literacy is viewed as a social practice, which is not only a reading and writing process but also the major mediator for getting on in life.

Another study conducted by Volk and Acosta (2001) analyzed the socio-cultural and interactional practice of literacy for the focal children’s bilingual environment, such as their home, bilingual classroom, church and Sunday school, and community, for a full school year. The complex literacy lives of three Spanish dominant, mainland Puerto Rican kindergarten students were investigated by applying ethnographic techniques with participant observations, interviews, and audio recordings. The researchers focused on
the children’s literacy supporters and their beliefs, and the related environment, as well as the nature of literacy events that the children co-constructed with these supporters.

In this study, the literacy events had three characteristics: collaborative activities, socio-cultural practices, and complex constructions. Collaborative construction of literacy events emerged in an integration of various resources in young bilinguals’ lives—such as culture, religion, first and second language knowledge and school experiences—along with the transformation of evolving identities. The various communities of each individual involved were influential in attuning to the socio-cultural construction and analysis of syncretic literacy practices in different contexts (Volk & Acosta, 2001, 2003).

Literacy research within linguistically, ethnically, and socio-culturally diverse groups has been prominent in the 21st century. Increasing numbers of immigrants from numerous countries including European, East Asian, and Middle-Eastern regions have prompted researchers to become interested in different literacy practices related to each group’s authentic home culture as having family literacy practices. In order to explore different kinds of literacy practices among these diverse groups, much literacy research has been conducted in African-American or Latino communities, but studies in Asian-American/Canadian homes have been scarce. In one of these studies, Li (2002) extensively documented four Chinese immigrant families’ home literacy usage and development in Saskatoon, Canada, based on conceptualizing literacy as a learning process in socio-culturally situated practices. By framing language and literacy as socio-culturally encoded practices in their bilingual home, the focal students and their families in this study reflected their ethnic, social, and cultural literacy interwoven in the families’
physical and social culture as Chinese immigrants in a rural community in the Canadian West.

To investigate the contextualized literacy in their own society and culture, Li’s research is a deep investigation into family literacy practices focusing on four focal children from four different households to investigate spoken and written activities. More specifically, Li explored the relationship between home literacy and culture through ethnographic methodology. She also described genuine literacy practices, including parental beliefs and influences, cultural conflicts, influences on the use of literacy by social integration into Canadian society, the role of media, and the nature of literacy practices in four homes, the school, and the community.

Through this intensive naturalistic case study research, Li asserts that individual students possess their own purposes, audience, and realities with regard to literacy practices at home. Therefore, educators should not make generalizations about Asian-American home literacy practices, nor should they expect Asian parents or students to work harder based on assumptions about Asians being hard working. Research shows that immigrant families have their own ways of raising children to be successful in schools as competent literates. Families from other socio-cultural backgrounds also possess unique background knowledge, different from European-American homes. This study itself presents significant influences not only on unique home literate culture and practices among Asians, but also on the articulation of how students’ previous experiences related to home culture and language/literacy as socio-cultural background knowledge had been valuable in their long literate path.
**Heritage language and identity loss.** Young immigrants have an urgency to survive and to feel a sense of belonging in new communities and environments with native English speaking peers, such as in classrooms and playgrounds. For young immigrants, the fundamental factors that contribute to learning English and prevent segregation in the classroom are the acceptance by non-alienation of peers and being involved in the dominant society (Tse, 2001). These socio-cultural factors cause young minority students to adopt negative perspectives of their heritage culture, identity, and tongue (Corson, 2001; Crawford, 2000; Cummins, 1999; Fillmore, 1991a; Li, 2002; Tse, 2001; William & Snipper, 1990). The socio-cultural and political environments, as well as regional educational settings in the United States, influence young bilinguals to have low expectations about maintaining their mother tongue, but to quickly acquire English in order to survive in monolingual schooling (Tabor & Snow, 2001; Tse, 2001). Although new language learning does not necessarily contribute to the loss of first language and identity (Fillmore, 1991b), when young immigrant children acquire English language proficiency as they are daily exposed to an English-only environment, the biggest concern is that they will lose their heritage identity and language (Crawford, 2000).

According to Tse (2001), the main reasons for the loss of their heritage language are a strong desire for (a) a sense of belonging to a dominant group, (b) limited exposure and opportunities to develop their mother tongue, and (c) the power of the English language. One of the misconceptions is that home language learning will hamper their English language learning. Furthermore, Fillmore (1991a) warns of the negative social and emotional issues later on in the lives of young immigrants due to losing their first language. For example, many Asian students lose their mother tongue as they attain
English language proficiency. As a result, the social and emotional connections between the young immigrants and their family and community, who are interactive and supportive in many ways, do not last long enough (Fillmore, 1991a, 1991b). Cho and Krashen (1998) investigated Korean-American students who lost their Korean language proficiency. In this study, every student was fluent in Korean prior to entering all English schooling, whether they were born in America or immigrated to the United States. After these students became proficient in English, one of their greatest frustrations that resulted is the social, cultural, linguistic, and emotional disconnection between them and their families. This can lead to serious social-emotional problems later on in their lives (Fillmore, 1991a, 1991b).

Children who are raised in a bilingual home (e.g., both parents speak English and Korean) while living in an English speaking country, are called “at-risk bilinguals” (Tabors & Snow, 2001). Some parents value English literacy to such an extent that the children have little native language and literacy support at home. In addition, in early childhood education settings and elementary school programs where the teachers and children speak in only English, children will develop English language and literacy quickly while little to no maintenance will occur in the children’s native language development (Crawford, 1996; Cummins, 1999; Tabors & Snow, 2001).

Many researchers have found that the preschool and early elementary years may be the most important time to establish oral and literacy acquisition in two languages. These advocates are particularly concerned that “young children are highly susceptible to losing their first language if the first language is not strongly maintained during the preschool years” (Tabors, 1997, p. 4). Therefore, a developmental and intensive first-
language program throughout the early elementary years is strongly recommended in order to establish literacy in the first language (Tabors, 1997). It is widely known, however, that first language schools, which generally meet weekly on Saturday or Sunday, have neither provided enough opportunities nor met expectations of young bilinguals compared to their constant exposure to English speaking settings (Bialystok, 2001). Although once a week of home language practice is not comprehensive, these first language schools play a major role in forming young student’s identity by practicing home language and culture in a safe zone (Pak, 2003).

Identity confusion and heritage language loss are related matters because both issues are caused by the same problem and have the same result. Many socio-cultural bilingual scholars report that the connection between young learners’ first language loss and identity crisis is due to their negative self-ethnic and linguistic conceptualization (Corson, 2001; Fillmore, 1991a, 2000; Gregory & William, 2000; Norton, 2000; William & Snipper, 1990). In particular, Gee (1996) explains identity crisis as the tension between heritage and the dominant language in the new social setting, and he claims that one’s identity depends on the acquisition and development of languages throughout one’s life.

According to similar findings on biliteracy practices in different studies of various socio-cultural communities, language and literacy can be supported in a variety of contexts along with hybrid identities of literacy users. Vygotsky (1978, 1986) argues that the shaping of one’s identity is influenced by language and literacy learning because individuals’ and communities’ speech/dialogue represent their specific viewpoints, including socially constructed identities (Bryzzheva, 2002). In addition, these children’s identity formation is influenced by discourses that are formulated through the
communities of practice that the young diverse learners belong to (Gee, 2002; Wenger, 1998). Therefore, socio-cultural discourse and dialogue represent an identity kit, which includes devices such as ways with words, meanings, values, beliefs, thoughts, interactions, attitudes, etc (Gee, 2002). As shown in two different research studies, hybrid, situated, and syncretic identities from this postmodern and socio-cultural perspective is a package of complex, dynamic, relational, shifting, flexible, ongoing, situated, and developmental self-concepts (Manyak, 2001; McCarthey, 2002; McCarthey & Moje, 2002; Wenger, 1998).

However, there are other literatures and sample cases representing different outcomes from the above. These opposing opinions exist because some people retain their heritage national/ethnic identity although they do not speak their heritage language. In such cases, scholars find a basis to argue that identity and language do not go hand-in-hand; however, scholars cannot overlook the hybrid concept of identity formation and negotiation. Even someone who grows up not speaking his/her heritage language may be affected by family history, surrounding culture, heritage communities, family educational history, and other environmental factors. As the above scholars emphasized, identity is hybrid and flexible, dependent upon beliefs and value systems (Miller, 2000; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

Bialystok and Hakuta (1999) confirm that “social factors conspire to ease the effort of young children by providing a nurturing environment, simplified input, educational opportunities, cooperative peers, and other supporting aspects of a social context that facilitate the acquisition of any language” (p. 178). The combination of all efforts and optimal education in rich scaffolding socio-cultural contexts will make it
possible for young diverse learners to maintain heritage language and identity. In this socio-cultural perspective of early bilingual/biliteracy development, language learning is considered as learning in general, and the linguistic and cognitive mechanics of language and literacy are not considered even with its own importance (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Cross-language transfer within the linguistic perspective and meta-cognitive/linguistic issues in the cognitive aspect are explained in the following section.

**Linguistic perspectives: (cross) language transfer between L1 and L2.**

Literacy acquisition in the first language helps build second language literacy acquisition. Numerous scholars support the theory of positive transference, such as the transference of acquired literacy skills, from the first to the second language (see Garcia, 2000). Both the background knowledge and literacy skills of a young learners’ first language play a detrimental role in second language schooling (Thomas & Collier, 2002). The effect of transfer in early bilingualism is explained as a process of building on what young diverse learners already know in their first language to their new skills and knowledge in the second language (William & Snipper, 1990).

Historically, language transfer has been investigated within two different perspectives in the realm of bilingualism and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Major psycholinguists in SLA, such as Krashen (1982) and Cook (1986), named this phenomenon “cross-linguistic transfer.” Cross-Language Transfer (CLT) is the most influential hypotheses on early bilingualism according to Cummins’s (1981b, 1986) Interdependence Hypothesis and Threshold Hypothesis.
Interdependence Hypothesis (IH). IH proposes the existence of transferable linguistic knowledge and skills between two different language systems. In the author’s original quotation, Lx refers to L1 and Ly represents L2:

to the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Ly. (Cummins, 1981b, p. 29)

Proficiency in one language can be a strong predictor of one’s ability to learn another language; thus, second language learning is facilitated by already existing knowledge and skills in young students’ native language. (Cummins, 1981b)

Several researchers applied IH and received strong credibility as they supported IH through empirical studies. For example, Lopez and Greenfield (2004) investigated Cummins’ language IH between oral language proficiency and phonological awareness in Spanish-English bilinguals who enrolled in a Head Start program. For both languages, the Pre-Language Assessment Scale 2000 measured expressive and receptive oral and pre-literacy knowledge, and the Phonological Sensitivity Test measured rhyming, alliteration, and sentence segmenting skills. As a result of study, 100 early Hispanic bilinguals’ test scores show that Spanish language acquisition and competence facilitates meta-linguistic skills in English language learning.

Many researchers have found similarities in the syllabic structures of two Spanish and English (see Barrera, 1984; Chiappel & Siegel, 1999; Durgunoglu, 1998, Durgunoglu et al., 1993; Garcia, 1998; Jimenez et al., 1995, 1996). They discovered that the phonological awareness and word recognition in Spanish plays an interdependent role in the decoding ability of English. The more proficient the young learners’ first language acquisition is, the more feasible their second language development will be, which supports the IH proposed by Cummins (1981b, 1986, 1989).
Bauer, Hall, and Kruth (2002) performed a case study of a two to three-year old bilingual’s code-switching and mixing to examine the interdependence of two different languages. They investigated the natural linguistic response of a young bilingual with three adult caregivers and pragmatic roles of language as they related to play contexts including daily activities for a year. The authors found that the focal child tends to switch his choice of language between English and German depending on the linguistic and cognitive flexibility of the caregiver’s speech and needs, including the interdependence of languages. Therefore, Bauer et al. (2002) provide evidence that young bilinguals are strategic code-switchers, when they do not know a word in one language, do not find the equivalent word for direct transition, and/or when they use the weaker language.

On the other hand, another study found no evidence of code-switching while engaging in challenging cognitive tasks in bilingual preschoolers’ private speech (Diaz & Weathersby, 1991). Most empirical studies, however, support positive cognitive and linguistic flexibility by confirming that code-mixing/switching is one of the most common characteristics among bilingual students (Bauer, 2000; Bauer et al., 2002; see also Garcia, 2000; Grosjean, 1982; Yoon, 1996; Shin, 2005). The relationship between L1 and L2 is “interdependence” (see Cummins, 1989; Olvando, Collier & Combs, 2003), so it is natural for bilinguals to switch codes, and to borrow words through code-mixing as many bilingual scholars support Cummins’ IH: “some aspects of linguistic proficiency are cross-lingual” (Cummins & Swain, 1986, p. xvii).

**Threshold Hypothesis (TH).** Bilinguals’ necessity of their “level of competence” in the procedure of developing their second language, especially for the better application and procedure in written texts, is called **Threshold Hypothesis** (Cummins, 1979, 1981a;
Cummins & Swain, 1986). The threshold level of proficiency—a high level of competence and performance—in both languages contributes to linguistic, cognitive, and academic benefits for young bilinguals’ further development. Bilinguals must attain the language competence threshold as a prerequisite to permit transferring cognitive demands on language use (Cummins, 2000).

Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, and Kuehn (1990) performed a study on adult ESL learners to determine the reading and writing relationship between L1 (Chinese and Japanese) and L2 (English) languages as well as between modalities of reading and writing. This study confirms Cummins’ inter-lingual transfer and threshold hypotheses. It suggests that the transfer of literacy skills emerges in all languages but that the pattern of transfer differs for Chinese and Japanese bilinguals. As for modalities, reading strategies are more easily transferred than writing skills from L1 to L2. The level of English language proficiency, background knowledge, and cultural literacy practices, however, causes individual differences in acquiring literacy skills in English.

Another study conducted by Cobo-Lewis, Eilers, Pearson and Umbel (2002) investigated the difference in the academic performance of two languages for Spanish-English young bilinguals. In order to answer this research question, researchers applied 18 sub-domains of language and literacy tests, as well as other variables like socio-economic status, instructional methods in school, and language spoken at home. The researchers assert that this study proves Cummins’ theories on IH and TH by showing that poor academic skills in Spanish have a negative impact on the academic achievement in English.
Over a period of two decades, Cummins confirms that acquired literacy skills of young bilinguals transfer to the second literacy acquisition. To support this, much research on young bilinguals showed extensive data on code-mixing and switching, and usage of cognates for translation from one language to another (Barrera, 1984; Bauer, 2000; Bauer et al., 2002; Diaz & Weathersby, 1991; Garcia, 1998; see Grosjean, 1982; Jimenez et al., 1995, 1996). Cummins (1989, 2000) concludes that interdependent language transfer occurs more efficiently when young bilinguals acquire a threshold level of cognitive and strategic knowledge and development in their first language. During this procedure, the direction of transfer is almost always from a simpler-structured language to a complex or ambiguously structured language (Bialystok, 2001). Bialystok (2001) concludes Cummins’s threshold hypothesis as a formal incorporation of one’s proficiency level into the effects on bilingualism.

The strong evidence for cross-language transfer supports a positive and socio-cultural view of young learners’ first language as well as the importance of young bilinguals’ L1 knowledge and development. This view values the knowledge that has already been built in the early lives of young bilinguals, serving as valuable assets. Cummins’ important hypotheses were proposed based on Vygotsky’s claim of early learning and development, the role of educators in providing scaffolding within social interactions, and the possibility for young learners to represent the same thought in different languages (Cummins & Swain, 1986). Much research supports the IH and TH, confirming meta-cognitive/linguistic benefits by inter-lingual transferring phenomena. The following section examines cognitive perspectives in early bilingualism, especially focusing on meta-cognitive/linguistic awareness.
Cognitive perspectives: Meta-cognitive/linguistic awareness. Young bilingual’s cognitive advantages over monolinguals have historically been one of the most controversial issues in early childhood education. The basic issue of these historical debates is simple – language is either a major or minor part of cognition. Jean Piaget minimized the role of language in one’s cognition, and claimed that bilingualism has little or no influence on a young one’s cognitive development (Baker, 1988). On the other hand, Vygotsky (1986) conceptualized language as an important tool in processing one’s thought. Therefore, his view, which is the more strongly supported by current scholars, is that bilingualism can have a profound effect on young learners’ learning and development depending on social interactions and contexts (Hakuta, 1990). The evidence of quantitative data sets confirms that early bilinguals have meta-cognitive/linguistic advantages with cognitive flexibility. Meta-cognitive and linguistic awareness are important strategies in the literacy development of young bilinguals (Garcia, 1999, 2000).

Meta-cognitive awareness. Meta-cognitive areas in bilingual reading, i.e., how bilinguals recognize themselves as reading in two languages, the characteristics of reading tasks, and the reading strategy employment and transfer between two languages, have been investigated (see Garcia, 1999, 2000). Several researchers documented meta-cognitive transfer of reading strategies between Spanish as L1 and English as L2. For example, Jimenez et al. (1995) qualitatively analyzed the case of a proficient Latina bilingual sixth-grader to investigate cognitive and meta-cognitive knowledge during her reading process in both languages. These authors agreed with Vygotsky’s (1962) view that second language acquisition is “conscious and deliberate” from the beginning (p. 109). To find out how a proficient reader applies complex reading strategies, Jimenez,
Garcia, and Pearson examined four dimensions: the purpose of reading, navigation skills for unknown vocabulary, interaction with texts and how one makes use of being literate in two languages. Data from think-alouds, retelling, interviews, a prior knowledge evaluation, and a questionnaire were compared to both the data of a successful English monolingual reader and a Latina bilingual who did not succeed in reading in school. The finding suggests that explicit knowledge in two languages promotes a bilingual’s reading comprehension. Unknown vocabulary, however, was a big obstacle for proficient bilinguals. This study also proved the importance of the linguistic and socio-cultural familiarity of reading passages for both proficient monolinguals and bilinguals. Jimenez et al. (1995) concluded that seeing oneself as literate can transfer from the L1 to the L2. The following year, the same three researchers published a larger qualitative study assessing 11 Spanish-English bilingual middle-schoolers (eight successful English readers and three marginally successful English readers) and three monolingual English speakers who were proficient readers. This study found that the application of reading strategies of the eight successful bilingual readers did not show much difference for the three monolingual proficient readers. Employing monitoring skills for comprehension, background knowledge, inferencing, and meaning construction were identified via think-alouds, reading passages, questionnaires, interviews, and retelling tasks by these successful readers. Successful bilingual readers identified that several reading strategies, such as monitoring, questioning, rereading, and evaluating were transferred to second language reading (Jimenez, Garcia & Pearson, 1996). Furthermore, many biliteracy researchers confirm that young bilinguals employ specific meta-linguistic reading strategies and knowledge acquired in one language to reading in the other language.

**Meta-linguistic awareness.** Meta-linguistic ability refers to one’s ability to be flexible or abstract in language use in many different contexts (Hakuta, 1990) and one’s capacity to use knowledge about a particular language (Bialystok, 2001). “Meta” refers to a higher level of generality rather than an explicit structure of a particular language; however, language structure, complexity, and the similarity between two languages play a crucial role in young bilinguals’ language acquisition (Bialystok, 2001). In other words, the characteristics of linguistic factors in each language cannot be separated in the study of bilingualism, especially in comparison research between bilinguals and monolinguals. Verhoeven (1994) asserts that reading development in a second language is highly dependent on the structure and characteristics of the target language.

Bialystok (1997) confirms the importance of supporting first language development, which shows the cognitive advantages of bilingual language learners’ advanced meta-linguistic abilities. In a large scale experiment, two groups of bilingual children, 54 Mandarin Chinese English speakers and 47 French-English speakers, and one group of 34 monolingual English speaking children were assessed by an initial screening test to confirm their acquisition of prints by reciting the alphabet, recognizing words, and printing their names. Although all 137 fourth and fifth graders demonstrated similar performance in the written forms of English through screening tests, the students’ knowledge evaluated by several assessments (e.g., Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised, Moving Word Problem, and Word Size Problem), depended on their age and bilingual experiences including the characteristics of their first language. Once young
bilinguals recognized and overcame the possible confusion between different systems of written forms, experiences in two different languages enabled young children to learn where to look (moving word task) and what to look for (word size task). Bilingual students showed more advanced understanding of symbolic representation of print as encoded in written texts. Another finding from this large quantitative study is that young bilinguals’ various experiences of written systems have meta-linguistic and cognitive advantages with the characteristics of linguistic transfer across languages (Bialystok, 1997).

Many researchers have studied other languages as L1, such as Spanish, French, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. For example, Durgunoglu’s (1998) study found that the literacy development of Spanish is similar to the literacy development of English for monolinguals in the interdependence and similarity in word recognition, spelling skills, and phonological awareness. Studies in meta-cognitive/linguistic skills comparing L1 and L2 are highly focused on the relationship between Spanish and English. Similarly, Francis (2000) found that all Spanish-Náhuatl bilingual students transferred literacy skills. In a study of the influences of phonology and syntactic awareness in young learners’ word-spelling achievement in the French immersion classroom, young bilinguals’ spelling development was related to the auditory, not syntactic, awareness (Cormier & Kelson, 2000). Similarly, the features of the Chinese language that differ from English have an influence on literacy development for Chinese-American students. Chinese characters more closely resemble a morpheme in English, and most modern spoken words are formed by two- or three- character words (Chang, 1998). Many studies conclude that Chinese literacy proficiency brings about positive effects on English
language acquisition (Chang, 1998; Bialystok, 1997; McCarthey et al., 2004). In Japanese, language is symbolized by a combination of characters and syllables, and it does not mark a definite/indefinite contrast, which causes great difficulty in learning English writing (Hakuta, 1976). On the other hand, the Korean written system represents syllables; thus, Korean-English bilingual students showed better symbol-sound correspondence (Koda, 1998; Shin, 2005). While inherent structural differences between Korean and English cause difficulty in acquiring English grammatical morphemes, Korean and Japanese share morpho-syntactical similarity (Shin & Milroy, 1999). Together the findings from these studies suggest that the skills and knowledge in one’s first language influences the course of second language acquisition and development depending on the language-specific similarities and differences.

Early bilingualism influences students’ meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic acquisition and development by identifying some unique ways of learning from a bilingual perspective (Bialystok, 2001; Garcia, 1998). Early language and literacy skills, including syntax, semantics, morphology, phonological awareness as well as expressive discourse, will be helpful for young bilinguals to develop “meta” understanding to transfer to the second language and literacy acquisition and development (Lopez & Greenfield, 2004).

Several major theories and issues related to socio-cultural, linguistic, and cognitive dimensions were explained along with influential empirical research studies as supporting evidence. Young immigrant children’s first language acquisition facilitates second language learning and development. Bilinguals maintain more analytic orientation to language than monolinguals (Cummins & Swain, 1986). Furthermore, the shaping of
young bilinguals’ multiple identities through cultural practices in different communities was explained with the hope for them to develop and maintain their lifelong heritage identity. These three theories related to early bilingualism have been grounded in the social, linguistic, and cognitive issues. Therefore, homes, communities, and schools should support simultaneous and additive bilingualism in diverse social, linguistic (e.g., phonological, morphological, and syntactical advantages) and cognitive perspectives (Lopez & Greenfield, 2004; Romaine, 1995).

**Characteristics of bilingual/biliterate children.**

**Home environment.** As Tabors and Snow (2001) assert, “The early language environment of young bilingual children, whether intentionally constructed by families or merely happenstance, will have an important impact on children’s later language and literacy development.” For this reason, parents who intend to foster biliteracy and bilingualism for their children should purposely construct an environment to do just that. Indeed, the result of Bus and van Ijzendoorn’s (1995) research suggests that children with more reading experiences not only had greater language growth but also better outcome measures in reading achievement and emergent literacy (Bus, 2001).

Even after children know how to read, being exposed to printed materials and observing family members’ literacy activities for purposes in their daily lives accelerates children’s reading skills (McGee & Richgels, 2003). Other research indicated that parent-child conversations, for example, during meals helped develop children’s language skills (Purcell-Gates, 1996). Kindergarteners’ and first graders’ knowledge of written language, that is, “print concepts, letter knowledge, invented spelling, and word identification,” are
associated with attempts by parents to help their children learn about print (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001, p. 22).

At home, parents’ attempts with interactive storybook reading can be very helpful. According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), intervention programs with interactive storybook reading accelerate children’s receptive language and concepts of print. In particular, interactive activities with primary caregivers for at-risk kindergarteners help motivation for reading, awareness of story-line and structure (Klesius & Griffith, 1996). Bean (1997) also emphasizes a dialogic approach, in which “the learners learn more about the content of the text and the teacher learns more about the learner” (p. 64). In this case, dialogic parent-child book reading, in which the adult actively listens to the child, asks questions, adds information, and fosters the child’s sophisticated descriptions of book material, is more effective at promoting literacy skills in young children than traditional story time in which a parent reads and the child listens (Bus, 2001). Moreover, according to Morrow and Weinstein (1986), creating a library corner that was visible, accessible, and attractive in early childhood classrooms increased children’s use of library materials (cited in Roskos & Neuman, 2001, p. 282). This too applies to bilingual families’ homes whereby books in the child’s first language (e.g., Korean) are put out for the children. Thus, parents’ education, efforts, goals, and home environment are critical to improve preschooler’s biliteracy education.

**Developmental stages of the language of bilinguals.** Children go through developmental stages as they acquire a second language. Tabors (1997, cited in Tabors & Snow, 2002, p. 167) asserts that “children who are exposed to a second language in an out-of-home setting such as English in an early childhood classroom move through a
specific developmental sequence that includes four phases: home language use, a
nonverbal period in the new language, telegraphic and formulaic language, and
productive use of the new language.” McLaughlin, Blanchard and Osanai (1995) also
suggest that after children’s attempts to communicate in their first language, they enter a
period in which they do not talk at all in the second stage; this is a period during which
children begin to actively crack the code of the second language.

In the third stage, which shows telegraphic speech and the use of formulas,
children are ready to communicate with others. Children “use a few content words
without function words or morphological markers” and “children use prefabricated
chunks long before they have any understanding of what they mean” (Fillmore, 1976,
cited in McLaughlin et al., 1995, p. 3). Eventually, children keep, develop and begin to
produce language for their own use. According to McLaughlin et al., “they may form
new utterances by using formulaic patterns with the names for objects” and “apply newly
acquired syntactic rules to develop productive control over the language.”

However, the rate of children’s second language development is related to
individual differences. Four factors play a role: motivation, exposure, age, and
personality (McLaughlin et al., 1995). In many cases, children who are older, have
greater exposure to English, have higher motivation to communicate in English, and have
more outgoing personalities tend to move more quickly through the developmental
sequence (McLaughlin et al., 1995).

*Characteristics of Korean literacy* (*Han’gŭl*). To look closely at Korean literacy
development, we should know about the characteristics of Korean literacy. When I
learned the English language, I found remarkable differences between the English
literacy system and the Korean literacy system (called “Han’gūl”). Han’gūl is a non-
Roman alphabetic script in which one consonant always combines with one vowel to
make a basic syllable. These consonants and vowels must be combined to make a word
(Kim, 2008).

Although its basic unit of representation is a phoneme, Han’gūl is unique in that
one or more consonants are always combined with a vowel to form a syllable, such as
VC, CV, CVC, CVCC (Koda, 1988). According to Koda, multiple Han’gūl symbols in a
single syllable are packaged in a square-like block. Taylor and Taylor (1995) also
confirm that “Han’gūl is used in reading and writing like a syllabary in that two or more
letters are packaged into a syllable block” (p. 230).

As an illustration, a simple CV block (ŭ/da/, meaning “all”) contains two
symbols: one consonant (Ŭ/d/) and one vowel (Ŭ/a/). A more complex CVC block ἢ
(Ŭ/l/), meaning “moon”) is made up of three symbols: two consonants (Ŭ/d/), (Ŭ/l/) and
one vowel (Ŭ/a; Taylor, 1980, cited in Koda, 1998; Yi, 2008). It is believed that the
syllable blocks are the basic units of visual processing during reading and spelling of
Han’gūl words (Taylor, 1980). The logic is two-fold: (a) blocks are easier to distinguish
visually than individual phonemic symbols and (b) syllables are perceptually more
prominent than phonemes (Koda, 1998). Although one could generate about 12,700
blocks simply by packaging different combinations of the 24 basic symbols,
approximately 2000 blocks are in common use (Taylor & Olson, 1995, cited in Koda,
1998). Thus, Korean readers develop compound phonemic awareness through their daily
practice in syllable-block formations with phonemic symbols when reading and spelling
Han’gūl words, because Han’gūl is an alphabetic syllabary. Scholars including Taylor
and Taylor (1995, 2000) assert that Han’gŭl is an alphabet in that each letter codes a phoneme. For the Korean student, learning Korean literacy (Han’gŭl) can help preschoolers transfer and accelerate the development of phonemic awareness and rules, such as grammar, to English literacy.

**Code-switching.** Code-switching is an important characteristic of bilingual and biliteracy learners, according to much research. For example, Genesee (1996) found that “somewhere around the age of two, children’s language use depended more on the language their parents used; thus, even young bilinguals display a sensitivity to socio-cultural norms and expectations of their communicative contexts” (p. 54). Another reason for bilingual children’s code-switching is their cognitive needs (Bach, 2006). Therefore, Genesee found that children are strategic code-switchers, when they do not know the word in one language, do not find the equivalent word for direct transition, and/or when they use the weaker language (2006).

Bauer, Hall and Kruth (2002) focused on the focal child’s bilingual usage (code-switching) with adult caregivers and pragmatic roles of language as they relate to play contexts. Bauer et al. (2002) conducted a year-long case study of the focal (two to three-year-olds) child’s bilingual usage in play contexts including daily activities with three adult caregivers. Different analysis was used to answer different research questions. First, to find out about the types of play the focal child engaged in, she did a context analysis of talk to find the roles of participants and the goal of activities. Second, to find out how the focal child constructs her involvement in play, talk was coded in speech acts (e.g., agreeing, confirming, describing, etc.) and Bauer did a frequency count for each category. From this research, Bauer et al. found that the focal child tended to switch her
choice of language between English and German depending on the caregiver’s speech in play contexts. Therefore, they concluded that children’s play with bilingual adult caregivers can help them develop into pragmatically different bilinguals with reference to functions and code-usage. Furthermore, a full accounting of the context in which such development takes place is required to understand both the processes and outcomes of bilingual development.

*Sibling effects in biliteracy practices.* Within the area of bilingual/biliteracy research, siblings’ effects on literacy interaction and practices have been investigated as one of the characteristics of bilingual homes (Dinah, 2000; Kovac, 2002). For the literacy practices at home among siblings, an important task for older siblings is to act as a “school-home go-between” for their younger siblings (Volk & Acosta, 2001, p. 197). In addition, “syncretic literacy,” in which older siblings inter-contextualize school literacy practices at home when they do literacy activities with younger siblings, is very important. Gregory (2001) conducted a one-year study of 16 families (eight Bangladeshi and eight Anglo-Londoners). Each family had a child aged 9 to 11 years old with at least one younger sibling. The result of this study suggest that the older siblings can be familiarized with the content of literacy lessons and school procedures while guiding the younger siblings; at the same time, the younger siblings can learn school “meanings” in a comfortable environment. “Younger children’s learning is characterized by repetition or imitation of older child’s action or discourse, echoing, listening, requesting help, challenging and general practice” (Gregory, 2001, p. 318). Gregory also emphasized the role of older siblings’ providing structured lessons, praise, and opportunities “in an understandable form to their younger siblings during play at home” (2005, p. 22). He
concludes that these kinds of literacy practices appear to set up the younger siblings for later success in formal schooling. Drury (2007) agreed with this conclusion by confirming Gregory’s “synergy” effect on siblings, and maintained the older siblings strengthen their own learning by acting “as adjutants in each other’s learning” (p. 531).

There are other studies in the literature that emphasized not only sibling influences but also sibling similarity or differences depending on the birth order in bilingual homes. In Shin’s (2002) study, Korean-American bilingual homes presented influential outcomes stimulated by older or younger sibling. In a survey study of Korean parents of second-generation Korean-American children under the age of 18 years old, Shin found the following: “across birth order categories, the children spoke more English (or more mixed Korean and English) and less Korean with their parents once they entered school. Even before entering school, however, fewer second-born children (66.3%) than firstborn children (78.8%) spoke Korean with their parents, and even fewer third-born children (42.9%) did so” (p. 105). Importantly, Shin concluded that the first-born children brought English exposure so that later-born children naturally chose English in very early stages. Therefore, the first-born might hinder all siblings in becoming bilinguals and biliterates, a finding that contradicts the other previous research on the effects of older siblings as facilitators, mediators and home-teachers (Gregory & Williams, 1996; Shin, 2002)

Linguistic Ideology and the Transnational Korean Community

Linguistic ideology among Korean identity groups. Two terms, ideology and language, have been frequently used in recent sociolinguistic, anthropological, and
cultural studies (Woodlard & Schieffelin, 1994). While various scholars in these fields adopt the two terms in various ways, Woodlard and Schieffelin (1994) mainly focused on ideology of languages, which is a political and socio-cultural stance of language application in one culture. Though I differentiated between language and literacy in the other sections, in this section, I use a combined language and literacy ideology, which I call “linguistic ideology.” This term includes both oral and written language unless the original literature address as “language ideology.”

Language ideology refers to a belief system in which language users recognize the concept of language in situated contexts, power relations, and constant reproduction of socio-political structure (Eagleton, 1991; Hawkins, 2000; Silverstein, 1998; Van Dijk, 1998; Woodlard, 1998). Each language carries its own power and meaning, constructed by language users embedded in their situated contexts (Bourdieu, 1981; Gee, 1996; Norton, 2001; Pennycook, 1994, 1998). For example, the term “world English” or “official English” received attention during 20th Century (Pennycook, 1994, 1998), because this official recognition of one language brought strong political, socio-cultural, commercial, educational, and linguistic power for the speakers of designated/official language as well as the countries where the empowered/dominant language has been used as the main language in society and educational systems. According to Jung and Norton (2000), English ideology, especially in the era of maximizing international trade and electronic communications, in the teaching and learning of English had become a critical educational issue in non-English speaking countries.

The modern “official language” movement, which began primarily in the early 1980’s in the United States (Crawford, 2000), brought not only the political power as the
largest English-speaking country (i.e., the United States) but also educational profits by accepting many F-1 (students visa) students from other countries. The highly evaluated United States educational system and English ideology played an important role to attract educational degrees and career seekers to become globally competent by improving English proficiency and earning educational credentials in their own fields. For South Korea’s, the national globalization project (Park & Abelmann, 2004) along with the governmentally controlled educational emphasis on global English (Jung & Norton, 2000) have resulted in South Koreans as one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States (Department of Immigration and Naturalization, 2006).

Korean’s “cosmopolitan striving” for acquiring English proficiency has been related to the symbolic value of English language contextualized in political, social, economical, cultural, and educational issues in South Korea (Park and Abelmann, 2004). The governmental slogan, “globalization” that has been incorporated into every aspect of society facilitates the hegemony of English for Koreans, so that there has been rapidly growing numbers of study-abroad students, migrants, and even short-term travelers who want to acquire English proficiency (Ro, in press). The socio-political trends of globalization in Korea create and transform the hegemony of English. For example, many Korean residents pursue the feeling of being “at home in the world” by investing financial and institutional resources into English education (Song, 2009). With the ideology and hegemony of global English among South Koreans, English language is interwoven as “globally doing local forms of the global” (Pennycook, 2003), or otherwise, in becoming a “glocalized” (Robertson, 1995) language.
Global migration, cosmopolitan citizenship and/or bi/multi-lingualism not only belong to the United States but are also becoming world-wide phenomena in this current global and cosmopolitan world; linguistic ideology plays a crucial role in shaping and transforming diverse transnational identity groups in the United States. In the next two sections, the meaning of identity groups and group identity, and Korean groups’ linguistic ideology will be examined.

**Identity groups and group identity.** Identity groups (e.g., Mexican-Americans, Boy Scouts of America, or Anglo Canadians) hold their own values, cultures, memberships and linguistic characteristics (Banks, 2008). As we interpret from examples of identity groups, they can be either majority or minority groups. Gutmann (2003) argues that each individual in majority or minority groups should be treated equally in a democratic society; in that, each member can pursue group freedom, and engage in-group actions to achieve democratic values.

Group identity in linguistic perspectives is the common (or becomes common) concepts that each linguistic group generates over time by sharing their own unique linguistic cues and meanings: these common characteristics become their own linguistic group identity (Norton, 2000, 2001). In my point of view, these group identities can be united into one concept, for example, when the entire group takes action on political or democratic issues. Otherwise, group identity can also be divided into two or more identity groups, depending on each group’s history, culture, language, and characteristics.

concepts of participation and engagement of communities of practices, Norton (2001, 2009) expanded linguistic participation and engagement through sharing similarly patterned discourse in which language users engage and participate in their own communities. In this study, I engaged and participated in a Korean-origin community over 7 years in the United States. As I explain further below, the Korean-origin community shaped its own community especially focusing on academic achievement both in children and adults. In terms of their own unique discourse and literacy usage, the members of this community tend to present extreme use of code-mixing/-switching as most of them are bilingual and biliterate even though the level of their proficiency in English and in Korean varies among members.

A common purpose of Korean immigration is preparing children to be qualified to acquire future membership in an imagined community called “Transnational Elite Koreans,” or TEK. This imagined/future community is based on the theoretical concept of “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). To become a member of this Korean future/imagined community, competent bilingual/biliteracy practices and engaging in their specific linguistic practices and group discourse are necessary (example provided in chapter 5).

In TEK, transnationalism in each member’s linguistic and socio-cultural status is the most significant and practical aspect, while Korean’s governmental and educational globalization has been deeply rooted in generating a future/imagined socio-cultural and linguistic community. Each member in the TEK community must hold global mindsets and credentials, such as holding professional degrees, having multi-cultural, -national, and -lingual ability, and/or having a global vision and knowledge with an open mind (see
recent Korean newspapers articles for more information about se-gye-hwa and globalization). “Being globally competent and qualified Koreans (or Korean-Americans)” is deeply grounded in the concept of se-gye-hwa (globalization) said the Korean government since the 1990s (Park & Abelmann, 2004).

Importantly, becoming fluent bilinguals and biliterates in both Korean and English is mandatory, and extra language proficiency will be necessary to hold a high status position or career. The tentative members of this imagined community (in this case TEK) often provide specific figures as examples as the leader of the TEK community. For example, Ki-Moon Ban was appointed as the secretary-general of UN (United Nations) on Jan-1, 2007 and he is the first Korean UN secretary-general historically. He graduated from the best university in Korea, received a graduate degree from Harvard University in the United States, then built a career as a foreign minister in UN. He is a good example of TEK members who is globally influential, transnationally competent, and a proficient English and French speaker.

Beyond being a fully competent Korean-English bilingual, there are more requirements to gain membership in TEK. In order to afford their educational and living expenses in a highly valued country like United States, Canada, or some European countries, imagined community candidates should currently hold at least middle to high SES or should hold ability to get outsourcing funds (provided by government of enterprises). Future children candidates’ SES naturally corresponds to their parents’ current SES. There are some parents who believe that they do not currently belong to middle-high SES; however, they still invest much for their children to achieve a high level of education, economic assets, and membership in the TEK community.
The review and synthesis on the following topics provide the background information for the study: (a) socio-cultural theoretical frameworks, (b) language and literacy as social practices, and (c) early bilingualism and biliteracy development. While there has been research within each of these areas, few studies have investigated their intersection. My study thus examines how second-generation Korean bilingual children and English language learners develop two languages in diverse situated settings; the kinds of bilingual and biliteracy events that occur in their daily lives; and the influence of environmental, social, and cultural factors on the focal children’s identity formation and early bilingual and biliteracy development.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Methodological Framework

Early bilingual and biliteracy learning and development are socially and culturally embedded practices that involve individuals’ and groups’ linguistic identities. Understanding two complex communities of practices, Korean and English linguistic groups in this study, requires in-depth investigation of socio-culturally and ideologically situated discourse and phenomena. I used a qualitative case study methodology, which Stake (1995) defined as the best for “naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, biographic, and phenomenological research methods” (p. xi). A case study is an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon over time using multiple sources of data (Merriam, 1988), for the purpose of gaining specific results, rather than generalization (Creswell, 1998). The multiple case study, which I employ here, is defined as “a research design for closely examining several cases linked together” (Stake, 2006, p. v). It allows me to write what Geertz (1973, pp. 6-7) describes as a thick description, from which readers can learn about the detailed socio-cultural environment of biliteracy events and practices. Furthermore, in the process of data collection and analysis, this method is deliberately “empathic” and emphasizes the “uniqueness of the situation” (Stake, Bresler, & Mabry, 1991, pp. 11-12), which is one of the key features of qualitative research methodology. Qualitative researchers normally conduct a study of no more than four cases in order to attain a deep understanding of the cases. Thus, my multiple cases study was designed to examine three related cases.
In this study, language and literacy use can be understood from the socio-cultural perspective of bilingual and biliteracy learning and development. To investigate the different kinds of communities in this study, an ethnographic qualitative study was needed. According to Creswell (1998), the definition of ethnography is “a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system” (p. 58); thus, I examined the linguistic, educational, and socio-cultural contexts of the participants. Ethnographers must be immersed in the natural socio-cultural settings of their participants and have a commitment to spending extensive time and work in the field in order to collect and analyze data from the viewpoint of both “insider” and “outsider” (p. 16). Genzuk (2003) also emphasized the in-depth and thorough understanding of the socio-cultural situation as the major role of qualitative ethnographic researchers.

The participants of this study were three children from an immigrant family. Drawing from a series of data sets (interviews, observations, documents such as writing samples, and narrative assessments), the various ways that early learners become bilingual and biliterate were systemically categorized. The extensive interviews and informal conversations, periodic observation of the bilingual homes and classrooms, formal and informal evaluation of written materials, and macro/micro analysis of the data allowed me to understand the children’s language and literacy development. In addition, the longitudinal nature of the fieldwork allowed me to develop trusting relationships with the focal family in the United States and extended family members in the Republic of Korea and to understand the experiences of the participants.

I strongly believe that the multiple case study methodology is the best fit for presenting a detailed picture of each participant’s bilingual/biliteracy development within
a Korean-American immigrant family. The individual cases—described in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7—will be presented as the combined case of one immigrant family’s longitudinal language and literacy use.

**Description of the Participants**

For this study, I present details about three young learners who have grown up in one family. In the description of each focal child, it is important to include the characteristics of the focal family and environment because I looked at home/family bilingual and biliteracy practices as the larger context of the study. I also include information about each participant’s personal characteristics, educational history, individual language and literacy practices and development, and identity formation in each of the findings chapters. These explanations provide background about each student related to immigration, family history, the history of the relationship between the participants and me, their SES, and other issues.

As part of the pilot study and background of the current study, I met these three students (Kevin, Mary, and Shelly) and their parents at least once a week, which provided me with an opportunity to develop a good rapport with the family. Since I have known them for a long time as a family friend and a major consultant for their children’s education, I have been able to keep track of developmental changes and linguistic issues for more than six years. To respect each participant’s confidentiality, I use pseudonyms.

**Parents and immigrant history.** The parents are permanent immigrants and all three children were born in the United States. The parents came to the United States 15 years ago in order for the father to pursue a doctorate and then obtain a stable job. The
father is a senior project manager at a multinational company. He was born in Korea but lived in Singapore with his family for three years, starting at age 11. After Singapore, his family moved to Boston, Massachusetts and stayed for two years; his family then returned to Korea where he lived until returning to the United States for graduate study. Perhaps due to his five years in Singapore and Boston, he achieved native-like English proficiency, which he began to lose until 1994, when he came back to the United States.

The mother has a bachelor’s degree from a major Korean university. After getting married, she came to the United States with her husband 15 years ago. She speaks English at a communicative level, and this ability likely originated in her middle/high school education in Korea and her own effort to learn the language after arriving in the United States. She is now a busy homemaker. She attempts to foster her children’s interest in both Korean and English with enthusiasm and commitment to the Korean community, which gives the children more exposure to both languages in contexts such as in the home, playground, church, and community.

Kevin (the first child in this family). Kevin was born in the United States in June, 1996. According to my own observation and interviews with his parents, extended family members, and classroom teachers, Kevin could be characterized as an active, social, and outgoing student, especially during his early childhood and early elementary years. His personality appeared to help him acquire both English and Korean as a means of interacting with others in his early years. However, his outgoing personality faded as time went by, and he became reserved and quiet as he entered his later elementary years. These changes in his personality became evident when he became a sixth grader in 2007.
The effect of this change in personality on Kevin’s bilingual and biliteracy practices will be discussed further in chapter 5.

**Mary (the middle child in this family).** Mary was born in October, 1999 in the United States and was active, curious, and outgoing in the early years, especially when she first picked up words, letters, and ultimately language and literacy in her two linguistic systems, Korean and English. Her intelligence and curiosity seemed to accelerate her literacy development and contribute to her outstanding verbal skills in two languages with both Americans and Koreans. Although she cannot produce perfect grammar or expressions in her speaking and writing, she always seemed confident in oral and written Korean until early 2006. Her longitudinal changes in linguistic development will be further explained in chapter 6.

**Shelly (the youngest child in this family).** Shelly was born in May, 2002. I met Shelly at the Korean school when her mother picked up Mary because Shelly was always with her mother. She has the strongest will among the three children. If her parents forced her to do something, she always expressed very strong reluctance, both verbally and behaviorally, and then finally cried loudly. She was mostly a quiet child, who always smiled and was curious and physically active, which she demonstrated by following me from room to room and activity to activity whenever I visited her home. In terms of language and literacy, Shelly sometimes copied Korean letters and various kinds of literacy activities while I was tutoring her two older siblings. She liked to hear stories and to engage in book reading in English while she tended to be quiet orally. In other words, she was active in physical behavior but reserved in oral expression. This is different from
her two older siblings, Kevin and Mary, who tended to follow their parents’ instructions. More detail will be provided in chapter 7.

**Social economic status (SES) in this family.** Since I have known this family for seven years and learned many details about the social and economic situation of the family, including the father’s income, I can conclude that this family has a high SES; they could be considered upper middle class in the United States. The entire family has been able to travel to their home country regularly (at a cost of more than $5,000 for airfare), and they also enjoy domestic vacation travel. They own a large house in an expensive neighborhood and are able to afford two cars and meet educational costs for regular and extra-curricular classes.

My long-term relationship with the focal family and my continuous effort to be an influential person in these children’s early literacy development made this ethnographic multiple case study possible. I was able to keep track of their linguistic and other educational development over the years, and I have met the focal children regularly in order to consult with them about their English and Korean education, in collaboration with their mother and classroom teachers. This background information about the participants is very important so that readers can be informed of the socio-cultural, historical, and linguistic philosophy and practices embedded in their daily lives.

**Research Design and Data Collection**

In order to collect extensive ethnographic qualitative data for three cases, the research design required multiple sources of data, complex timelines and schedules for data collection including: in-depth interviews, participant observations, document
reviews, and informal assessments with the participants in the United States and Korea. Qualitative researchers employ “detailed methods, a rigorous approach to data collection, data analysis, and report writing” (Creswell, 1998, p. 21). These steps in qualitative ethnographic research are critical to ensure the validity with substantive claims and evidence. The data sources come from written materials or images; thus major types of information include interviews, observations, documents, and audio-recording tapes (Creswell). In order to gather extensive data to enhance the credibility and validity of the study, I used all possible data sources except visual images (such as cameras) in order to protect participants’ personal identification. In the following section, I provide detailed contexts and procedures of the data collection methods, which include four sources of information: in-depth interviewing, participant observation, document review, and informal assessment.

**In-depth interviewing.**

**Background and contexts.** According to Kvale’s (1996) metaphor about the interviewer’s role as a miner or as a traveler, I was a traveler who went on a long journey from the start of storytelling to the end of returning home. The traveler refers to “a postmodern constructive understanding that involves a conversational approach to social research” (p. 5). With the purpose of qualitative research interviews—which is “a construction site for knowledge,” I conducted interviews by building knowledge together with the interviewee using a conversational method “as a professional interchange, and as a philosophical dialogue” in a comfortable setting (p. 19).

Designing the interview is critical because different types of interview methods will generate different data (Kvale, 1996). Prior to the actual interview, I developed
protocols for each interviewee, which was designed to help him/her respond to my original inquiry (see Appendix A-F). These protocols served to remind me of the goals and help me focus on the original inquiry. In reality, when I conducted the actual interview, I needed to be careful not to lose sight of the focus. These semi-structured interview protocols provided me with a chance to map out an interview strategy. Furthermore, the pre-structured interview guide was helpful not only for keeping me from being distracted by other issues brought up by the interviewee, but also to gather more information relevant to the original inquiry (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Seidman, 1998).

When I interviewed the parents, children, and teachers, building rapport was necessary. Although I needed to build rapport with participating teachers in both countries, building additional rapport was not necessary for the focal parents and children. Since I taught them as an interactive teacher and a family friend and cared about their children’s academic and cultural environment at home and in the community, we were familiar and comfortable with each other for some time. However, I needed to consider how I would present myself during the interview because my relationship with the parents and children had been that of a teacher rather than a researcher. In our initial discussions about my interest in observing and interviewing the parents, I clearly did what Wax (1960) advocated, presenting myself as a learner (as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2000). I reminded the parents that I have never been a parent of a young child but have an interest in learning about how the parents interacted with their children in order to enhance biliteracy development.
Furthermore, being a familiar teacher and friend to the focal participating family for a long time allowed me to understand their linguistic interactions in an everyday setting, and helped me to analyze and interpret the interview data thoroughly. During the interview for the pilot study, participants tried hard to answer fully and even asked for clarification to understand the interview questions and to provide me with clear responses.

**Plans and procedures.** I conducted semi-formal interviews with three focal children, their parents, classroom teachers, and three influential people (maternal grandmother, younger sister of the mother, and the principal of the heritage language school). Given the nature of longitudinal ethnographic study, some informal interviews including continuous casual conversations with study participants and other influential people such as close neighbors and extended family members who reside in Korea were all included to support the validity and solidity of the study. Regarding the level of intensity, length, and frequency for the interview with focal participants, I interviewed the mother and the focal child every year, and any kind of sincere conversations or their narrative reflections related to research questions were included as part of the interview data. On the other hand, I conducted an interview once or twice with educators, extended family members, and community members in the middle of the study to build rapport with them to provide further background information. Therefore, once I interviewed participants and we got to know each other, I conducted additional interviews as the situation allowed and as interviewees was willing to provide more time for this research. The focal children also attended a private educational institution to master skills or gain knowledge for extra-curricula subjects. Therefore, I contacted the major educator(s) to
visit and observe the actual class in which the focal child was involved. I got permission to observe, interview teachers, and attend parent-teacher meetings.

In the process of interviewing, English and Korean were spoken to maximize the most convenient and comfortable atmosphere to obtain honest and detailed answers. For example, during the pilot study, I interviewed Kevin’s parents in Korean and Kevin in English to understand the process of bilingual literacy education from both the parents’ and child’s perspective. Kevin’s parents were most comfortable speaking Korean; on the other hand, Kevin was most comfortable with English. Mary and Shelly were also more comfortable with English, although Mary often tried to communicate with me in Korean until 2006. In order to make the interviewees comfortable, I naturally let them choose the language and I followed their flow and tone.

Pre-structured interview questions and protocols for the focal parents and children were developed to respond to my research questions and objectives. Parents’ questions included their goals for biliteracy education for their children, the family’s linguistic history, current conditions and processes to foster bilingualism and biliteracy, and expected outcomes. The interview questions for the focal children inquired about their perceptions of their linguistic and ethnic identity, their opinion of being biliterate, and how their language learning process was developed. These interview questions are provided in Appendices A and B. For interviewing classroom teachers, heritage language educators, or community members/leaders, I also created the interview protocol for these interviewees (see Appendix C and D).

Additional informal interviews with extended family members of the focal participants, such as aunts, private teachers who regularly visit the home, community
leaders, staff of Korean language schools, and other related personnel were necessary for me to engage in the natural yet complex settings to understand early bilingual and biliteracy development. For example, when I visited Korea during the winter of 2005 and summer of 2007, I met extended family members in Seoul, Korea because we had already met in the United States in this focal family’s home.

**Participant observation.**

**Rationale and contexts.** In order for readers of the study to be able to experience “being there” and to capture the participants’ thinking (Richardson, 1994, p. 521), I observed as much as possible, which required a sufficient commitment of time and resources as an ethnographic researcher. I firmly believe that observation is one of the key methods in qualitative research, in that researchers (writers) are able to deliver the details of settings to the readers. In this process, details that researchers must convey are the socio-cultural settings and contexts, naturally occurring events and practices, discourses and interactions, and even feelings and physical expressions of research participants (Genzuk, 2003; Stake, 1996).

In addition, the observational method in Qualitative Inquiry was what Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2001) call a “descriptive observation” in which the researcher observes everything. In reality, with so much activity and constant discourses with many participants in one setting, I had difficulty observing every event. Therefore, I often tended to focus more on the phenomenon of interest, linguistic interaction and literacy events, which Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) describe as “casting my net broadly.” For my observations, I wrote “descriptive field notes,” which were the detailed “written
account[s] of what I hear, see, experience, and think” in the field (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 110).

Emerson et al. (1995) refer to the ethnographer’s “stance.” My initial intention was to observe linguistic interaction and practices in their daily activities at homes, classrooms, and other settings; however, I soon recognized that this would not be possible because I was a teacher who had known the focal participants well for a long time.

Consequently, the observations were “participant observation,” because I continued to interact with the focal participants. While conducting observations, I was simultaneously an observer, teacher, parents’ guest, and a researcher. This enabled me to elicit more natural but focused observations that facilitate more valid findings and conclusions. As I conducted participant observation, it was very crucial to write accurate, descriptive, and extensive field notes for researchers to present substantive claims and multiple perspectives. In this procedure, researchers play a role as “active learners” who provide detailed views of settings and situations from the participants’ view rather than as “experts” who are judgmental about the target issues.

**Procedures.** I visited focal participants’ home regularly once a week during 2003-2005, fall 2007, and spring 2008. At other times during this six-year study period, I was able to make monthly visits except during the times when I was in Korea or when this family was on vacation. This regular scheduling of data collection was necessary for the researcher (me) to keep track of bilingual and biliteracy practices embedded in socio-cultural settings over the period of time. For the classroom observation, once a week I visited every classroom in which each participant was placed, responding to the school’s
and teachers’ schedule. A total of five teachers were interviewed and observed during 2006-2008.

In the United States, community-based bilingual and biliteracy education was mostly held in the Korean language school. As the vice principal of the school, I was able to present the staff’s perspective on participants’ bilingual/biliteracy education as a community member, and I also had access to observe the focal child’s learning practices and development in the classroom. Prior to each observation, observational protocols were developed, identifying who, when, how long, and what to observe (see Appendix G). This pre-structured protocol reminded me of my role as a “gatekeeper,” “key informant,” or a participant observer, focused me on methods that recorded notes, and made me write descriptive and reflective notes. According to Creswell (1998), “descriptive notes” are written descriptions of activities and physical settings, whereas “reflective notes” are writings of continuous processes, reflections on events, and summaries of observation with themes or perspectives (p. 125). The initial step of writing the summary of each observation, the informal procedure of recording information, and “jottings” were useful in writing observational field notes (Emerson et al., 1995).

Although a researcher writes observational logs on and off the field, audio-recordings while observing were helpful in reminding me of the detailed dialogue and moments of situated events and practices that occurred. The audio material was useful to write thick descriptive field notes; however, I made sure to use recordings only with the participants’ permission every time. All direct and descriptive field notes from direct observation and audio-materials were noted, transcribed, categorized, stored, and analyzed to allow me to present details in the data analysis section.
**Document review.** Each focal child’s written artifacts, writing samples, and/or any kinds of literacy events that were collectable in print were saved and filed in a portfolio. The portfolio was useful to keep track of the young children’s literacy development and written language use. Classroom teachers agreed to let me copy the participants’ writing journals and diaries. Every time I visited to observe their classroom, I copied the child’s product, and the teachers shared their notes or opinions regarding the child’s bilingual behavior, literacy development, and signs of identity formation. For example, Mary’s second grade teacher showed me that Mary had written Korean letters in her journal. The Korean heritage language school, regular public school, and the focal family’s home were the major places where I was able to collect the children’s written samples. Every teacher kept each student’s writing journal to evaluate gradual changes and development in literacy ability. By the end of data collection, I prepared a thick portfolio to keep track of written evidence of child’s practices and development.

**Narrative assessment.** For bilingual young learners, narrative informal assessments based on participant’s developmental log, written artifacts, and school documents are more credible than formal assessment in two languages. The informal assessments are helpful with “at-risk,” poor or diverse children who speak languages other than English at home; they may be discriminated against by standardized tests, which contain middle-class western cultural contexts (Garcia, 1999; IRA, 2000). The assessments with young children should be conducted informally (McLaughlin, Blanchard, & Osanai, 1995). Furthermore, many scholars assert that informal assessment can be useful in the bilingual field in order to reflect accomplishment and attitudes as well as the affective (emotional or attitudinal) aspects, and to emphasize the process
aspects of language and literacy rather than the product (Garcia, 2000; O’Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Portfolio review is a method of informal assessment that includes various kinds of literacy work samples and activities collected from multiple sources, such as homes, classrooms, playgrounds, and community classes. With the portfolio, I conducted informal but narrative assessments for comparisons between earlier and later literacy achievement to describe literacy habits, practices, events, and activities at home, in the community, and in the classroom setting, in order to assess participants’ on-going bilingual and biliteracy development.

As a family friend, a language and literacy educator, and a researcher, I knew participants for a long time before beginning the research study; therefore, I was able to provide objective and subjective evaluations about each child’s overall and bilingual/biliteracy development including family practices. In addition, as I interviewed classroom teachers and observed the focal child’s learning in the classroom at both the regular and Korean schools, I was able to provide a holistic picture of bilingual and biliteracy development in diverse settings, as young learner’s development processes were complex. Thus, the narrative assessment was based on the portfolio, observational log, field notes, and other documents that contributed to the understanding of each child’s development. My written evaluative comments were evident in written products or data sets.

The entire course of data sources and collection is displayed below:
Table 1

Data Sources and Collection

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<tr>
<th>Data</th>
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Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the data analysis procedure, I expected to find many different themes. Gee describes these themes as sets of lines within the same theme, event, or perspective (1999). While I interviewed and observed participants’ discourse and situated behaviors regarding bilingual/biliterate activities, various meanings of discourse and cultural models were shown. Constant, responsive, and reflective data analysis allowed me to view several main themes from the multiple forms of data—interviews, observations, documentations, and assessments.
After each interview, I wrote up the details that I could not record in the field, and then transcribed interviews from recorded audio materials. The transcription itself, as well as repeated reading used to confirm my transcription helped remind me of the interview situations as well as to code transcribed data and identify themes.

In the home and community setting, I was a participant observer. Therefore, I wrote up field notes right after leaving the observational site, so as not to miss important details or perspectives. Then I transcribed the recorded audio-materials and coded them to identify evolving themes. In the classroom setting in both countries, however, I performed direct observation by sitting in the back with a laptop. I wrote up all details on site and added more details right after each observation. From the repetitive reading and checking, I was able to confirm the coding and sorting of important themes. In terms of reviewing documents and portfolio as the narrative assessment, I wrote up the participants’ progress, developmental changes, language and literacy habits and usage, and then I coded them to identify themes.

As a Korean graduate student in a Midwestern university town with a sizeable Korean population (South Korea being the number one country of origin among international students on this campus), I frequently interacted with the local Korean community, including Korean-American children at churches, local schools, and community centers. The priest at one of the Korean churches asked me to serve as a heritage language teacher in their Korean language school, and that was how I met the focal family of the study.

As a qualitative researcher involved in both the Korean and Korean-American communities in this town for many years, I was able to function as both insider and
outsider to the research setting. I had several factors in common with the focal family, giving me “insider” status. First, I was born in the capital and largest city of Korea and had lived there for 25 years, even working as an English teacher and teacher trainer for the two years before I came to the U.S. I also had a bachelor’s degree in child psychology and education from a university on par with the focal parents’ alma mater. My multi-lingual and cultural identity was also similar to that of the focal parents in the study. Like the focal parents, I had lived in the U.S. for an extended period (7 years, in my case), so that my concepts of language, culture, and identity had become a mix of Korean and American, although I still felt that I was basically a Korean, slightly Americanized.

There were also differences separating the focal family and me (as the researcher). Most importantly, they were raising children in the U.S., which affected their English language use. As the three children became more and more immersed in American culture, so did the parents. Having children also made the parents’ lifestyle different from my own; they had more family activities, while I was involved in academic activities. Thus, the gap between the focal family and me regarding lifestyle and language/literacy usage became wider as time went by.

With my gradually changing position as ethnographer and family friend, I was able to position myself as an insider in the former part of the study, and as then later as an outsider. In other words, during the first 3 years of this study, having a similar background to the family helped me understand their linguistic and cultural lives more fully. On the other hand, our lives grew more and more different as the study progressed, which gave me the distance I needed to be an outsider as I analyzed and interpreted the data over the course of the last 6 years of the study.
An ethnographic researcher embedded in the research setting for many years runs the risk of assimilating the research participants’ beliefs and value systems, thus becoming biased. Therefore, my dissertation chair and other colleagues involved with the study constantly reminded me of this downfall. With their help, and because of the distance I achieved from the focal family, as described above, I was able to consider the big picture of these children transforming from Korean immigrants to American citizens in a community with many Korean students, scholars, visitors, and immigrants.

In conclusion, my inquiry originated from multiple cases within one family setting; thus, cross-case analysis was considered. Cross-case analysis is the researcher’s interpretation across the cases, given from “the binding concept of a theme, issue, phenomenon, or functional relationship that strings the cases together” (Stake, 2006, p. 39). Using cross-case analysis was appropriate to compare and contrast emerging themes across the different cases. For the initial analysis, I analyzed and interpreted interview, observation, and written sample data based on pre-set large-scale categories as follows: (a) daily practices and development; (b) goals and beliefs on bilingual and biliteracy education and practices; and (c) identity negotiation and transformation based on my research questions presented at the end of chapter 1. After a series of data analysis based on the initial categories, I rechecked and reconfirmed them from different data sets across interview transcripts, field notes, and written samples.

Cross analysis across cases (parents, extended family members, Kevin, Mary, and Shelly) produced many sub-themes such as (a) personal characteristics related to heritage language/literacy development, (b) unique paths to becoming bilingual/biliterate, (c) sibling similarities, differences, and effects, and (d) personal history and motives for
changes in their ethnic and linguistic identity. These themes will be explored in depth in each chapter. Furthermore, I also checked matches and mismatches between their words and behavior from observations: Details are described in each chapter of the findings sections (chapter 4, 5, 6, and 7).

For all sources of data—interview transcripts, observational transcripts and field notes, and other written documentations—I read and re-read data sets thoroughly in order to understand the overall meaning of the discourses and embedded contexts. For the systemic analysis, I categorized multiple codes, supported by emerging themes, and these coded categorizations were confirmed by the repetitive procedure of reading and interpretation. Next, I identified themes in the data to form tentative summary statements, which were altered as needed when the data analysis process took place. This is common practice as researchers examine the extensive qualitative data inductively to search for evolving themes, dimensions, codes, and categories (Creswell, 1998).

The Researcher

I, the researcher, became interested in early bilingual and biliteracy development as socio-culturally embedded practices as a graduate student on the main campus of a major university in the Midwest. Two major motivations were generated from the countless valuable experiences as both a graduate student and as a Korean community member in this mid-sized university town. Being a long term resident in a mid-sized university town as a Korean community member enhanced my interest in early Korean-English bilingualism as well as shaping identities of early ESL learners and bilingual and biliteracy learners.
While observing and teaching at the Korean language school for four years, I was able to observe and experience different situations with permanent and temporary immigrant children in the school and community settings. I had been teaching one and a half and second-generation Korean kindergarteners, first through third graders for four years as the head teacher every Saturday, except during summer vacation, for four years. From 2005 to 2007, I was also the Associate Supervisor of the school. Through these teaching and administrative positions, I recognized the importance of bilingual and biliteracy development. Many bilingual children in the United States have difficulty maintaining their native language and literacy abilities, which can lead to a loss of ethnic identity and family bonds. I believe these children can be provided with a means to maintain and develop literacy and language skills in both their native language and in English.
Chapter 4
Goals and Perspectives of the Parents on Bilingualism and Heritage
Language/Literacy Maintenance and Development

Introduction

In this section, the goals and perspectives of the parents on their children’s education, especially on language and literacy development across two languages will be discussed. The parents’ discussion of bilingual education and general linguistic perspectives includes both oral and written language because they did not specifically separate oral and written linguistic practices; however, the parents frequently used the word “literacy” or “reading/writing” when they wanted to address literacy components or emphasize reading and/or writing development. The parents’ views, especially the mother’s beliefs and applied practices, are presented in the following categories: (a) the perspectives/concepts and educational goals/beliefs about bilingualism and bilingual education, and (b) the reality of daily life. Prior to exploring these two main issues, the following vignette illustrates the context.

Research Setting—Vignette: Korean Bilingual/Biliterate Home

When I entered the home to observe natural bilingual and biliterate events, I noticed that every wall was covered with beautiful artwork. I immediately felt embraced by the loving and caring atmosphere created by the children’s mother. I imagined that this family’s life must be very comfortable, since they owned a four-bedroom, two-and-a-half bathroom house in a good neighborhood. As I looked around, I saw a rich literacy environment including numerous print materials in both languages and piles of books on...
the bookshelves in every corner. A Garfield cartoon playing on the television turned out to be a popular educational video to help young children develop their English skills, especially students acquiring English as a second language (ESL). In Kevin’s bedroom, there were a couple of Korean books spread out on the floor, which made me guess that the children might have been reading or playing with these books just before I came to visit.

While I walked around the house, I could hear Korean and English being mixed and switched all the time. When I went upstairs, however, I heard only perfect native English sounds. I knew that it was not Kevin, Mary, or Shelly’s voice, since I had known them for a long time. It turned out to be the voice of Kevin’s best friend, Connor, who wanted to play hide-and-seek with me. (I had also known Connor for a long time.) Kevin’s mother knew that the purpose of my visit was to observe her children, not to play, so she told Kevin and Connor, in Korean, not to bother me. The two boys did not answer, so Kevin’s mother warned them again, this time in English, “Kevin! Connor! Stop playing and come here to do your homework or read your Korean books!” Kevin finally responded, “Ok, ok, ok . . .” in English, but he was not taking in what she said.

The Perspectives on Bilingualism and Biliteracy Education

Based on longitudinal observation and constant conversation, I can say that the parents’ intention to emphasize bilingual education stems from the following: (a) they are educated; (b) they appreciate their own bilingualism, which affords them the advantages of two cultures and languages mingled in their daily lives; and (c) they personally have strong connections to educational practitioners or researchers through bible study
meetings, community gathering events, and family friends and colleague groups. More information about these acquaintances and how they have affected the parents’ decisions about their children’s bilingual education are presented in the latter part of this section.

**Overall educational beliefs and goals.** The mother of this family asserted that she is not a typical Korean mother who puts significant or even excessive effort into her children’s education. Having known this family for nearly six years, I agree that the parents are not excessively anxious about their children’s education, compared to other families with similar social and economic resources (see the Korean community part in Literature Review section, pp. 53-60). However, as a private Korean tutor for this family, I witnessed the parents’ increasing and then decreasing emphasis on their children’s bilingual/biliteracy education. Thus, I asked about their educational goals/beliefs about Korean language and literacy during an interview during early 2008. For eliciting the mother’s honest and genuine answers, I spoke Korean so she did, and then I translated these conversations to English below.

Researcher: What educational and career goals do you have for your children? Is your enthusiasm about bilingualism related to those goals? Are you pursuing bilingual education to help them achieve something? For example, do have hopes of your children becoming lawyers, doctors, or CEOs?

Mother: Yeah. I don’t think I am pushing them to be lawyers or doctors. However, I want them to be like my husband, who is a project manager in an international company, available in many ways in our lives, and fully competent in two languages, so that he can work anywhere in the world. Being bilingual is a prerequisite to success, as well as to the full enjoyment of the many cultures in this world.

Researcher: What are you currently doing in order to reach these goals?
Mother: Trying to teach them Korean language, searching for their innate talents for their true happiness, and supporting them in all kinds of ways, educationally, financially, and emotionally.

Based on my earlier descriptions/explanations in the later part of Literature Review (pp. 53-60) about the excessive efforts of many Korean mothers toward their children’s global education and the shaping of an elite Korean educational community in the United States, these parents, especially the mother (who is the educational manager in the typical Korean family), are not typical of Korean parents. These parents do not have specific hopes of their children becoming doctors or lawyers, which are the symbols of successful, wealthy individuals in Korean culture. Rather, these parents want their children to lead comfortable lives based on their own efforts and unique talents as members of a minority group with his/her own heritage language and culture in addition to American/European language and culture. Over the course of 6 years of interviews and observations, the parents and extended family members in this family hold an “additive” perspective of bilingualism. Here is an example of the mother’s consistent comments that illustrate her perspective of additive bilingualism.

Researcher: Why do you strongly believe that raising your children to become bilinguals/biliterates would be good for you or your family?

Mother: Anything having more is better than one, and it is the same with language and culture. Look at the world: everyone is [ethnically] mixed, and most people are bilinguals for their daily convenience, to get on with their lives. For example, my husband was also raised as a bilingual in many countries. It was not by his own choice, but his father’s job made him that way. I like this, because that factor about him caught my attention, and it has also helped my children become bilingual and biliterate. I hope my children become like him, a globally competent person. And they are Koreans, and so are we [the parents]. Thus, I hope they [my children] hold onto their own blood, language, and culture as Korean-Americans. (Casual conversation in July, 2007)
Based on their overall goals and beliefs about general education, the specific but consistent viewpoints/perspectives of these parents about bilingual/biliteracy education are presented below.

**Consistent perspectives on bilingual education.** The focal parents are educated and were raised in educated, high SES families. This family has also stayed up-to-date on educational news and information. The parents have shown a consistent perspective and a strong willingness to provide bilingual education for their children over the course of 6 years:

Well, I, myself, am a bilingual and that brings me many positive experiences and opportunities. Furthermore, everyone around us, like my friends and colleagues—even our grandparents—emphasize that all the time. Since we’d been connected to Korea, we [the parents] know that everyone in Korea wants to have the opportunities like we have now. Not just limited to Korea, but it has obviously become a world-wide phenomenon. Yep (nodding). (From an informal interview with the Father, Nov., 2005)

When the father mentioned his appreciation of being a “full bilingual,” he noted that being a full bilingual gave him the opportunity to work as a manager in a multi-national company, allowed him to be a cosmopolitan citizen, and allowed his entire family to be an internationally competent family. Furthermore, he felt that in order to give his three children a chance to grow up as globally competent citizens, their becoming competent bilinguals was a prerequisite.

Reflecting the parents’ value on Korean as well as English spoken language and literacy, Kevin was exposed to many literacy events and experiences through abundant print resources at home. Many kinds and levels of Korean and English books populated Kevin’s room, where he had a library corner. Fiction and non-fiction books of various sizes, materials and genres were placed on bookshelves throughout the house, but
especially on the biggest bookshelf in the family’s den, a central family gathering place easily accessed by the children. According to the mother, Kevin illustrated interest in books within the home, which were approximately 60% Korean and 40% English, during 2004-2005. Kevin’s siblings frequently read and played with those books. Kevin’s parents modeled interactions with print by frequently reading Korean and English books themselves and to the children. Moreover, reflecting their values, the parents devoted considerable financial resources to a bi-weekly Korean tutor and sending Kevin to the Korean school. The Korean school curriculum focused on Korean oral and written language (e.g., reading aloud, listening to traditional stories, Korean dictation) while the Korean tutoring program mainly focused on Korean reading and writing (e.g., reading comprehension activities and journal writing).

The parents not only provided a bilingual/biliterate environmental setting supported by their high SES, but they also made explicit educational attempts toward heritage language/literacy retention and development. In the children’s free-writing notebooks, the mother wrote model letters for the three children to copy, practice and apply in various situations, leading to their acquisition. In the first row of the free-writing notebook, Kevin’s mother wrote model words like 아빠 (dad), 아버지 (father), 엄마 (mom), and 어머니 (mother). The first and second words both mean “dad” in Korean; however, the latter shows courtesy. Similarly, the third and fourth words both mean “mom” in Korean, with the fourth one showing respect for elders. Kevin’s mother wanted to teach Kevin how to write Korean words and Korean cultural language, in which it is important to use appropriate words depending on whom the speaker is talking to. As exemplified, Kevin’s mother wrote the model words intentionally after thinking about
systematic teaching strategies, such as what kinds of words Kevin needs to learn first, and what to teach when she caught teachable moments in various situations and contexts.

During the mid-latter part of this study, especially in 2006-2007, the parents presented consistent views on the importance of heritage language/literacy retention and development; however, this enthusiasm for pursuing these goals seemed to fade as time went by. The parents often complained about all-English schooling and the daily realities that kept them busy. This time frame is when all the children presented the least development in their heritage language, literacy, and cultural involvement. During early 2008, the mother began to regret her neglect of her children’s bilingual/biliteracy education, because of the emotional distance from her children caused by the linguistic barrier. All three children often spoke to her in English, while she responded to them either in Korean or in brief, broken English. Following is a transcript of an interview conducted during February 2008.

Researcher: What do you think about bilingual education?
Mother: I know bilingual education is important, especially for my children and other children like mine.

Researcher: What do you mean?
Mother: These days, so many children live outside of their home country, and they easily lose their home language and culture, just like my own children.

Researcher: And why bilingual education is important?
Mother: I guess everybody knows about that these days. Rather than losing the home language, it is better to keep it.

Researcher: Can you be more specific? Why do you think it is worth their time and effort to become bilingual/biliterate?
Mother: Because it brings more advantages than disadvantages. Maybe because we live in the States.

Researcher: In your opinion, to what degree are you currently pursuing bilingual education for your children?

Mother: I’m trying and I will continue to try. But it’s very hard. I feel scared not to have in-depth talks anymore with my children.

Researcher: What about your husband? Doesn’t he talk much with his children when he comes home? What are the percentages of his communication in English and Korean with his children?

Mother: Sometimes, they talk a lot both in Korean and in English. But then again, they speak short or easy words in Korean, but when the discussion gets complex, they switch to English right away. My husband speaks 60-70% English at home. He tended to speak English 80-90% for 1 or 2 years, so I asked him to change his attitude and verbal habits from English to Korean. It’s not easy sometimes because of him. I sometimes feel that he has accelerated my kids’ thoughts on communicating in English because they can have in-depth talks in English. Anyway, he has been trying to communicate with them in Korean after work, but he often works at home. My husband used to interact with the children a lot, but these days he is busier with work. I wish he were able to interact with them in Korean more than he can.

Motivation. This consistent perspective and determination for educating their children to be bilinguals/biliterates faded due to two major influences, especially during the mid-late part of this study (2006-2007). The parents’ goals for Kevin’s literacy and language must also be noted. These parents reflect Gardner and Lambert’s (1972) instrumental motivation when thinking of biliteracy. According to Fillmore (1991), in societies like the United States with diverse populations, children from linguistic minority families must learn the language of the educational opportunities offered by the society. Thus, because Kevin lives in an English-speaking country, the parents may feel compelled to teach him English. They stated that Kevin first learned to write his name in English rather than Korean, which suggests that they placed greater value on English
literacy. Similarly, the parents stated that when Kevin had trouble understanding English in kindergarten, they began code-switching and mixing English and Korean:

“We always spoke Korean until Kevin went to preschool. However, he could not understand what the teacher said so we started to mix English and Korean to help him learn English.”

Though helpful to Kevin’s transition to an all-English school environment, speaking English at home probably accelerated Kevin’s loss of Korean proficiency. The parents stated that his English literacy developed at a much faster rate than his Korean literacy. Finally, Kevin’s parents also reflected Gardner and Lambert’s (1972) integrative motivation because they wanted Kevin to be socially successful at school as well. The parents were not as motivated to help Kevin with literacy and language in Korean.

**Identity-maintenance and development: Raising their children as Korean or Korean-American.** I met this focal family for the first time at the Korean language school, which indicates that the parents already valued their children’s heritage language development and cultural retention. Whenever I asked about the rationale for sending their children to Korean language school, they never omitted the word “culture.” In their answers every time, their desire for Korean language/literacy acquisition and development always came first, and then they mentioned their desire for their children to be exposed to and to acquire Korean heritage culture. In addition to these reasons, the mother often mentioned meeting Korean people and making Korean friends.

From the beginning of this study, Kevin’s parents played an integral part in his education and provided significant guidance towards skills they considered valuable, as indicated during observations, interviews, and discussions. The importance of Korean
and English oral language and literacy as well as Korean culture was demonstrated in the following excerpt taken from an interview with Kevin’s mother in 2005:

We are Korean, so we should know how to read and write Korean at the same time as English, because we are in the United States now. Although my children were all born here, we can’t be the same as Americans. We are not sure whether we will go back to Korea or not, but we want our children to master both languages. Then they can be confident in any situation in both countries.

Because the parents were quite worried about their children losing their Korean identity, culture, and language/literacy, they placed significant emphasis on Korean ethnic identity and cultural literacy. They illustrated that they valued their children being Korean by sending the message, “You are Korean and you should know how to read and write in Korean” when they talked with Kevin and by occasionally modeling Korean reading and writing. I observed that the parents put more effort into developing their children’s Korean identity than ever, so I asked why during an interview in 2006. The mother replied:

Now, the situation is changed. They [my children] don’t like to communicate in Korean any more. Mary, in particular, has been exposed to United States schooling for three years, so it seems her preferred language has changed from Korean to English. And Shelly has made this situation worse. She is so different from her two older siblings. Shelly never felt any necessity to learn Korean, because everyone in our home is able to communicate in English pretty well. I even sometimes feel that it is easier to speak English—of course only simple sentences (smile)—for faster and easier communication of instant needs. I feel that my children have been losing their Korean identity. I’ve learned from them that losing their Korean identity could be the main reason behind their loss of Korean language/literacy.

When the children tried to speak only in English, the parents sometimes intentionally changed from English to Korean, hoping that the children would recognize why they suddenly switched languages. When the parents started to speak Korean, Kevin and Mary occasionally changed from English to Korean right away or soon after, but
most of the time they continued speaking English. Shelly’s language development was in English, beginning when she was three to four years old, which resulted in increased English use by all family members.

In order to find about changes in the parents’ educational goals/beliefs, I asked the following question again during a casual conversation in 2008:

**Researcher:** Why do you put so much effort and time toward your children’s maintenance and development of Korean language and literacy? Is it because your family might go back to Korea?

**Mother:** Because they are Koreans. Although my children were all born here, we can’t be the same as Americans, and even Kevin has begun to realize that lately. And he said he wanted to be fluent in Korean language and literacy because he is Korean and that’s how he looks.

As I reviewed the longitudinal interview transcripts and experiences with this family, raising their children as Korean or Korean-American has been the most important motivation for bilingual/biliteracy education and linguistic and cultural retention.

**Constant effort on pursuing and maintaining a TEK membership.** (See the background information about TEK community in chapter 2, p. 59.) According to the series of interviews with the focal parents for this study, they felt lucky to come to this Midwestern university town to obtain a Ph. D., and then have a stable job in the same town to educate their three children in a safe, multi-cultural, university town where education is highly valued.

We have been quite satisfied with our lives here. Actually we are so lucky. I know that there are other cities where many Koreans reside, but they are not necessarily similar to us. Because my husband holds a Ph.D. and the quality of life is quite high and comfortable, I hope my children have at least similar or better lives by being highly qualified to hold any job that they want. One day, Mary mentioned that she wants to become a teacher. But we know that she is academically and linguistically curious and she is a fast learner. So we had to explain her other jobs are also available for her; for example, she can be a university professor who can
train and educate teachers. It’s their choice what they want to be, but we also should guide them if they can be better than that. I’m not downgrading teachers, as you already know, but she is a really smart girl who can contribute and make a greater impact for both Koreans and Americans.

In this excerpt, the mother (and her husband) illustrate that they hold a global vision for their daughter, who has been showing high academic and linguistic curiosity. Fifteen years ago, these parents came to the United States as a result of their global vision to get a Ph. D. at a top-ranked American university. Now, the father of this family earns enough income as a manager in a multi-national company and plays a role as the president of the academic association of Korean scientists in the United States. He recalled:

I lead my family like this because my family had become multicultural and transnational. I grew up outside of Korea, of course in Korea also, because my dad had a multinational job. I am sure that I inherited the desire for my children to become like us (parents), although I hope for my children to grow up as the better person than us (laugher).

As evidenced in the series of interviews about parent themselves, their 15 years of living as a Korean-American immigrant family in the United States influenced them to maintain their own Korean-origin identities as well as and to encourage their children to do the same.

**The realities of daily practices and practical difficulties/hardships.** Although these parents had a strong desire for their children to become bilinguals/biliterates, their actual daily practices varied over the course of 6 years. During the first stage of this study (2003-2004), the parents showed a strong willingness and strict discipline for their three children to acquire and develop their heritage Korean language, literacy, and cultural identity. The parents’ determination for their children to become competent bilinguals/biliterates appeared in the practices that were part of their daily lives, such as
the abundant resources, sending the children to Korean language school, getting a Korean literacy tutor, etc. On the other hand, busier daily lives and a basic need for faster communication influenced this family to use English more and more as time went by, especially when all the children were going to school.

The challenges of daily life with three children and their own pragmatic convenience-based linguistic choices caused the parents to use English more and more in the interest of faster and easier communication, especially when all the children were going to all-English schools. As the mother indicated during an interview, the family’s attention to Korean oral language and literacy ebbed and flowed, particularly in response to the family’s busy daily lives. She said:

Our emphasis [on Korean language and literacy] has varied time to time even though I’ve always known its importance. There were times that I had to give it up and the situation made me want to let it go. You know, I’m really busy with three children. On the other hand, there are times that I really feel it’s time to start again. Then I try again and again and that’s been possible [with Kevin’s tutoring].

Although the parents tried to keep up their everyday pragmatic efforts in an attempt to counteract Kevin’s shift from Korean to English, they did not do so in a systematic way such as implementing a Korean-only rule at home. They did sometimes intentionally switch to Korean when Kevin or his siblings asked a question in English, apparently hoping that the children would recognize the significance of the switch. But the children often continued speaking English.

Gradually, the parents came to hold the viewpoint that Korean literacy was the responsibility of Kevin’s private Korean tutor and his teachers at the Korean language school; the parents felt that they lacked time to focus on Korean at home. During a
discussion, Kevin’s mother talked about the reasons she sought Korean tutoring support for Kevin:

I tried to teach him how to read and write in Korean, but it is too difficult to sit down with [Kevin] and make [him] concentrate on studying, as the mother of a baby and young children . . . [Tutoring] will fill the hole of what we cannot teach them about Korean language and culture. Thus, outside of the Korean language school and tutoring sessions, Kevin had increasingly fewer opportunities for Korean oral language and literacy development and maintenance.

Overall, the parents’ strong desire and related practices faded over time as all three children went to all-English schooling so that they tended to speak, listen, read and write in English even at home and in community settings. These gradual changes in their daily lives influenced the mother to begin responding to the children in short English phrases more frequently than in Korean. As seen in the transcript excerpt below from a dinner table discussion, the parents code-switched rather than speaking only in Korean. Besides simple phrases and vocabulary such as “I don’t know” and “July,” Korean was increasingly neglected:

Kevin: What month is it? (English)
Father: Can you guess? (English)
Kevin: What month is it? (English)
Father: Can you guess? (English)
Kevin: I don’t know, July? (Korean) July? (English)
Mother: July (English) July, July (Korean) July (English)
Kevin: What day? Tuesday? (English)
Mother: July on Wednesday (English)

Kevin seemed to automatically ask his parents “What month is it?” in English. His father, who always tried to catch teachable moments, asked Kevin “Can you guess?”
naturally in English, because Kevin had asked in English. However, there was a
difference between the father and mother here, with regard to which language was spoken
first. Kevin’s father was quick to use English with their children, because he wanted to
ensure the children’s success in the United States. On the other hand, Kevin’s mother
always worried about the children’s poor Korean, so she tried to confirm that Kevin knew
“July” in Korean, repeating it twice in Korean after telling him the answer in English.

Still, the parents had not given up on speaking Korean at home. They tended to
speak Korean with Mary more than with Kevin. When asked why, the mother indicated
that Kevin had lost some Korean literacy and oral language ability, and she hoped to
ensure that his younger sister, Mary, did not meet the same fate. They wanted Mary to
continue developing her Korean. The parents were not applying the same strategy with
Kevin because they found it too difficult to quickly change their verbal and written
communication habits, which were increasingly in English. In reality, the parents seemed
to accept that Kevin was becoming more comfortable speaking English than Korean.
Additionally, when Kevin or Mary did not understand a Korean word or phrase, his
parents often translated it to English: “When [the children] asked for explanations,
sometimes they could not understand in Korean. Therefore, we explained in English first
and gave another explanation in Korean.”

With Shelly, the parents gave up providing explanations in two languages due to
her inability to listen to long explanations, as well as the parents’ busy daily lives. In
order to delineate the parents’ honest opinion, I had casual conversations with them in
their heritage language (Korean) during early 2008. In this excerpt, the mother and I
spoke Korean, but I intentionally changed my language from Korean to English when I
asked questions to Kevin and Mary to make them feel more comfortable talking to me.

Kevin answered in English while Mary answered in Korean.

Researcher: Do you always speak to your children in Korean? Have you ever thought about communicating with them in English in order to improve your English proficiency? Be honest.

Mother: My sisters who came to visit a little while had this intention of improving their English proficiency. I understand my sisters’ intentions, because they are supposed to communicate in English while they are working and often go abroad. So I let them communicate in English. But I would like to improve my English proficiency only for better communication with my children; otherwise, I have no need for English in my life. I’ve got many Korean friends, and with American friends, we don’t have many chances to discuss things in depth, so I don’t need to learn more English. (She had already acquired a communicative level of English proficiency.) I just feel frustrated when I can’t express what I want to say to my children.

Researcher: Do you believe your English development/fluency affects your children’s language education? What about your sisters (aunts for children) & mother (grandmother for your children)?

Mother: A lot. All of us are getting to talk more in English although my English is mostly simple words or sentences. It’s a lot faster and easier than explaining something to them in Korean. I try to understand this phenomenon because we are residing in the United States. My children got much influences from relatives as well, about 50%, especially for Mary. For Kevin and Shelly, it doesn’t matter too much and they hate to get phone calls from their grandmother who speaks mostly Korean. But Mary has the most 정 (/jung/, meaning warm feelings about someone), so she speaks more to her grandmother and her aunts. Their relationships with their relatives in Korea is one of the main reason that they should develop their Korean proficiency. This even applies to their Korean identity. My children love to go to Korea, and they always look forward to it. When it is time to come back from Korea, they always cry and want to stay longer.

Researcher: What are the main reasons for that?

Mother: Everything in Korea seems fun for them—small things in the street and different experiences. They like to climb mountains and camp in the river valley. They look the same as other people in the street,
but they are sometimes proud of their English proficiency, too. However, Shelly doesn’t talk much in Korea, just like in the States.

Researcher: What have been the challenges of acquiring/maintaining heritage language proficiency?

Mother: It is really not easy to work on that in the States. Whenever I think about my kids’ Korean language and identity, I want to go back to Korea. But that will cause other problems, like adjustment to the Korean educational system.

Researcher: In what kinds of situations do you speak in English or Korean?

Kevin: Outside, I mean in school, library, out of the home, we use English only except a few occasions like after school or when I want to have a secret talk.

Researcher: Then at home, do you use Korean?

Kevin: Only when my mom forces me to do so. Mom speaks to me in Korean, but I always answer in English.

Researcher: (To mother) Why do you think that the entire situation has been driven this way?

Mother: They just don’t understand Korean much. As more time goes by, they use English only.

Mary: 올. 할머니 이모랑 얘기할때 한국말 많이 해. [Yes. I spoke more Korean with my grandmother and aunts.]

The parents continued to put effort into Korean spoken language and literacy development for their children; however, more practical matters tended to get in the way. In the beginning of the study (2003-2004), the parents presented consistent and rigorous efforts on their children’s heritage language/literacy retention and development while they also supported their English development. However, their strong discipline suddenly faded when all three of their children went to English schooling (2005-2006) so that they began to communicate mostly in English at home. At the same time, the Korean tutor was not available anymore, and the mother had also acquired English proficiency from her
own interest and daily communication with her children. By 2007-2008, a series of events between the mother and her three children alerted the mother to the need to emphasize bilingual/biliteracy education; these events included difficulties with communication, which gave rise to a growing emotional distance between the mother and children.

Their busy daily lives and the demands of the two younger siblings who constantly needed the parents’ attention played a role in the decreased emphasis on Korean at home. In the interest of meeting critical family needs, the parents sometimes pushed aside regularly interacting in Korean and supporting Korean literacy though they continued to occasionally find teachable moments.

The Perspectives of Extended Family Members on Heritage Language Maintenance and Development

The focal children’s numerous extended family members, especially the maternal grandmothers and aunts were one of the most influential figures for these young learners’ development of their heritage language and literacy. In addition, these Korean-looking and -speaking family members living in Korea were one of the reasons the children identities themselves as Koreans. In order to meet extended family members in Korea, the focal family flew to Korea at least once a year, and family members in Korea also visited this home regularly.

Since I have been a close family friend for many years, I have been able to maintain constant contact with all family members, including extended family members. Because they were kind to me, it was easier for me to have further conversations and informal interviews. Even though I did not initiate the topic of heritage language
maintenance and development, they often brought it up. They also asked questions about the acquisition and development of the two languages. This is possibly because all of the family members knew how I had become close to this family. Each time they initiated such conversations, I was naturally able to lead them into further conversation about the focal children’s heritage language maintenance and development.

The maternal grandmother and aunts carefully reviewed my tutorial materials when I visited this home for tutoring. They focused on the textbook, materials, homework, and teaching style (how I engaged the children in language and literacy learning). They also updated me about the nature, characteristics, and details of literacy events. When the children made an interesting comment regarding such things as struggling with learning two languages or identity confusion as Asian-Americans, the extended family members and parents informed me. Every time I met the children’s extended family members, I showed my enthusiasm for or interest in their grandchildren/nephews’ bilingual/biliteracy events, so that they might bring up a topic that could build rapport between us.

The Perspectives and Influences of Community Members on This Family

As transnational, bicultural, and bilingual Korean-Americans, this family shaped their own way of living-half American and half Korean. As such, they balanced themselves between two communities: the American community and the Korean-origin community. These two communities are described below.

American community. Because of this family’s SES and the father’s white-collar profession and higher education, they fit into their neighborhood well. They are
close to a few European-American families who live on the same street, especially the
next-door neighbors, because the two families have children of similar ages and share
backyards as well as the experience of leading immigrant lives. Furthermore, the oldest
boy is in the same class as Kevin, so they are best friends both at home and school. The
mother also made friends easily with other parents, due both to her personality and the
fact that she had lived in the town for so long. She and her friends sometimes shared
baking tips or carpooled, and their children often had sleepovers at each other’s houses.
Since the focal family’s house was located in the wealthiest part of town and the
neighborhood children tended to attend the same elementary school, I was able to observe
the other families.

**Korean-origin community.** The focal family has been highly recognized as a
model family both in Korean and American communities for over 10 years, because the
father has maintained a high status in an academic organization in the Korean and
Korean-American community. Since the father had earned his Ph.D. at the university in
town and held a stable job, he had formed strong connections with other families,
Scholars, and business owners in town. He was a family man who attended many events
with his wife and children. The mother naturally became familiar with the community
through school events, interacting with other moms, and church.

Therefore, as time went by, the mother also became well regarded by other
Korean moms because of her personality and commitment to improving the community.
Thus, both parents have numerous connections with many people in town. According to
the father, the ratio of ethnicity among his acquaintances was 60% American and 40%
Korean. The mother’s ratio was the opposite, as she had begun her life in this town
speaking only Korean. Her Korean mothers’ group and her Bible study group were her primary social gatherings.

According to the mother, an important topic among Korean mothers was how to raise children as bilingual/biliterates. Other mothers often asked her about how to increase their children’s exposure to Korean language, literacy, and culture. She told me that she did not have the perfect answer for them all the time, but just felt very lucky to have a supportive family back in Korea who could afford regular trips to the United States; they shared her views about bilingual education so that they cooperated to provide rich opportunities for her three children.

When the mother was talking about other mothers asking her for advice, I told her that I could understand why others might want to seek her advice, because they wanted to become like her family. She agreed, saying, “예 그런데 갈아요, 부럽단 애기도 많이 하고 많이 따라하려고 해요. 정확한 정보를 알려주도 하구요. ‘model family, best family’ 라는 애기도 들어봐봤어요. 좋은 거이긴 하지만 한편으로 부담스럽기도 하죠, 왜냐하면 저희도 바쁘고 정신없이 사는데 . . . 그렇게 완벽하지도 못하구요 . . . . . .” [Yes, I agree, they told me that they envy me and try to get a lot of detailed information to copy many things from my family. When they tell me we are a model family or the best family, I like to hear that; at the same time, I also feel burdened because we are always busy and we are not that perfect . . . . . .]

As an active member of the Korean community, I also heard other Korean families talk about this focal family. Everybody spoke highly of this family, often using the words “perfect family” when describing them. Thus, the mother’s concern did not
surprise me, because what she expressed to me was in line with what I had already heard from other community members.

Korean mothers tend to be the “educational managers” in the household (Park & Abelmann, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003). Thus, mothers’ meetings often focused on exchanging information about extracurricular classes and programs. Some of this family’s acquaintances held doctorates or master’s degrees in education. This allowed some of the social members to ask technical questions to degree-holding experts. According to the mother, one of the big issues in this group was how to maintain and develop their children’s Korean language and literacy as one of the channels to becoming a member of TEK (explained in chapter 2, p. 51). The mother expressed her concern about being in these community groups. “Some Korean parents look proud when their children speak both languages (Korean and English) really well, and I really envy that. No matter what I do, my children are not that good anymore.” She also noted the existence of competition among Korean mothers about their children doing well in school and being perfect bilinguals.

The following excerpt represents how Korean community members perceive their global citizenship. This conversation was recorded at a coffee table with four Korean mothers in 2005.

Mother 1: I never regret that we moved here. Although I am not a perfect native English speaker, I am also picking up the fluency, of course slowly (smile), and my children made great progress so far. Because they are ready to be fluent in both languages (Korean and English), I am sure that their future is so bright. At least, they will not become so poor with a job, right?

Researcher: So are you saying that you and your children can be globally competent by acquiring English proficiency or becoming bilinguals? (Other mothers, 2, 3, 4 were nodding).
Mother 1: Mostly but not necessarily. English is the most important part but they, I mean, we, are gaining cultural and life experiences in the United States. And I strongly believed that the US would be much better to live in than other places. Once we are successful here, then we can live anywhere in the world.

Researcher: (looking at other mothers) Do you also think so?

Mother 3: Yes, but my child is not bilingual. He lost his Korean ability. They (Mother 1’s children) are different because they speak Korean at home and many relatives come from Korea. My family, we mistakenly spoke English at home even though we changed that factor a few months ago, but he already became American.

Researcher: Are you talking about his language proficiency or identity?

Mother 3: Both.

This focal family might be different from other Korean-origin families in other towns in the United States, due to unique characteristics of the research setting. For example, this university town had experienced a steady increase in Korean population, especially in the last 5 years. In such a setting, religious communities are extremely important, because many ethnic groups gather in churches or community centers. This focal family was involved in many events and Bible studies in their church, and the parents were always very close to other Korean families in their bible study group. They shared much information and called each other often to talk about socio-cultural topics, leisure, family, or educational issues.

The focal parents’ educational goals, beliefs, and practices over the course of six years suggested that they genuinely valued high-quality education, especially when it emphasized heritage language/literacy development. The parents themselves were first-generation Korean immigrants who had had three children in the United States. Therefore, they had less Korean parents’ education-fever, excessive effort to raise their
children to become competent global citizens (see chapter 2, p. 59) who would be recognized as smart and successful people anywhere in the world. At the same time, the parents strongly pursued bilingual education for identity development as Koreans or Korean-Americans.
Chapter 5

Going Backwards: A Full-Bilingual Becomes Mono-Lingual—
the Case of the Oldest Child, Kevin

Introduction

This chapter describes Kevin, the oldest of three siblings in a first generation immigrant family. Kevin was the sole subject of the pilot study in 2003 and 2004, which became the cornerstone for the entire dissertation study. As I observed and taught him both in the Korean language school and his home as a private heritage language tutor, I was able to find opportunities and obstacles to Kevin becoming a full-bilingual/biliterate, which piqued my interest in researching him as a single case study.

In a series of in-depth interviews, Kevin’s parents indicated that they considered him a failure in the sense that he had been a full bilingual but gradually changed to an English monolingual, especially during the latter part of this study. The parents explained that, because he was the first child, they had not had enough experiences providing their children with bilingual/biliterate education. Three major sections will delineate the entire development of Kevin’s language and literacy proficiency, including his identity transformation, in the following order: (a) a chronological description of Kevin’s language and literacy development especially in his heritage language over a period of 6 years; (b) a historical representation of Kevin’s ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity; and (c) a discussion of socio-cultural factors creating both opportunities and obstacles to being a second-generation young child in the United States. In the following section, Kevin’s personal biography in terms of education, language, and personality will be described. Based on this background information about Kevin, major issues and findings
about his bilingual and biliteracy practices will be discussed, supported by relevant examples, sample transcript excerpts, and brief descriptions of assessment results. The results will be framed around two themes: (a) socio-cultural values and roles and (b) Kevin’s attitudes, perspectives, and linguistic behavior/development in Korean and English.

**Kevin’s current status.** At the conclusion of this study, Kevin was 12 years old and attended an all-English middle school. His outgoing personality in his early years seemed to facilitate his acquisition of both languages to communicate with others; however he became verbally quiet especially at home by the end of this study. He became a middle school student who enjoyed playing computer games in his own room and became less interactive with others. Since he attended all English schooling, he seemed mostly confident when he used English but had some difficulty forming grammatically correct sentences in Korean. He occasionally talked to me in English, Korean, or even some Spanish that he had picked up from his classmates until he was a 4th grader. Despite this skill, Kevin preferred using oral and written English even at home.

**Educational path.** I met Kevin in the Korean language school of a Korean church during spring of 2003, and at that time, he was six and a half years old, and attended an all-English first grade. Kevin attended an all-English neighborhood public school, which was reflective of the demographics within his neighborhood. Unlike his two younger sisters, Kevin did not go to any kind of daycare or preschool. His mother stayed at home; his two younger sisters (Mary and Shelly) were too young for school, so the parents decided to educate Kevin by themselves while his mother took care of the two babies at
home. In addition to this convenience-based decision about Kevin’s education, financial issues were another important factor in deciding whether to send him to daycare or not. Throughout his early childhood, Kevin had fewer extracurricular classes than his other two siblings. Although his parents had a tight budget at the time, they sent Kevin to Tae-Kwon Do classes, like other Korean boys. Tae-Kwon Do is something that parents generally cannot teach at home, and it is not as expensive as piano or violin lessons, for example.

Kevin went to a middle school officially and unofficially ranked in the middle of the town middle schools. His parents wanted to send him to a better school, but the district’s system was to send everyone in Kevin’s elementary school to the middle school where he ended up. The intent behind this system was to keep all the middle schools in town equal in terms of the quality of students, teachers, and test scores. When Kevin’s mother explained this, she did not look happy, but she also indicated that she had tried to accept the system set up by the district. Kevin’s high school will be similar to the middle school that he went to—mainly populated with white Americans and African Americans, with a few Asian students in each classroom. Like other children, Kevin was greatly influenced in his linguistic practices and development by his elementary and middle schooling.

**Kevin’s Bilingual and Biliteracy Acquisition and Development**

By following Kevin’s case, I found that a child’s personality, his parents’ daily oral language usage, and his everyday schooling played the most important roles in his development of bilingual and biliteracy proficiency as a young, second-generation learner.
in the United States. As I present in the next chapter, literacy classes and activities in the first language accelerated Kevin’s linguistic and cognitive development, including his acquisition of socio-cultural knowledge. His linguistic practices, including his concept of identity and his writing samples, suggest that he presented steady progress throughout the course of his Korean language school and tutoring.

However, this progress changed in a very short time to a loss of his Korean language and literacy proficiency, once everyone around him prioritized other matters over the maintenance and development of Kevin’s heritage language and culture. In order for readers to see the big picture of his longitudinal linguistic and cultural development, a detailed chronological description will be presented in three time frames: (a) 6-8 years old (2003-2004); (b) 8-10 years old (2005-2006); and (c) 10-12 years old (2006-2008). A summary of his oral and written language acquisition and development in two languages during the three time frames will be presented in Table 2.

Kevin’s oral language usage and development.

Six to eight years old (2003 to 2004): A fluent Korean speaker begins to acquire a second language, English. Kevin had stayed at home with his parents from birth until he began kindergarten. Due to his mother’s lack of English proficiency, having lived only a few years in the United States, Kevin spoke and listened to oral Korean language all the time, as his mother tongue/language since birth. Although he had not been born in Korea, he was the best Korean speaker among his classmates in my class; his oral Korean proficiency interested me in observing him to find out how he had acquired his heritage language as a Korean-American born in the United States.
Kevin often engaged in code-switching and -mixing, similar to other bilingual preschoolers. In the following excerpt, Kevin code-switched while talking to his mother.

At the end of Korean school, his mother asked Kevin a question in Korean:

Mother: Are you going home now? (Korean)
Kevin: Nope! (Korean)
Mother: Are you sure you want to stay here? I’m leaving (Korean)
Kevin: No (Korean). Come on! (English) I will (Korean) play (English) for just half an hour with my friends! (Korean; from a field note in May, 2003)

This conversation is a typical example of code-mixing for bilingual preschoolers. The conversational partner, the mother, who is bilingual, influenced Kevin to mix and switch the language code, because Kevin was probably sure that his mother could understand these simple English words.

During this period of 2003-2004, I was able to observe Kevin every Saturday as the head teacher of his class at the Korean language school. Before each class, I had a series of conversations with his parents about their concerns related to Kevin’s Korean oral and written language development. I often engaged in brief conversations with Kevin and his classmates during their play. Kevin seemed confident in speaking Korean, but he had some difficulties forming grammatically correct sentences when it came to complicated issues and tenses, probably due to his young age. In addition, Korean grammar is more complicated than English grammar, because of all the suffixes for showing courtesy to elders, as well as many different kinds of prepositions with nuanced meanings. Although Kevin had not acquired all of the detailed rules of oral Korean
language, he had been able to communicate simple and short utterances in Korean to other Korean parents, teachers, and classmates at the Korean language school.

In early 2004, when Kevin was a kindergartener, his mother asked me to tutor him in Korean language and literacy at least twice a week. Thus, I began to privately teach him Korean at home, in addition to the Saturday Korean language school. As a part of this study, I met with the focal students and their parents at least three times a week, which provided the opportunity to develop a strong rapport with the entire family, including extended family members. The ongoing in-depth observations showed Korean language/literacy use about 60 to 70 percentage of the time in this home, and I was able to double-check this approximation with Kevin’s mother:

We use Korean probably about 70% of the time daily. However, I feel that it has decreased since Kevin went to kindergarten. He is picking up English too fast after a couple of months being there, and I was really amazed by how a young child is able to acquire a language so quickly. I wish I had Kevin’s ability to pick English up so fast (giggling). (From an informal interview in Dec, 2004)

Importantly, Mary, Kevin’s younger sister, began preschool during this period. As Mary’s English oral language proficiency increased, Kevin began to switch more frequently from Korean to English with Mary and with his parents. Because Mary was Kevin’s primary play partner at home, Mary’s increasing ability to interact in English had a significant effect on Kevin’s use of Korean. Consequently, the family gradually began to use less Korean at home.

**Eight to ten years old (2005-2006): Increased code mixing/switching.** During this time period when Kevin was in first through third grades, I observed more code-mixing and -switching from Korean to English. Bauer (2000, p. 106) discussed code-switching, asserting that it is “a widely distributed tendency among bilinguals.” Many
researchers have stated that children may mix languages when a word is more easily accessible in one language than in the other language. In the following excerpt, Kevin code switched while talking to his mother. At the dinner table, the mother asked Kevin whether he wanted to have more milk or not.

Mother: Who wants more milk? (Korean)
Kevin: Me! (English)
Mother: Are you sure you want to have more? (Korean)
Mary: I also want to have more. (Korean)
Kevin: Me too! Give me more milk. (English; From a transcript during an observation in December 2005)

In the excerpt above, we can see that he engaged in more code-switching during simple conversations at home. Bauer (2000) suggested that the reasons for code-switching can be social assimilation depending on the conversational or play partner, or the content. Many studies also have indicated that mixing languages does not necessarily lead to loss of spoken language proficiency (i.e., Garcia, 1983); however, the trend towards more code-switching in this family appeared to lead to decreased Korean use at home.

Connor: Can you come over to my place? I’ve got a new game!
Kevin: Oh! (looking at his mother) Can I go?
Mary: (To Kevin) 염마가 오빠 한글 공부해야 한다고 했잖아! [Mom told you that you should study Korean literacy!]
Mother: 그래, 게다가 너 학원은 어떻게하려구? [Right, and then what about your extracurricular class?]
Kevin: Mom, just one time . . . Can I skip it?
Mom: 워라구? 잘 안들려~! [What? I can't hear you, speak up!]
Kevin: I said I would skip only once!

Mother: 거봐, 너 한국말 다 까먹어놀구, 어쩌구 그래? [See? You've forgotten most of your Korean, what are you going to do with it?]

Kevin: (Silence) . . . . (looked sad; from a transcript during an observation during November 2006)

The ratio of speaking English had increased while Korean usage had decreased, and the speed of these changes had accelerated; in addition the parents did not oppose the linguistic changes. As Kevin grew up, he tended to have more conversations especially with the father, and the father spoke to Kevin in English more than before. When I asked the father why, he shared his belief that he valued the quality and intensity of communication with his son. However, he still believed in the importance of heritage language retention and development. I was able to observe the mother’s attempt to get Kevin to communicate with her in Korean; however, she also had her own interest in improving her English proficiency while she naturally communicated with her children at home.

Not only had Kevin’s daily conversation changed from Korean to English, but his linguistic play (rhyming) had also changed from Korean to English. As he played computer games or outdoor games with his peers, he often made sounds that were composed of English syllables.

Both Kevin and his parents discussed the use of language games at home. The International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) jointly suggest rhyming games and letter-sound matching games as aspects of developmentally appropriate practices (1998). When asked about language games in English, Kevin gave the following examples:
Humpty Dumpty, Chiki-chiki boom-boom, porki-porki boom-boom, horki-horki boom-boom.

However, when I asked about Korean language games, Kevin said, “I don’t know.” Thus, Kevin missed out on an interesting way to increase his Korean language ability.

Ten to twelve years old (2006-2008, late elementary and middle school): Radical decrease of oral Korean language usage. The longer Kevin was exposed to all-English schooling and friends who spoke only English, the less he tended to communicate in Korean at home. The more Kevin’s mother acquired English language proficiency, the fewer opportunities Kevin had to be engaged in Korean language in his daily life. As time went by, Kevin’s two younger sisters were also exposed to English-only preschool and kindergarten, and they also tended to speak more English than ever, especially after mid-2006. Through monthly observations and yearly interviews, I saw that there was too little time for Kevin to practice Korean language and literacy. Kevin spoke English approximately 80% of the time at home, including time with American peers, Korean peers, and siblings.

During the formal interview held in November 2007, Kevin specifically complained about using Korean at home. When I asked him why, he said, “I don’t understand Korean much . . . 단어도 모르고, 어떤말도 무슨말인지 몰라 [I don’t know many words, and I sometimes don’t understand what my mom tells me in Korean].” The mother added,

In Sunday school at the local Catholic church, some new Koreans just joined the class. The American teachers asked Kevin to translate to Korean for them. However, Kevin did not know the Korean word for “goal (목표),” so he got embarrassed, and he basically could not translate well.
I remember that the mother had mentioned her dream of Kevin fully mastering two languages so that he could translate anytime and anywhere, but he seemed to be far behind achieving that goal.

Kevin had been living in an English speaking country where English literacy and language are highly prized. He did not realize that Korean sound-symbols are actually more closely correlated than the sound-symbols of English. Thus, learning to read and write in Korean should have been easier than English, since he had a strong basis in Korean oral language. However, Kevin actually had few opportunities to acquire Korean literacy. He complained that his English-speaking peers asked him to translate when his mother spoke to him in Korean, and that bothered him. He wanted to speak English to make life simple and easy. Thus, Kevin’s surrounding environment encouraged him to use English.

Kevin’s biliteracy development. Kevin had been raised as a Korean speaker, having learned to read Korean letters first, until he went to an all-English kindergarten. When I met Kevin in 2003, he was 6 years old and only capable of reading a few Korean letters from his Korean name, although he was quite fluent in speaking simple Korean sentences. Kevin’s parents told me that they had tried to teach him how to write his Korean name, as well as words like “dad (아빠),” “mom (엄마),” “younger sibling (동생),” and some types of food. Unlike his two siblings, Kevin stopped using and learning Korean in 2006. However, Kevin’s daily language and literacy usage contained a mixture of both languages, and his English development was typical of native English-speaking American children who rank in the top 5 of their classes, according to his
mother and classroom teachers. (The teachers did not use the number 5, but the mother did. They both mentioned that Kevin had been an excellent student in class).

In addition to observing Kevin’s heritage language and literacy development as a pilot study for this dissertation, I also experimented with using quantitative methods to evaluate his heritage literacy development in the separate categories of reading and writing in order to find the best research methods to investigate young learners’ language and literacy development, especially in their heritage language. Below, I describe the process and results of the temporary quantitative study, most of which took place in 2005 alongside the longitudinal qualitative study.

Reading development: Letters/words/sentences and literature (Korean).

Reading letters/words/sentences. Kevin learned how to read some Korean letters before this study began, so that I was not able to observe the beginning steps of his building literacy. Kevin’s Korean literacy will be examined in three time frames: 2003-2004; 2005-2006; and 2007-2008.

2003 to 2004: A fluent Korean speaker slowly developing his Korean reading ability. During this time frame, Kevin was 6-7 years old and in kindergarten and first grade. This period was the cornerstone of Kevin’s Korean language and literacy improvement. In 2003, when I met him at the Korean language school, he was able to read a few words mostly about himself, including his name and the names of family members.

As I got to know him and his parents better through our interactions at the Korean language school and in private tutoring in 2004, the gap between his oral and written linguistic proficiency in Korean became evident in many ways. Even though Kevin was
comfortable and confident speaking and listening to oral Korean, he was able to read only a few simple words that he had learned from his parents (i.e., family relationship names [called “호칭” in Korean]). With his awareness and understanding of the Korean letter-sound relationship, he attempted to read many words and was able to read most simple words correctly. On the other hand, he read some words incorrectly in the following cases: (a) the word was written differently from its pronunciation; and (b) the written word included 2-3 consonants in one syllable, which constitutes a more complicated syllable in written Korean.

The entire curriculum at the Korean language school was the same curriculum adopted by the Korean educational government system, so that the textbooks in each grade were the same textbooks that children in Korea use daily in the classroom. However, the population at the Korean heritage language school in the United States was mostly young second-generation learners who were born in the United States or who moved to the United States a long time ago. Thus, most students had difficulty learning the content in the textbook when they took classes at the Korean language school. They were barely able to read a few words per textbook page, but Kevin’s ability was better than second-generation Korean students of the same age with similar academic, economic, and natural support, perhaps because he was raised by first-generation immigrant parents who used spoken and written Korean on a daily basis in the United States.

Kevin was one of the best students in my class, and he showed his phonemic awareness by making mistakes in writing Korean words. He tended to spell words as they are pronounced, although many Korean words are spelled differently from their
pronunciations. For example, I (the Korean language school teacher) taught my students to write “went to school” in Korean. Many students wrote a whole word, most of a word, or a grammatically incorrect sentence. Kevin, however, wrote most sentences correctly, yet he wrote them how they sounded, rather than following the rules of written Korean. Therefore, when I asked him to write “went to school,” he wrote “학교에 가다,” whereas the correct spelling is “학교에 갔다.” Not only does this example show Kevin’s phonemic awareness, but it also shows his understanding of letter-sound relationships. In addition, Kevin had presented some understanding of grammatical rules for writing Korean, which are different from English. For example, in English, the word order is subject + verb + noun/adjective, but in Korean, the word order is subject + noun/adjective + verb. Kevin showed awareness of the differences in word order of the two languages. Furthermore, when most Korean literacy learners are asked to write the word “school (학교),” most of them write “학교,” as Kevin did, because the pronunciation of both spellings is the same. Kevin understood these rules as well as other differences between Korean and English language and literacy, but it would take a long time for him to acquire all the different complicated rules of written Korean.

Overall, Kevin made astonishing improvement in reading Korean letters during this period (2003-2004). He was able to read some written Korean words in 2003, but by the end of 2004, he demonstrated some fluency in reading short (and sometimes long) Korean sentences.

2005-2006: Rapid improvement. Kevin achieved the most radical improvement of his heritage language/literacy development during this period, when he was 8-10 years old. During 2005, I used both qualitative and quantitative assessments in my research
with Kevin. In the following paragraph, the background, design, procedure, conditions, contexts, and differences between pre-assessment and post-assessment are explained in detail.

Kevin’s assessment was composed of both a pre-assessment and a post-assessment of his reading and writing development in Korean. I conducted a pre-assessment to establish a baseline for Kevin’s literacy ability. This was an informal assessment that included various kinds of literacy work samples and activities collected from my Korean class at the beginning of this pilot study. Many naturally-driven writing samples were generated in Kevin’s home during playtime, family time, and homework time right after school. Written pieces and literate activities during my Korean tutoring classes were added. I also conducted semi-formal assessments for comparison with later literacy achievement after 10 months of intervention: answering 5-7 comprehension questions after reading a short paragraph aloud, which focused on Kevin’s reading ability. To check his reading status, I examined his reading speed, reading mistakes, fluency, and comprehension of the main ideas and details of the text. My test for reading aimed to assess his ability to read, the characteristics of his reading, and his comprehension ability, including the five to seven comprehension questions. For the post-assessment, all of the questions and the setting for the assessment were identical to the pre-assessment, to discern Kevin’s biliteracy progress. To add to the accuracy of the assessment results, I also considered environmental factors when the two assessments were conducted, maintaining the same time, place, noise level, and Kevin’s personal condition. Therefore, the setting of the post-assessment was the same as the pre-assessment.
Results of the reading assessment. In Korean, Kevin’s literacy skills progressed during the ten months of this study due to literacy intervention through the language school and individual tutoring. Based on observation and analysis, Kevin improved from an early beginning reader to an advanced beginning reader, according to Salinger’s (2001) scale of early literacy development. Thus, Kevin made substantial improvement in Korean reading during this one-year pilot study for the longitudinal (6 years) case study.

For example, Kevin exhibited improvement in phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, reading speed, and comprehension, though his performance was not correct at all times. Kevin easily identified words that he already knew. He also guessed at the meanings and sounds of words unknown to him. He identified most Korean letters and sounds and read correctly by putting his index finger under each word as he read. It was clear that he read to understand the meanings of words and content in text. His understanding of a narrative text, usually several paragraphs of a short book, was illustrated when he was asked to pause and predict what would happen next when he read a story. With his knowledge of Korean vocabulary and his comprehension ability, he usually understood story texts and often correctly predicted the next events in the story.

I assessed Kevin’s reading comprehension with questions about details from an informal text. He answered 3 questions out of 10 correctly in the pre-assessment and 6 questions out of 10 correctly in the post-assessment. This suggests that his Korean reading comprehension ability improved over the 10 months of Korean literacy education. Because the time between the pre- and post-assessment was 7 months, Kevin
probably forgot the text, which was the basis for the assessment. Therefore, assessment reliability was likely not compromised by his taking the same test twice.

I also checked Kevin’s understanding of a narrative text. As Kevin was reading a story, I asked him to pause and predict what would happen next. With his knowledge of vocabulary and his comprehension ability, he mostly understood the story text and often correctly predicted the next event in the story. Yet, to understand a story in Korean, he still needed to continue learning about Korean language and culture. Kevin often said, “I don’t know what this means” in Korean.

To analyze and interpret Kevin’s improvement in Korean reading ability through assessment, I counted the number of right answers, and checked timing and flow, the length of content for writing an essay, and vocabulary usage. Then I found his level of literacy on a scale (see Appendix H) developed by South Brunswick teachers and ETS staff (as cited in Salinger, 2001, p. 400).

In the reading pre-assessment, he read 6 sentences of informal text. He took 7 minutes and seemed confused while answering the comprehension questions. For the comprehension questions, he answered 4 out of 7 questions correctly. He mostly understood the flow, but not the details. On the other hand, in the post-assessment, he read 6 sentences of informal text. He took 5 minutes and appeared to understand the main ideas. For the comprehension questions, he answered 6 out of 7 questions right. He mostly understood the flow, and more details.

I applied Salinger’s (2001) scale of early literacy development to the above results of the pre- and post-assessment. Kevin improved from Level 3 (early beginning reader) to Level 4 (advanced beginning reader) on a scale of 7 levels. (See Appendix H for a
detailed explanation of each level.) Over the course of 10 months in 2005, Kevin had been moving from the pictographic stage, with some phonemic awareness, to nearly complete phonemic awareness, and an understanding of letter-sound correspondences and grammar.

When reading in Korean, Kevin put his finger under the letters and read words one by one. He indicated that he was not sure whether he read the words correctly and sometimes went back to look at the letters and read the words again. For example, when he read ざ (/dal/, meaning “moon”), he put his head close to the book, and sometimes sounded out the first consonant and vowel (the top part of the word, e.g., ㄹ /da/) first and then combined it with the character below (e.g., ㅏ /dal/). Kevin’s reading method likely helped him understand the syllable formation system in Korean, in which an imaginary box is filled with two consonants and one vowel. This is different from the English syllable formation system, in which letters are never written one above the other, but are always placed next to each other in a horizontal row. However, reading from left to right (direction application) and his phonemic awareness in Korean may have helped Kevin acquire literacy in English faster, because the overall direction of reading Korean and English letters (left to right) is the same. As many researchers have confirmed, first language literacy accelerates second language literacy acquisition. Barrera (2003) also asserts that linguistic factors which are acquired in the first language transfer to the second language. In Kevin’s case, he acquired literacy in Korean first (writing his Korean name), though he had been exposed to two different languages at the same time. As the mother confirmed, his second language (English) acquisition accelerated once he acquired simple concepts of Korean literacy.
In conclusion, Kevin was able to show improvement on his reading development in Korean. With intervention, including Korean heritage language classes, intensive private tutoring sessions, the daily effort of his parents, and daily Korean usage, Kevin was able to present improvement in learning Korean during his early elementary period.

2006-2008: Sudden decrease in oral Korean language use. In this time frame, Kevin was 10-12 years old and in late elementary and middle school. He showed a serious decrease in both his oral and written Korean usage and practice. This corresponded to the time when I (as his private Korean tutor) had to stop teaching Kevin and his sister, Mary. Kevin’s parents also ceased to send him to the Korean language school. When I asked why, his mother told me that she strongly believed that Kevin had acquired stable and confident Korean proficiency, so it would be waste of money to continue sending him to the language school. Rather than paying for Kevin to attend the Korean language school, the mother preferred to send Mary or Shelly, because they had not acquired as much Korean as Kevin had. She also believed that Kevin would not take long to regain his current level of Korean language/literacy proficiency, even if ceasing his Korean language and literacy education caused him to lose the linguistic proficiency that he had acquired so far.

In this period, when Kevin was a 4th-6th grader, he also looked forward to reading literature. His reading habits and characteristics in this period will be displayed in the following section.

Reading literature—2003-2004: An exploration of various pieces of literature in both languages. At this time, Kevin was a 6-8 year old boy in kindergarten and first grade. When I was teaching Kevin in the Korean language school, I introduced many
pieces of Korean literature, mostly big books with large drawings. Kevin liked them and expressed his excitement about big books: “우와! 나 이런 큰 책 집에 있는데, 작은 아니 보통 책은 많아! [Cool! I don’t have these at home, but I have many Korean books, but they are small- or regular-sized.]” Kevin’s characteristics were typical of children beginning to read: he liked to read a few words in picture books.

Because Kevin was the first child in his family and the parents and extended family members provided many kinds of books in both English and Korean including biography sets, history sets, Aesop fairy tale sets, and/or creative story sets. Kevin’s parents believed that providing those books was much more important than saving money, so they asked extended family members to buy them in Korea when they wanted to buy a big present for their children’s birthdays. Kevin’s parents got English books from the local bookstore, and extended family members in Korea sent books by air and brought them with them when they visited the family.

In both English and Korean, Kevin had been exposed to many literacy events due to the family’s abundant print resources at home. I observed many kinds and levels of Korean and English books in his room, where he had a library corner. To draw the children’s attention, books of various sizes and materials, containing stickers and pictures, were put on the bookshelves. While I taught Kevin in his room, his siblings read and played with the books, and he also expressed his interest in the books.

2005-2006: Enjoying Korean books, but only thin ones with few letters. As an 8-10 year old second and third grader, Kevin continued to show interest in various kinds of storybooks and colorful drawings. When Kevin read short stories in Korean, he expressed his interest and curiosity about the content in the books and the illustrations. He
attempted to skim the front page of Korean books, read the titles, looked at illustrations quickly, and said, “I want to read this.” He opened the books and started to read.

Although he sometimes enjoyed reading Korean books, he preferred books in English when given the opportunity to choose. Moreover, Kevin increasingly showed a preference for reading simple rather than challenging Korean books. For example, he sometimes expressed his interest in the content of short Korean books and the illustrations within them. He attempted to skim the front page of these short Korean books, read the titles, looked at illustrations quickly, and said, “I want to read this.” On one occasion, he opened a new Korean book, “방구쟁이 할머니” (“The Grandmother Who Passes Gas”) and started to read. He read the first sentence of the text right away: “

예전 어느 시골 마을에 방구쟁이 할머니가 살았습니다” [A long, long time ago in a rural town, there was a grandmother who passed gas all the time]. However, upon looking at the thickness of this Korean book, he sighed and refused to continue. This was a typical expression of his stress when reading Korean.

Especially during 2006, when I was not able to teach him either in the Korean language school or at his home, I noticed that he was not reading as much as he had before 2006. When I asked him to read Korean literature, he began to express stress about reading books written in English and in Korean. He asked me in English, “Why do I have to read books written in Korean and in English while other children read books written in English only?” I answered, “Because you are a bilingual and biliterate. They just can’t read books written in other languages, but you can. How awesome! I am so proud of you!” He remained quiet, perhaps because my words were consistent with what he had
heard from his parents and extended family members, especially his maternal grandmother.

Although his parents and I pointed out the positive side of reading literature written in two languages, Kevin often expressed stress when reading Korean, and I could see that reading in English was much easier for him than reading in Korean. Kevin had various kinds of books in Korean and English, and his books in English were often thicker than his books in Korean. During an interview, he said that he thought Korean was more difficult to learn than English, and this notion appears to have resulted in a refusal to read books that were even slightly more difficult than his current reading level in Korean.

2006-2008: Sudden decrease of reading Korean literature. When he was 10-12 years old and in late elementary followed by middle school, I never saw Kevin read Korean literature, except for a few comic books. His mother also told me that he refused to read Korean literature, although she had gotten some books from the public library and from family friends. She explained that he felt it was too difficult to read long and complicated sentences in Korean, with unknown vocabulary and embedded elements of Korean culture. This phenomenon had been evident not only in reading literature but also in popular culture, such as Korean movies. Kevin initially showed a strong interest in Korean films when he still had proficiency in Korean language and literacy, but he gradually lost interest as he lost linguistic proficiency. During his informal interview in early 2008, I asked Kevin to write down the title of books that he had recently read. He wrote down only two Korean book titles that he had read during 2007.
In sum, Kevin indicated that he could read and write and speak in English and Korean; nevertheless, through interview, discussion, and observation, it was obvious that Kevin believed that English oral language and literacy was far easier than Korean. Consequently, he tended to refuse to read Korean books that were even slightly more difficult than his current reading level. He seemed not to be afraid of choosing books written in English at a slightly higher level than his current reading ability; on the other hand, he mostly chose Korean comic books or other books that looked easy to read. Reading in English, however, was substantially less problematic, as illustrated by my own observation at home, and his good grades and emotional comfort at school.

**Writing development: Writing letters, words, and essay.**

2003-2004: Beginning to write Korean letters. During this period, when he was 6 to 8 years old, Kevin had acquired Korean oral language as his mother tongue. He learned how to speak, read, and write his Korean name first, and then acquired the same skills in English. However, Kevin’s literacy ability was at the level of a 4-year-old, writing a few Korean alphabet letters, such as ㄱ, ㄴ, ㄷ, ㄹ, ㅁ, ㅂ, ㅅ, ㅈ, and ㅊ, which compose Kevin’s Korean name. His parents explained to me that sending Kevin to the Korean language school to develop his Korean literacy proficiency was a means to raise him as “a real Korean” who was capable to read and write fluently in his heritage language. Therefore, his mother always tried to sit down with him with a Korean writing notebook.
Kevin’s mother reflected on how to teach Kevin to write the Korean letters (14 consonants and 10 vowels) one by one. She took on the role of educational manager for Kevin by intensively teaching him how to write each consonant and vowel over the course of this period (2003-2004). As I began to observe him in 2003, I was able to observe his development from letter recognition and identification to reading words and then series of words, and then to writing short sentences.

\textit{Figure 1}. Kevin’s writing sample 1.
In Kevin’s writing sample below, he was able to write a list of words when he had model words in front of him. At this time, I taught him colors in Korean. After reading aloud from a Korean book called “I Love the Rainbow (무지개가 좋아요),” Kevin started writing colors in Korean, flipping to each page to see how to write the name of each color in Korean. Although the first color of the rainbow is “red (빨간색),” he only wrote “간색.” When I asked him why, he said, “그 글자는 쓰기 너무 어려워 (It’s too difficult to write the first letter).” Thus, he wrote the color “red” in Korean without the first letter (빨), which is composed of three consonants and one vowel, to form the first syllable of “red” in Korean. With the exception of that syllable, Kevin wrote the names of the seven colors of rainbow perfectly in Korean, as shown below.

Figure 2. Kevin’s writing sample 2.
Kevin’s writing improved consistently and gradually day by day. He seemed to enjoy experiencing his own improvement and hearing lots of compliments on his written Korean words and sentences from many adults around him, including extended family members, neighbors, me as his Korean tutor, and his own parents. Kevin’s speedy improvement in his Korean writing will be displayed in the following section. Ten dictation words and a short free-writing essay represented his ability to write and to develop his own ideas in written Korean.

**Figure 3. Kevin’s writing sample 3.**

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| 업공색무지개 |
| 무지개생늘가요 |
| 나는무지개가조와요 |
2005-2006: Radical improvement in Kevin’s Korean writing. As with his reading development, Kevin’s writing improvement was influenced by interventions during this period, when he was 8-10 years old. Kevin’s writing ability in Korean clearly increased over the course of this period. To ensure a reliable assessment, I developed simple but detailed on-going assessment material, which was composed of 10 dictation questions and a written essay. Kevin’s improvement in writing dictation (10 short sentences) and essays is obvious. As mentioned earlier, I also compared his literacy level on the pre-assessment to the post-assessment, as follows.

In the pre-assessment of writing dictation, he got 3 right answers out of 10 questions. Kevin mostly made grammatical mistakes. For the writing essay, he wrote a total of 3 sentences, with 3 or 4 words in each sentence. In the post-assessment of writing dictation, he got 9 right answers out of 10 questions. He made a grammatical mistake in his one wrong answer. In the free writing essay section, he wrote a total of 5 sentences, with 5-6 words in each sentence.

In his essay, Kevin’s content and flow improved slightly from the pre- to post-assessment. He wrote 3 sentences with a disorganized plot in the pre-assessment, but he wrote 4 sentences with better organization in the post-assessment. The number of words in one sentence also improved from 3-4 to 5-6. With his development in Korean oral language and reading ability, his writing context and vocabulary appear to have improved as well, though these results may not be significant.

Looking at the details of Kevin’s essays and dictation, his grammar mistakes decreased from 7 to 1, from pre- to post-assessment. Furthermore, each syllable became better formed in the shape of a square, with better spatial orientation. He also improved
his use of Korean affixes, which show courtesy to elders. Kevin’s writing skills and grammar improved with support.

Moreover, although Kevin continued to make some mistakes, such as putting no spaces between words, or writing Korean syllables in an ill-shaped square, he gained knowledge of the rules of written Korean. For example, he exhibited an increased understanding that (a) letters are written from left to right and top to bottom spatially, (b) syllables should be in an imaginary square box, (c) letters are written to allow spaces between words, but not in all cases, and (d) letters are not capitalized in Korean (Koda, 1998). Consequently, he tried to follow these rules, but he still made mistakes. Because he was aware of his weaknesses in writing Korean, he showed a lack of confidence during dictation. Kevin sometimes refused to write, or he worked hard at writing but appeared nervous about writing letters incorrectly.

Like his reading ability, Kevin also made gradual improvement in his Korean writing. His content and flow improved slightly during this ten-month assessment period. Initially, his diary entries consisted of 2-3 word sentences, such as “나는 학교에 갔다” [I went to school], and there was no beginning or end to the stories that he wrote. Later, he produced longer essays about topics he chose (e.g., amusement parks or Halloween) and eventually wrote four to six sentences, which flowed quite smoothly. He mastered how each letter can function to make the sounds of a whole word. Kevin listened to the pronunciation of words, carefully writing down each letter with that sound. This suggested that he attained sound-symbol relationship knowledge, a skill found universally essential for success in reading, writing, and spelling in any language (Goswami, 2002).
Kevin showed development of phonemic awareness in written Korean, relying on my pronunciation when speaking and trying to write what he heard during dictation. As explained above, what he heard and how he wrote were sometimes different. This is the main reason that he sometimes made mistakes in writing Korean during dictation. When he wrote short diary entries or essays, he usually organized his writing well in terms of context and content, except for some small grammar mistakes. He followed Korean grammar rules such as [Subject+ adjective/adverb+ verb] very well and even considered the writing content. When we look at one of his short writings, entitled “Rainbow,” he started by writing the main characteristics of a rainbow, his feelings about those characteristics, and then finished writing with his own feelings about rainbows. In his writing process for this piece he did not appear anxious, perhaps because it was short.

However, these rapid improvements through intervention (the Korean language school and private tutoring) did not last long. When the intervention stopped, he got busier with his schoolwork, and his siblings spoke, read, and wrote in English after coming home from all-English American schools. The proficiency Kevin showed during 2004 and 2005 radically changed.

2007-2008: Refusal to write Korean. Through interviews and observations, it was obvious that Kevin believed that English language and literacy were far easier than Korean during the period when he was 10-12 years old and in late elementary and middle school. For instance, during an interview, I asked him several questions in Korean about language preference and difficulty:

Researcher: In what language do you feel more comfortable?
Kevin: English. From a long time ago. It’s easier than Korean.
Researcher: Was it always the same or have you changed from one language to another?

Kevin: I liked Korean a long time ago but it is so difficult when I write.

Researcher: Is Korean more difficult? Why?

Kevin: It’s easy to write in English and I can just write. But it is difficult when the sound and writing is different in Korean. And I don’t know many words in Korean so I have to ask . . . (Semi-formal interview in November 2006)

After this semi-formal interview at the end of 2006, Kevin wrote only a few pieces in Korean. I interviewed Kevin’s school teacher and collected his writing pieces in English. In all of these pieces, he only wrote one Korean word: 커너 (“Connor,” his best friend. This friend is American, but he asked Kevin to write his name in Korean.) Otherwise, he wrote no Korean words in school or at home. According to Kevin, he sometimes spoke to his mother in Korean. (He said “always” first, but changed his wording to “sometimes” when I asked him whether that was true or not. According to my observations and experiences with Kevin, “sometimes” is the appropriate word.) Kevin rarely read or wrote in Korean at home during this period. The following writing sample is the longest example from this period, which he wrote upon my request in late 2007. Otherwise, I could hardly find any writing pieces except when he modeled his Korean writing for his younger siblings, and those events only happened a few times over the course of two years.

One day in late 2008, I asked Kevin to write this piece about himself because it would be beneficial for him to think about himself and document his changes in his own life history, language, and identity development. Right after observing a language arts class in Kevin’s classroom, I tried to connect what he had learned about five paragraph
essays in his American schooling to his Korean writing practices. My intention was to help him see that writing in one language would not be much different in another language. Therefore, when he was having a hard time brainstorming about what to write in Korean, I asked him to write about himself, including three major themes: my history, language development, and identity. I asked him to write the introduction to expand on three different themes, and then to conclude his writing to inform us about what message he wanted to deliver to his audience. Kevin asked me for help a few times, and when he asked, I tried to give him tips for idea development, such as, “Do you believe that you have changed in terms of being American or Korean? What about your language? What are the changes, and what do you think about those changes?” For the most part, Kevin was able to develop his ideas much more fully than he had in the past, so he wrote an entire page more quickly than ever in Korean. I encouraged him by emphasizing that English writing and Korean writing are not that different, saying “You can write whatever you might write in English. You have written many five-paragraphs pieces, right? You can do the same thing when you write in English, because it’s just a matter of writing the same thing but in a different language, Korean.” Surprisingly, his writing filled more than an entire page of his spiral writing notebook, and it was interesting to see that his writing practice and development in English influenced him to improve his second language writing. This was consistent with what numerous studies have found regarding linguistic transfer from the first to the second language (see pp. 39-49 in chapter 2).
However, Kevin’s writing conventions, especially spelling, got worse. Specifically, I was able to observe that he made many mistakes in writing vowels that he had been able to write correctly two years before. When I reviewed his writing pieces

Figure 4. Kevin’s writing sample 4.
from 2005, he rarely made mistakes in writing Korean verbs, especially on the vowels. At the time, he did make a few mistakes writing Korean verbs, but they were common mistakes for young Korean literacy learners. Now, two years later, Kevin was making many mistakes, especially with vowels that were important to the shape/form of Korean words, mostly words. For example, he wrote “잘해요.” rather than “잘해요” [meaning: “doing a good job”]; “나에 대해,” rather than “나에 대해” [meaning: “about me”]; “편해요,” rather than “편해요” [meaning: “comfortable”], and “친구,” rather than “친구” [meaning: friend].” Kevin rarely made these mistakes writing Korean words during 2005 when he wrote Korean almost every day, but it seemed that he had since forgotten many letters and grammatical rules about how to write Korean words and sentences.

In short, Kevin’s interest in Korean writing changed in much the same way as his Korean reading. For more than two years (2006-2008), he only produced a few written pieces in Korean, but I was able to observe and collect an abundant amount of written pieces in English. Although he indicated that he “liked Korean a long time ago,” later he felt more comfortable with English literacy, because “it’s easier than Korean.” Although Kevin complained about Korean reading and writing, throughout this study he willingly participated in bi-weekly Korean tutoring sessions and weekly Korean language school, though at times he did not show a favorable attitude toward developing his Korean literacy.

Kevin’s Perspectives, Attitude, Identity, and Socio-Cultural Environment

Vignette: Kevin’s hardship with being bilingual. On a cool, breezy day, Kevin was having fun with his neighbor, a Hispanic boy (named Connor), and his younger sister
in the back yard of their house. The door to the back yard was glass, right next to the kitchen; therefore, Kevin’s mother kept checking on them while she was cooking supper as she always did about this time of day. After four minutes, while I was chatting with Kevin’s mom about taking care of the grass in the yard, Mary also joined them to hang out with Kevin and neighbor friends. Of course, I started to worry about the four kids’ safety as well as their peaceful atmosphere while playing. Kevin’s mother seemed more conscious about that, as she checked on them more often while I was walking towards them to listen to their conversation. As Kevin tried to go toward the trampoline, Kevin’s mother shouted: “Kevin! Don’t go there! That’s someone else’s, not ours, and that’s too far away!” She spoke to him in Korean, as usual.

Kevin’s friend, a neighbor boy (Connor), looked at Kevin and asked him “What did she say?” with curiosity in his eye. Kevin seemed to think about what he could say in reply to his mom’s words with a frustrated, embarrassed, and kind of shameful look, and said back to him: “She was just worried about us, so she told us not to go there since that is not ours.” His friend seemed to understand, but neither of them spoke after that. Silence remained for a while between Kevin and his friend, and I did not know why.

After a few minutes, they were talking, playing, and running again. As a researcher, I could have made valuable observations; however, I could not stay with them for the whole day. I felt pressure to interview Kevin and looked at my cell phone to check the time. A sensitive and thoughtful person, Kevin’s mom noticed that and shouted to Kevin again in Korean. “Kevin! Times up! You should come here and start what we promised!” He looked frustrated, looked at his friend, and said something. I could not hear it, but I am sure that Kevin let him know he should leave. Connor stood up from the
grass and looked at the ground; of course, he also seemed unhappy and slowly walked to his home, right next door.

In the interview, I asked Kevin why he became angry while playing with Connor. Kevin actually still seemed mad, even though about twenty minutes had already passed since he got mad. Kevin complained that English-speaking peers always asked him to translate into English, when his mother spoke to him in Korean, and that bothered him. He just wanted to speak English to make life simple and easy. Kevin also added that he sometimes could not understand his parent’s words or their intentions when they spoke in Korean (observed during May, 2005).

This vignette communicates his continuous struggle with being bilingual and biliterate especially during his early childhood period. His negative attitude and frustration had not been apparent prior to kindergarten, according to his mother. She explained that Kevin seemed to enjoy speaking Korean and learning English at the same time, but he seriously began to feel stress and frustration when he struggled with two languages in kindergarten.

Kevin’s perspectives, attitude, and resulting behavior regarding Korean language and literacy acquisition and development changed over time. He felt comfortable and fluent speaking and listening to Korean, as he had been raised by first-generation Korean parents in a home dominated by Korean culture, especially prior to kindergarten. In early 2004, he told me “나 한국말 잘해. 근데 엄마가 나 영어도 잘해야 돼. 난 한국말이 좋은데 . . . ” [I am good at speaking Korean, but my mom told me that I should also be good at using English. I like Korean, but . . . ]. However, his preference for using Korean did not last long, due to his all-English environment. His surrounding environmental print
was all English, except his home and the Korean language school. The mother shared her observation that Kevin had begun to enjoy watching American cartoon series and also had begun picking up English proficiency very fast. As for Korean oral proficiency, Kevin’s mother indicated that early on, he used both Korean and English, but his nearly all-English environment led him increasingly to feel more comfortable with English:

Kevin liked both languages until kindergarten but started to prefer using English when he was in the first grade in part due to watching television and interacting with peers. His environment is composed of English except his family, but we also sometimes use English. So Kevin feels much more comfortable with and at ease with using English now.

Like his parents, during the time span of this study Kevin indicated that Korean spoken language and literacy were important to him. His viewpoint appeared to be primarily linked to his parents’ perspective as indicated when he said, “My parents are Korean and I’m a Korean-American. And they keep telling me that I should know about Korean.” Kevin asserted that Korean was much more difficult than English and showed a preference for English during discussions with me by responding in English to questions asked in Korean.

In fact, Kevin disclosed that often he could not understand when his parents spoke to him in Korean. He asserted that he simply wanted to speak English, which would make his life simple and easy. He also was increasingly ashamed about his family’s use of Korean.

**All-English schooling in the United States.** Unlike at home, where the parents attempted to establish a Korean-literate-rich environment, Kevin’s public school was not supportive of his Korean. Monthly observations of Kevin at school indicated that teachers
did not encourage his Korean oral language, literacy, and cultural knowledge. The following interview was conducted in English upon his request:

**Researcher:** How does schooling affect you to develop Korean? Any opportunity to use Korean? Did your teacher mention about your Korean culture or country? Have your teacher ever mentioned about Korea in your classroom?

**Kevin:** A few years ago, a teacher asked me about how to celebrate Christmas in Korea.

**Researcher:** So, how did you answer?

**Kevin:** It’s mostly same, so I told him we celebrate same as Americans. Oh, Mr. Brown, a helper for art class, he had been in Korea for two years, so I heard that he read Korean word out when Mary wrote her name as Mary (메리). It was cool, but . . . Why do I have to use Korean at school? (Informal interview in November 2007)

Kevin had seemed uncomfortable using Korean in his classroom, and he actually stated that there was no need to speak Korean because he was fluent in English.

Kevin’s participation in the American education system resulted in less exposure to Korean language and literacy. As Patton and Snow (2001) state, children who are bilingual and are placed in mainstream American classrooms must learn to understand and speak English as well as learn to read and write English without academic instruction in the first language. Thus, children will not become literate in their first language through their schooling and are clearly at risk for first language loss. Homework from his public elementary school focused on English rather than Korean literacy. Social interaction at school also occurred in English. Consequently, as his English literacy and language skills increase, his Korean literacy and language skills developed much more slowly. This situation suggests that Kevin was not receiving what Krashen (1982) calls *comprehensible input* in Korean. Krashen states that children acquire language when they
have exposure to language that is just beyond their current level of development; this was critical to Kevin’s Korean language acquisition. Because he was less proficient in oral Korean, he likely had more difficulty acquiring Korean literacy proficiency.

**The effect of technology.** Kevin had used computer software programs and games at the Korean language school and tutoring sessions, but he suddenly changed to using computers to make contact with American English speaking friends or for his free time activities, playing computer games in English only.

In 2004 and 2005, the Korean language school encouraged all students to make use of Korean educational software in order to practice Korean language and literacy. Websites for learning Korean literacy were not popular yet, so the principal burned CDs to give teachers and students, and Kevin got one. The particular CD that Kevin used for a while was “Practicing Korean Typing,” and was composed of reading and writing sections. In the reading section, there were interesting folktale stories divided by the length of reading texts. In the writing section, each letter and word was highlighted for writers to follow step-by-step directions to practice typing correctly. Kevin used it about one or two hours each week, but he preferred playing computer games, due to his perception of studying Korean. He often told his mother and me, “이거 연습하려면 오래 걸려, 게임할래 [It takes a long time to practice this, I will play a game.]” Then he switched from typing practice to playing computer games.

When I asked Kevin why he did not use email, he complained that it took a long time to develop one sentence. The following excerpt was from the semi-formal interview conducted at the end of 2006.

**Researcher:** How does computer usage affect your Korean development? Toward oral? Written?
Kevin: 음 [yes]. But 할머니 이모랑 얘기할때 한국말 많이 해. [When I spoke to grandmother and aunts, I used Korean a lot on the computer]

Researcher: 그래 [Really?] How? Through MSN? E-mail? On the phone?

Kevin: 화상챗 (camera on the pc)으로 할땐 말로 하고, 보통은 Messenger로, 전화가끔 하고.. [When I spoke through the camera on pc, I spoke to them orally. I also used Messenger (Instant Messaging or MSN), and I sometimes talk to them on the phone.]

Researcher: 그러면 년 이걸 다 한국말로만 한다는 거야? [So, you spoke to them entire in Korean only?]

Kevin: 말할땐 한국말하는데 어떤때는 이모들이 영어로 하라고 해. [Yes. I mostly spoke to them in Korean, but my aunts sometimes asked me to speak in English.]

Researcher: Why?

Mom: 내 동생들이 외국에서 (영국) 공부하고 와선 영어 연습할려구 그래 요^^ [My younger sisters studied in English-speaking countries so they tried to keep up with English proficiency by practicing English with my children (smile).]

Researcher: Kevin, 그럼 왜 한국말로 typing은 안해? [Then why you don’t type in Korean when you do IMing or MSN?]

Kevin: 한국말 type 하기 어려워서 잘 안해. [It’s very difficult to type in Korea so I’d rather not to do it.] 영어로 해..한국말 잘 못하겠어. 넘 느려. . . 한 손가락으로 특특 . . . 닦답해. [I typed in English . . it’s difficult to type in Korean. Too slow by doing Hunch and Pack” typing . . It’s just too slow.]

Kevin indicated that emailing or instant messaging with extended family members were not that helpful in practicing or learning Korean literacy. He preferred visiting the Korean family’s social networking site (on Cyworld) to see his family’s pictures and to review other peoples’ comments about them. In 2007, Kevin asked his mother, “엄마, 이 것봐, 이게 무슨말이야? [Mom, look at this! What is that mean (by pointing Korean-typed comments under one of the family picture on their family website)?]. For Kevin,
reading Korean words or sentences about himself seemed fun; however, he kept repeating, “I hate to study Korean.” From the series of observations and interviews, I learned that making Korean interesting and fun would be the key for Kevin.

Soon, Kevin validated my theory about his computer usage for acquiring Korean literacy. He was surfing the Internet when I passed by the family computer between their kitchen and den. I asked him what he was looking at, and Kevin said, “Yahoo Kids Korea.” This website is a Korean version of Yahoo, designed for children. I asked him, “What is that?” and he answered, “It’s for Korean kids. They have cool stuff and it’s fun.” I asked him, “Like what? Can you show me?” Kevin let me see what he was looking at. He clicked on each character on the “cartoon” page. Surprisingly, he read each character’s name aloud in Korean. He seemed to be familiar with these characters, mentioning their names in Korean even before clicking on them. Then he said, “I will email you about these.” I said, “Really? That would be awesome!” Then he typed 샤오샤오, which does not carry any meaning, but is pronounced as /shao shao/. He must have typed this word from memory, because he did not seem to be looking at anything, and I did not see the word on the webpage anywhere for him to copy. I took advantage of this time to ask Kevin some further questions, as follows:

    Researcher: So, when do you use Korean on the computer?
    Kevin: I use it for doing homework for Korean class; otherwise, I rarely do.
    Researcher: But, do you use the Internet or the computer in English?
    Kevin: Yes, a lot.
I did not need to question him further on that subject, because I had often observed him visiting American websites to do homework or for fun. In Korean, I had only observed him visiting Yahoo Kids.

Researcher: How did you learn about those Korean cartoon characters?

Kevin: I learned from Korean peers who visited Korea or recently moved here from Korea.

Researcher: Do you prefer learning Korean from papers and books, or computer programs?

Kevin: I like to learn Korean through the computer. But I can’t use the computer on weekdays. I’m only allowed to use the computer on weekends.

Mom: If you study Korean, I will allow it!

Kevin: Ok. I like to use the computer! (Smile)

In sum, this case revealed that primarily due to parental support, participation in Korean tutoring, and the Korean heritage language school, Kevin’s Korean literacy skills gradually increased (although it was decreased later), though not to the level expected for his peers living in Korea. Kevin’s English oral language and literacy skills also increased. Nonetheless, nearly all of the environments in which Kevin found himself encouraged oral language and literacy development of English rather than Korean. As a consequence, his English oral language and literacy proficiency was increasing at a rate commensurate with his native-English speaking peers, according to teacher and parent reports. In addition, Kevin’s daily educational practices and interactions with peers and family members (particularly his sister who recently entered all-English schooling) resulted in a gradual decrease in Korean oral language use and proficiency. This outcome was unexpected for the parents, who provided material, emotional, and financial support for
spoken bilingualism and biliteracy. With the best intentions, they tried to develop and incorporate two languages into their daily lives and environments, supported Kevin’s participation in Korean cultural activities, and intended to raise him as a Korean-American who was well-balanced in both languages and cultures. Kevin was frequently though not sufficiently exposed to rich language and literacy events in Korean. Thus, achieving high levels of language proficiency in both Korean and English did not appear to be feasible for this child provided he continued on the same trajectory; his daily exposure and use of Korean continued to decrease and could not compete with his daily environmental and institutional exposure to English.

Initially, coming from an all-Korean home, Kevin began an all-English educational environment at kindergarten and continued through the end of this study. His school environment had a profound and continual impact on his spoken language and literacy proficiencies. For instance, as his mother said about his early school career, “[Kevin] could not understand what the teacher said, so we started to mix English and Korean to help him learn English.” Although perhaps helpful to Kevin’s transition to an all-English environment, this decision and others delineated below likely set the stage for Kevin’s continual challenge to learning and maintaining Korean language and literacy.

Kevin’s Ethnic and Cultural Identity Negotiation and Transformation

Kevin’s ethnic/national identity. While Kevin was being raised in a culturally and linguistically Korean home from his birth until early 2004, he was able to speak Korean quite fluently. At the time, he firmly asserted that he was Korean because his parents were Korean. Kevin also added this sentence in Korean: 그리고 엄마 아빠가 나보고
고 코리안이래 [And my parents told me that I’m a Korean]. Then, as his attendance of an all-English school caused English to surpass Korean as the dominant language in his life, Kevin’s identity changed. In early 2005, Kevin did not claim to have a Korean identity during an informal conversation with me, saying, “I’m an American because I’m here, not in Korea.” He stressed that most people with whom he interacted spoke English rather than Korean. With his identity as an American, and his motivation to assimilate with his peers and with adults, he did not see the usefulness of reading and writing Korean. As a result, Kevin may not have felt there were any advantages to being biliterate.

About one year later, in a semi-formal interview conducted in October 2005, Kevin seemed to have changed his mind again, telling me that he was a Korean, as clearly stated in the following excerpt.

Researcher: Kevin, who are you? I mean . . . are you American? Or Korean? Especially in the States, people talk about their race and ethnicity. Which category do you belong to? Korean? American? Or both?

Kevin: Uhm . . . (thinking for a while) . . . Korean!

Researcher: Why? Why do you think so?

Kevin: Because my mom and dad told me I am a Korean. And Korean comes first!

Researcher: What do you mean “Korean comes first”?

Kevin: I am a Korean-American. In two words, Korean comes first. So I am supposed to be both, but I am more Korean (smile).

Researcher: Ah . . . Interesting!

Kevin: 선생님은요? [What about you? Teacher?] (He spoke Korean for the rest of the conversation.)
Researcher: Korean-American 이 아니고 한국 사람이야. [I am a Korean, not a Korean-American.] (I also spoke Korean, except the word “Korean-American.”)

Kevin: 왜요? [Why?]

Researcher: 너는 여기서 태어났고, 그래서 공식적으로 Korean-American이라고 불리지만, 난 한국에서 태어났고 부모님 두분 다 한국 사람이고 완전히 어른이 된 다음에 여기 왔으니까 완전히 한국 사람이지. [You were born here, so you are officially a Korean-American. But I was born in Korea, my parents are Korean, and I came here after growing up, so I am purely Korean.]

Kevin: (nodding)

As time went by, he began to relate his language and literacy ability to his ethnicity, the same as two younger sisters had done.

A year later, in November of 2006, Kevin told me that he was a 60% American and 40% Korean, as follows.

Kevin: I’m a 60% American and 40% Korean.

Researcher: Why?

Kevin: Because I live in the States, was born here, and speak English all the time. But Mary might be different. (At this time, Mary was with us.)

Mary: I’m 50% American and 50% Korean.

Researcher: Kevin, Why did you say that Mary might be different?

Kevin: I don’t know. She speaks Korean more than me.

Over the course of 3 years, Kevin’s answer to questions about his identity changed several times. For Kevin, where he lives and where he was born were major factors in determining his identity, and these two factors had been obvious and consistent. Since 2006, his identification as American exceeded his identification as Korean, because of his residency and birthplace. During an interview in November 2006, Kevin mentioned
his English language proficiency as a reason for considering himself American; however, this was the only time he mentioned the correlation between his language proficiency and his ethnic/national identity.

Kevin’s concept of his own identity had remained the same for another year; on the other hand, his mother told me that Kevin seemed to realize that he would not be able to become a true/pure American and that he would hold a bilingual/biethnic identity. When I asked the mother why his concept of his national and ethnic identity had changed, she shared a story about something that had recently happened in Kevin’s middle school.

**Researcher:** Why do you put so much effort and time into maintaining your children’s Korean ability? Because they will go back to Korea?

**Mother:** Because they are Korean. Although my children, all of them were born here, we can’t be the same as American and even Kevin realizes that these days.

**Researcher:** How?

**Mother:** There was a dance party at school. Girls, these days, girls probably ask guys out to dances. I heard Conner’s (Kevin’s best friend) story about a girl’s rejection, so I asked Kevin, “아, 녀석 누구 춤추는 여자애 없었어?” [Hey, was there any girl who asked you to dance with?] He said, “No,” so I asked him, 면발 장난만 치고 그런거 아니야? 못산개 굴구 짚곤 장난치고 그러니까 그러지 아니야?” [Maybe it’s because of your bad behavior in school! What do you do to girls?] Kevin said, “NO, it’s because I’m Korean!”

My husband and I were shocked by his answer. His father told him, “That’s not the reason why don’t they like you. Because you look different? Maybe you seem too shy, or maybe there are other reasons.” 근데 사실 다른 이유가 엿있었어요, 달라 보이니까 그럴 것지, Kevin말이 들린거는 하나도 없는 것 같아요. [but I actually agreed to Kevin, because he looked just different. I guess Kevin was right.]

**Researcher:** Then for Kevin, being Korean-American is kind of a negative thing for him?
Mother: [Yeha, negative 하진 않겠지만 억간은 look different 이거나 negative 일 수도 있는...그렇게... maybe not, but there are no positive things as well... Maybe not that negative, but there would be a little looked different or be negative... I think so...]. (Interview in February, 2008)

The mother told me that she knew this would be a great time for the family to discuss the identity issue again. However, she missed that chance because she felt sorry for Kevin, and she was not sure how to approach the complicated circumstances, other than telling him, “Just accept it. You were born like that. It’s your destiny to go through these kinds of difficulties or discrimination in Western culture with yellow skin color.”

During the last semi-formal interview with Kevin in 2008, he told me, “I am both Korean and American, because my mom and dad are Koreans but I am growing up in America. So I know both English and Korean, so I guess I am 50% American and 50% Korean.” According to his mother, a series of events and related feelings affected Kevin during the adolescent period as a 6th grader boy. The changes/development of his linguistic and national identity will be displayed on page 146 in this chapter, after my description of his linguistic identity.

**Kevin’s linguistic identity.** Every year, I asked Kevin, “Are you a bilingual and biliterate?” which led to further discussions about how Kevin had been feeling about using/learning two languages while his other American classmates were using only one language. Especially for the first semi-formal interview conducted at the end of 2005, I had to explain to Kevin what these two words—bilingual and biliterate—meant. After listening to my explanation, Kevin answered, “Yes,” and he added the following comment: “I can speak both Korean and English well. My mom told me that it’s a good thing to know two languages.”
At the end of 2006, Kevin answered the same way as the previous year: he answered “Yes” to my question about whether he considered himself bilingual and biliterate. Further discussion about whether he liked to be bilingual/biliterate ensued, as presented below.

Researcher: Do you like that?
Kevin: Uhm . . . Sometimes it’s good, but mostly no.
Researcher: Why?
Kevin: I don’t need to speak Korean, but it’s cool others can’t understand.
Researcher: Like when?
Kevin: When mom came to the classroom to pick me up, I usually speak Korean to her, so nobody understands what I’m saying. It’s cool!
Mary: I like that, too! (smiling and nodding)

When I asked Kevin about his favorite word in any language, he answered, “I don’t know . . . I don’t have one . . . ah! maybe 케빈 (his Korean name). I like my Korean name much better than my English name, Kevin. When I asked why, he said, “It sounds cool! I don’t know, I like 케빈 (his Korean name) more. When I had conversations with him about his linguistic and cultural perspectives on being Korean, he didn’t seem to care about anything related to Korean except his Korean name. He often told me, “Well . . . I don’t think about it much,” or “I like my Korean name. That’s it!” This kind of attitude is much different from what he showed before kindergarten, when he used Korean most of the time.

Since 2006, Kevin had strongly rejected the idea of being bilingual and biliterate, due to the fact that he always had to study more than his monolingual American peers, and he wished that he did not have to study Korean all the time. He repeated his answer,
“I wish I was only an American because I hate studying,” every year for 3 years (2006-2008).

During early 2008, Kevin answered, “Yes. Because I can speak fluently both in Korean and English, I am a bilingual. Also I can read and write in two languages and express myself how I want. I sometimes believe that I am lucky to know two languages, but when I have to study, I wish I knew only one language because I hate studying.”

After listening to this answer, I asked, “Do you feel proud of using two languages?” and Kevin said:

I usually don’t think about it, but when I have to study, I think it is not really lucky to know two languages. That is usually the only time I think about it (knowing and using two languages). Rarely I think that it is lucky because when I am speaking another language in front of someone, it is fun to know that they cannot understand. (Semi-formal interview in Spring 08)

Then I asked, “Would you like to be completely Korean or completely American?” Kevin answered as follows:

I like being both, because I can communicate in both places, and the food selection is much wider, so you don’t have to eat the same thing over and over. However, because I have to study Korean, I dislike being a Korean a little.

No matter what kind of question I asked, his answer always came back to the idea that he hated studying more than others due to his bilingual/biethnic background.

Researcher: In what kinds of situations do you speak in English or Korean?
Kevin: Outside, I mean in school, library, away from home, we use English only except a few occasions like after school or when I want to have a secret talk.

Researcher: Then at home, do you use Korean?
Kevin: Only when my mom forces me to do so. Mom speaks to me in Korean, but I always answer in English.

Researcher: (to mother) 왜 이렇게 되는것 같으세요?
Researcher: How have you been practicing Korean language so far (for one and a half years)?

Mother: They just don’t understand Korean much. As more time goes by, they use English only.

Researcher: Do you read these books every day? You’d better to read, not just showing these to me . . . [He doesn’t improve much even if he goes to Korean language school. It seems that they use only one textbook and they played in class. It is true that there are much homework that he is supposed to do. But when Kevin studied with you, he spoke Korean a lot, but not any more in these days.]

Kevin: I brought a lot of Korean history cartoon books (20 sets), Look at this!

Mother: Yeah!

Kevin: No, teacher wants to see this.

Researcher: So you mean that if I bring you some Korean software for learning Korean, will you study/practice Korean more?

Kevin: Yes, yes.

Kevin seemed confused, and he struggled with his complicated bilingual, biethnic, and bicultural identity. His conceptualization about his own identity had changed over time, as displayed below.
Table 2

The Relationship of Kevin’s Linguistic Usage and Ethnic Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Korean (%)</th>
<th>English (%)</th>
<th>Ethnic Identity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Korean-American (official)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kevin seemed to have moved backwards compared to other bilingual learners, from a Korean-English bilingual to an English monolingual. As I presented in an earlier section, Kevin’s oral and written Korean practices over six years clearly point to his becoming a monolingual Asian-American student in the United States. Regarding his ethnic identity, his English acquisition and his rate of Korean proficiency loss accelerated his negotiation of transforming into an American adult from a Korean child. Among the three siblings in this household, Kevin was the one who clearly presented heritage language loss throughout his elementary years.

Kevin’s extended family members and exposure to popular culture (i.e., computer games, videos, movies, drama, comic books, etc.) did not provide enough input for him to maintain his Korean heritage language and identity. Based on my longitudinal experiences and observations, there are three possible reasons why Kevin lost heritage
language proficiency: (a) his personal characteristics; (b) his parents’ individual approaches to each child (their approach to Kevin being different from their approach to Mary); and (c) his lifestyle, which was closer to that of his American peers than that of his Korean peers. Kevin did have some Korean classmates in the Korean language school and at his playground, and he actually had a Korean best friend, Hwan. However, just like Kevin’s other Korean friends, Hwan moved back to Korea in 2006. The predominance of American, English-speaking friends greatly limited Kevin’s exposure to Korean language, literacy, and daily social experiences.

My personal hope for Kevin and my constant support as his main teacher in the Korean language school, his private heritage language/literacy tutor, and a close family friend majoring in early bilingual/biliteracy education were not enough to help Kevin overcome the obstacles to maintaining his bilingualism. Likewise, the type of input available to facilitate his acquisition and development of his heritage language, literacy, and identity were insufficient for him to have a sense of being bilingual/biliterate/bicultural.
Chapter 6

Developing a Hybrid Linguistic and Cultural Identity in Transnational Spaces: The Middle Child, Mary’s Case

Introduction

This chapter articulates how Mary, the middle child in this family, has been developing her Korean-American hybrid identity while she acquired language and literacy proficiency in two languages. Since I met Mary at the Korean language school when she was a 3 and half years old in the spring of 2003, I have been able to closely observe her language and literacy acquisition and development as well as her identity formation for over six years. In this chapter, I delineate Mary’s linguistic activities in two languages, her attitudes about her bilingualism/biliteracy development, and the influence of her surrounding ethnic/cultural communities, family members, and technology, as well as her own curiosity in language/literacy learning.

In order to describe the entire picture of Mary’s becoming bilingual/biliterate, I provide the following: (a) a chronological description of her language and literacy development for 6 years, (b) a historical representation of her ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity, and how Mary has presented and articulated her multiple voices as a second generation Korean-American student, and (c) the influences of socio-cultural factors on her process of becoming a bilingual/biliterate. Understanding Mary’s educational path and daily lifestyle surrounding her language/literacy practices is critical for drawing a holistic picture of being bilingual and biliterate as an Asian-American girl with an interest in and talent for language and literacy learning. Thus, her complex path
of exploration of two languages and cultures embedded in her bi-cultural/ethnic identity will be presented in the rest of this chapter.

**Personal information.** Mary is now a ten-year-old third-grader attending an all-English elementary school. She is active, curious, and outgoing. Her personality has helped accelerate her literacy development and verbal skills in two languages and also aided her social interactions with others. I was able to learn more about Mary when I began to teach her Korean. Based on my longitudinal observation of Mary, I noticed that her personality has changed over time, especially in academic settings. In the Korean school, when she was around 4 years old, she was shy when interacting with Koreans, and was interactive only with trusted people around her, such as her main teacher, her parents, and a few Korean neighborhood peers. On the other hand, she was joyful, curious, and talkative all the time at home or the playground. Mary was actively involved in various play centers and the library in the kindergarten classroom, and she explored the two languages actively at home in her early years with her parents and sometimes with her older brother.

After that, I was able to observe Mary’s modeling of the “best student” in Korean culture especially when she was in school. She tended to speak softly and quietly in the classroom and was always a good student who focused only on the task assigned by her classroom teachers. Both Mary’s first- and second-grade teachers mentioned that she was one of the best students in the classroom but was able to speak aloud when Mary needed. Now, she is a brilliant and academically-oriented student who always likes to learn new things and is curious about everything in her life. Her teachers always evaluated her highly in terms of academic ability and behavior. Every time I visited her classroom, she
tended to be quiet, doing her own work, reading books, answering worksheets, or crafting something with her favorite classmate, Jin, a Korean girl.

**Educational path.** Mary’s first school was a Montessori preschool that she attended for one year from Fall 2003 to Spring 2004. In Fall 2004, she moved to a private preschool near the local state university because of its reputation for excellence. During the summer of 2004, her mother asked me to set a separate time to work only with her. Beginning in Fall 2005, Mary went to the same public kindergarten and elementary school as Kevin, so that Kevin and Mary were able to go to the school together for two years, until the end of Spring 2007. Beginning in Fall 2007, Kevin went to middle school, while Mary and Shelly went to the same elementary school. Therefore, all three children in this household were sent to the same kindergarten and elementary school in the largest district in town.

Mary was the child most active among her siblings in taking extracurricular classes. Her extracurricular classes can be divided into academic and non-academic categories. For academic classes focused on improving her linguistic ability, she regularly attended the Korean Saturday Language School; a Korean private tutor visited her home twice a week; and she attended a Ku-Mon institute. (Ku-Mon is a Japanese educational company with many branches throughout Korea and the United States; their focus is math and reading drills.) For non-academic classes, Mary enjoyed piano, violin, ballet, and swimming. Except for ballet and swimming, which require specific facilities, private teachers visited her home regularly. According to her mother, Mary enjoyed learning new things, and most of the time, Mary asked to take these classes. Her mother added that Mary mastered most subjects quickly and always seemed to enjoy them, so her
parents never regretted spending money on her extracurricular classes. She added that Mary’s attitude was totally different from Shelly, who was always reluctant to take extracurricular classes, preferring to play instead.

My longitudinal observations and experiences with Mary’s academics showed that Mary has been confident and enthusiastic about learning any subject except maintaining/improving her Korean language and literacy, especially during 2006 and 2007. The detailed changes of her bilingual/biliteracy acquisition and development, along with her complicated identity will be presented in the following section.

Mary’s Bilingual and Biliteracy Acquisition and Development

Mary has a special talent for learning language and literacy, and this factor has influenced the entire family, as well as me, to put our hope on Mary to become a full and competent bilingual/biliterate during the course of this longitudinal study. In order to achieve that goal, her parents sent her to the Korean language school when she was 3 and a half. When I asked why they sent Mary to the Korean language school earlier than they had sent Kevin, they told me that they believed in the critical period of language acquisition in early childhood. When I asked what they meant by “critical period,” their explanation was more specifically connected to the concept of “sensitive period” (Berk, 2009; Lightfoot, Cole, & Cole, 2009) in child development, especially in language/literacy acquisition. Since they felt that they had failed to raise Kevin as a full bilingual, the parents wanted to provide the maximum input for Mary as early as possible.

As Mary’s parents had hoped and planned, participation in Korean language classes seemed to accelerate Mary’s meta-linguistic, cognitive, social and cultural
learning and development for two years. Mary’s improvement, as exemplified in her progress on the anecdotal portfolio assessment results and writing samples, suggests that she achieved steady progress through attending Korean language school and tutoring.

Mary has shown the most a fluctuating attitude toward her heritage language/literacy practices and education throughout the 6 years of this study. In the following section, Mary’s linguistic development in both languages will be chronologically discussed, divided into oral and written language. In order to respect the longitudinal nature of the home observation from 2003 to 2008, three time-frames were selected for systematic presentation of her overall language and literacy development in Korean and English: 3-4 years old (2003-2004), 5-6 years old (2005-mid 2006), and early elementary (mid 2006-mid 2008, 1st & 2nd grader). Mary’s biliteracy development, exploration of literature, reading, and writing will be discussed in a chronological manner. In order to help readers understand Mary’s complicated and language and literacy development, a summary of her oral and written language acquisition and development during the three time frames for each language will be presented in the next section.

**Mary’s oral language usage and development.**

*Three-to four-year-old preschooler (2003 to 2004): Mary’s exploration of two worlds with two different language systems.* When I met Mary for the first time, she mainly communicated with family members in Korean and spoke simple English with Kevin (her older brother) and the peers she usually played with. In Korean, she tended to use two word utterances such as “물 줍” (“give water”) or “잘 래” (“I want to sleep”) to convey her intention; however, she used single words utterances more often when she
spoke English (e.g., “water” or “me!”). During this time period from 2003 to 2004, Mary showed somewhat complicated but amazing oral language development by expressing her understanding and differentiation of two language systems, Korean and English. Depending on whom she talked to, where she was, and what she talked about, she was good at switching and mixing codes. However, because Korean oral language has an affix system for showing courtesy to older people, Mary often made the mistake of speaking Korean to adults without attaching appropriate affix, which is impolite. Close family friends often corrected her Korean, but other adults let her speak without correcting her every time, because they believed that exploring Korean was more important than speaking it perfectly.

She also preferred speaking to me in Korean, and I assumed the reason was because she knew that I was Korean and was her older brother’s Korean tutor. The following conversation happened in early 2004.

Dad: 왜 메리야, [What? Mary?]
Mary: 인사 . . . [Hello.]
Dad: 아, 인사한다구? 안녕하세요..해야지 [Uh, you want to say hi? You must say Hello, in Korean in a polite way.]
Mary: 안녕하세요~~ (Hello, saying in Korean, in a polite way)
Kevin: Did you already forget it? 바보야~ [“Stupid!”]
Dad: 케빈, 그러면 안되지, 한참 배우는 애탄테 . . . [Kevin, don’t! She is learning now . . .]
Mary: (to Kevin) 바보! [Stupid!]

At this point, I gave Mary an amazed look. Mary must have thought that I misunderstood her epithet as being aimed at me.
Mary: 아니 . . . 오빠가 . . . . [No, I meant my brother.]

Mary, who was four years old, obviously knew the social norm that it would be better to say “Hello” in Korean to Korean adults, so she was trying to recall how to say “hello” in a polite way, although she often forgot it. Mary recalled her first utterance and linguistic development by herself in early 2008.

Researcher: Mary, when did you start speaking in your life?

Mary: Like what? The first word?

Researcher: Yeah, like “mom,” “dad,” and anything else, like “milk” . . . anything, any word . . .

Mary: Maybe two to three? I don’t know . . . I think when I was one or two . . . no TWO . . . . . I was done with diapering at three, and I remember at that time, I was good at speaking Korean.

As shown in this excerpt, Mary was different from English monolingual children in the United States because she acquired her heritage language first, while she was simultaneously picking up her second language (English), living in an English-speaking country. Even as a two-year-old, she was exposed to two different languages at home, on the playground, and around the neighborhood.

Five- to six-year-old Kindergartener (2005-2006): Fluctuations. While I was observing her linguistic development with her family members in 2005, Mary showed astonishing interest and rapid development in oral language and literacy in the two languages. Based on Mary’s continuous Korean language and literacy development, supported by her Korean-speaking family members, weekly tutoring, and Saturday classes at the Korean language school, she became a fluent Korean speaker. It was also the time when she first experienced the larger world where she would be exposed to an all-English environment in preschool, followed by Kindergarten during this two year
period. Therefore, she also acquired English proficiency in addition to Korean language proficiency. However, this balance of home and school languages did not last long.

Tabors & Snow (2002) and Tabor (2008) address this kind of situation as well as how it can change a child’s linguistic environment:

> Bilingual children may continue to be exposed to any combination of first language and/or bilingual environments at home and first language, bilingual, and/or English language environments outside the home. Because this is often the time that children enter some type of out-of-home care for the first time, for bilingual children in the United States, this frequently means their first extensive exposure to an English language environment. (Tabors & Snow, 2002, p. 163)

Indeed, attending an English-only academic setting provided great exposure to English, and her English literacy skills appeared to have had a significant influence on Mary’s oral English skills. At the end of 2005, Mary’s mother mentioned the following:

> Mary actually tends to speak English more than when this study began and constructs longer sentences using [to + ] phrases or [ -ing] forms. It seemed that because she enjoyed and felt proud of her ability to speak English well she is making longer phrases than before.

As Mary was exposed to schooling in an all-English environment, it was obvious that she spoke English more than ever even at home with her siblings and the father. It seems that Mary continued to speak Korean with her mother because she realized that communicating in Korean would be a lot easier and productive for her mother.

> However, this state of affairs did not last long enough. Mary’s major daily conversational partner was her mother, who had also gradually become bilingual along with her three children; she acquired English proficiency little by little, until she reached a communicative level. Mary’s mother’s English listening ability and her mixed (English and Korean) responses to her three children seemed to influence Mary to switch from speaking full Korean sentences to sentences containing both English and Korean. Mary
was confident about her family members’ full understanding of her code-switching. This situation may be similar to those discussed by Bauer (2000), who concluded that bilingual preschoolers’ language choices can be greatly influenced by social assimilation or dependent on the conversational or play partner. The following excerpt is a typical code-mixing episode, which took place because Mary identified me as a bilingual. However, I found that she tried to use Korean more with me since she knew me as her brother’s Korean teacher.

Researcher:  
Mary:  
Researcher:  
Mary:  

In the above excerpt, Mary showed confusion between English and Korean. Having been surrounded by bilinguals and a biliterate environment, she used the English word “pencil” when she should have used the Korean word “yeon-pil.” However, her identity as a bilingual as well as a Korean-American helped her to feel comfortable using vocabulary in both languages, which made her smile about her mistake. If the partner (in this excerpt, the teacher) had not been a bilingual, and thus might not have understood two languages, then she might have been more careful about code-mixing/–switching. She most likely would have exhibited the same care with her family members, especially with her mother, had they not been bilingual.
Mary’s second conversational partner, after her mother, was Shelly, her younger sister, who was fluent in English. Unlike Kevin and Mary, Shelly had acquired English proficiency first in both oral language and literacy, so that Mary often changed her linguistic code from Korean to English for Shelly. When Mary came home after school, she and her mother and sister often spent a long time in the den playing or doing literate activities. Because the mother was fluent in Korean, while Shelly was fluent in English, this situation facilitated Mary’s code-switching.

Overall, the two-year period from 2005 to 2006 showed how Mary’s insertion of English words into Korean sentences increased. More specifically, Mary used to speak whole sentences in Korean while sometimes inserting English terms/vocabulary words, and she inserted more and more English words as time went by. Because Mary lived in an English-speaking country, she had always been exposed to English vocabulary through television, street signs, merchandise in stores, and even in her family members’ conversations. Mixing English vocabulary into first language sentences is one of the general characteristics of second-language learners who live in a society where the second language is the community language. With her parents and older brother, and within the community, Mary could feasibly pick up English vocabulary to use in her speaking, and often mixed it with Korean in her sentences. Over the six-year period of my observations, Mary presented the most joyful, interactive and talkative period from 2005-2006, as she became quite proficient and literate in both languages in her natural daily life.

Six to seven years old (2006-2007): Losing Korean oral proficiency. As Mary attended an all-English elementary school for first and second grade, it was obvious that
she was coming to speak more English, even at home. Furthermore, I (in the role of Korean language/literacy tutor) had become busier, so that her Korean tutoring was reduced from 8 hours per month to one hour per month from Spring 2006 to Spring 2007. For that one hour, I mostly observed the three children’s linguistic events and bilingual/biliteracy usage at home. As a follow-up to the longitudinal tutoring, I spent 15-20 minutes checking Mary’s homework from me for the month and assigned further homework in order for her to maintain her Korean literacy proficiency. I also checked what kinds of literature she read both in English and Korean. She read more storybooks written in English, and only read Korean storybooks with her mother, especially when her mother strongly encouraged Mary to read Korean books for herself and for Shelly. Every month that I visited their home in 2006, it was obvious that Mary spoke Korean with less and less frequency.

Another factor pointing to a loss of Korean oral proficiency was Mary’s daily interactions with her siblings. Kevin, who had totally switched his preferred language from Korean to English, talked to Mary in English all the time. This was different from my earlier observations during 2003 to 2005. Kevin’s frequency of speaking Korean to Mary gradually decreased during the 2006 to 2007 period, so that Mary also changed her responses from Korean to English as time passed. In addition, Shelly’s exposure to public schooling since early 2006 was very influential, because these two girls as sisters always stuck together. Thus, as Shelly spoke to Mary in English, Mary naturally responded to her in English. For instance, when Mary and Shelly were riding in their van between school and home, they spoke English rather than Korean. When I asked Mary, she told me that she and Shelly spoke English in school, so they naturally continued to
communicate in English. According to the mother, she rarely asked her children to change from English to Korean, especially during this period (2006-2007), because she was able to communicate in English and understand their discussion in English most of the time.

The following excerpt presents Mary’s own reflection on her daily oral conversation during this time.

Researcher: When you were good at Korean, did everyone speak to you in Korean?

Mary: No, Kevin spoke to me both in Korean and in English.

Researcher: Did he? That means . . . . . . If you and Kevin spoke to Shelly both in Korean and in English, why didn’t Shelly learn Korean as much as you did?

Mary: Because she (Shelly) is slow so we all mostly spoke to her in English.

Researcher: Did you speak to her in English? Do you have any reason for that?

Mary: I feel much comfortable in English now and Kevin also mostly speaks English. However, I do speak Korean with my mom.

Researcher: What percentage per day?

Mary: Maybe 13% . . . (Casual Interview: March, 2008)

Surprisingly, even Mary’s parents spoke English most of the time, especially during this period (2006-2008). They also spoke the language in which their children interacted with them. The parents’ strong will to help their children maintain/develop their heritage language and literacy faded, as exemplified by observational notes and casual conversations. One day in January 2008, the mother expressed her concerns to me by sharing her friend’s story, as follows.
One of my best family friends, we were here together but they went back to Korea for her husband’s job as a professor. Then they came back here for sabbatical. In that family, the younger one is a boy the same age as Kevin and the older one is a girl two years older than Kevin. When I listen to their conversations, they talk really a lot, both for good things and even during fighting. Since all the family members are good at speaking Korean, the conversation is really rich even when they fight. But for us, no . . . I realized that we don’t talk as much as that other family and we talk less and less. I am worried about that. But I can’t be a native English speaker so I tend to speak about only easy things/issues. Then my children do the same thing with me. They talk less and express themselves only with a few words. I don’t know what I can do about this.

Here, the mother was fluent in English at a conversational level, but not at the level of communicating about delicate issues with her children. For convenience purposes, communication about basic daily needs occurred in English, but the parents and children often did not move their conversation forward to more delicate and emotional levels as the children were growing up. Mary was smart enough to hide these issues from outsiders, so she told me she did not have many problems. On the other hand, in daily communication, she often told her mother, “never mind,” whenever the mother asked Mary to repeat something more than three times, or when Mary realized that her mother would not understand what Mary was talking about.

To conclude, all the children in this household were exposed to an all-English school setting beginning in January 2006, which facilitated Mary’s decreased oral language proficiency in Korean, her heritage language. This was also the time that I visited her home only once a month, so I expected this phenomenon when I knew that I would have to reduce my tutoring time; however, the result was much more dramatic than I had ever expected. I was surprised by her rapid development of English proficiency between visits; largely because all of the children in this family went to
English-speaking public schools, their communication at home and in community places changed from Korean to English.

Social exposure in preschool and on the playground with peers, and communication in English with her own family members accelerated Mary’s development of her oral English language proficiency. Interestingly, beginning in early 2008, Mary spoke to me in English all the time, because she felt much more comfortable in English, and had forgotten many Korean vocabulary words and expressions. In addition, Mary recognized that I could understand her English, so I naturally came to respond to her in English as well. Her overall change in oral language practices is presented in the table at the end of the following section.

Mary’s biliteracy development. Mary’s literacy acquisition and development in the two languages is much different from Kevin’s, presented in the previous chapter, or Shelly’s, described in the following chapter, in many ways. The most evident difference was the fact that Mary’s development was always a blend of English and Korean. Except the year 2006, when Mary neglected her Korean literacy development due to a lack of parental, educational/institutional, and environmental support, her literacy development in English and Korean cannot be separated. Most of the home literacy events were a blend of the two languages prior to 2006, while school literacy events focused on English language reading and writing. However, Mary sometimes wrote Korean words in her school journal or homework sheets for her school teachers. The details that appear in written examples of Mary’s literacy acquisition and development in two languages are presented in the following section.
Reading development: The alphabet and literature.

Reading letters. Mary learned how to read the English alphabet mostly from academic videos, books, and toys such as stickers, drawing tools, or soft alphabetic mats (large play mats with letters). When her mother was busy with her housekeeping work or with Shelly (Mary’s younger sister) at home, Mary was often left in front of the TV. Her parents always monitored what their children were watching, so Mary was able to watch only academic videos, such as the “Sesame Street Alphabet Learning Series” or the “Einstein Learning Lab Series.” Mary seemed to absorb what she watched right away, and she sang the alphabet songs repeatedly in front of adults, including me. Her parents and I often helped her remember some of the missing letters or provided some hints about what letter came next.

In 2003, Mary was able to read less than 10 letters, from A to G, and her parents were suspicious about whether she was actually reading those letters or repeating them from rote memorization. When I began with the letter “F,” she seemed to be confused about what to say, because she knew that the letter “F” that I showed her looked different from the letter she was accustomed to seeing first, “A.” Therefore, she looked at me for a while and softly mumbled “C.” Thus, I realized that she had memorized the letters A to G, but that she could not yet recognize/decode any of them, except the letter “A.” After Mary made several attempts to read letters, it was obvious that she was able to read the letter “A,” and she looked happy and confident when the letters B and C came along; otherwise, she looked confused about what to say aloud and frustrated that she could not figure out any other letters. Even when she copied the list of alphabet letters from A, she
was able to read aloud what she wrote only beginning with A, from her memorization of
the letters.

Mary’s mother often worked on phonics with Mary, as she did with Kevin. While
her mother read English books aloud to Mary, she showed Mary the letters and told her
the sound of each letter. For example, the mother pointed to the first letter of the word
“sunshine” and told Mary “이건 써, 같이 하면 써varchar이야, 동생 이름 부를때도 서, 스.
스 sound로 시작하지? 그거랑 같은 글자가야, 에스. 스, 수, like sunlight. [This is sun. It’s
sunshine together. When you say your sister’s name, it starts with the same letter: S. Su.
Su. See? Like sunlight.]” Whenever Mary had short lessons like these about phonics, she
quickly picked it up and repeated after her mother many times. It seems Mary enjoyed
the reading aloud of each pronunciation and the exploration of different sounds.

During the observation of Mary’s linguistic development with her family
members from 2004-2005, when she was 5-6 years old, Mary showed astonishing
interest and rapid development in general literacy and biliteracy. This was also the time
when Mary explored two different linguistic systems embedded in different kinds of
linguistic and cultural environments as a Korean-American second-generation child in
the United States. Based on her understanding of two different linguistic systems, she
continuously developed her alphabet knowledge in both English and Korean. In mid-
2004, she even compared sounds in English and Korean using her family members’
Korean and English names. Mary seemed to enjoy exploring the two linguistic systems,
and she did not complain about learning two languages, as Shelly often did, until late
2006.
During 2004-2005, Mary acquired many vocabulary words because of her natural ability in languages, as well as her own intellectual curiosity. She kept asking her parents, me, and other Korean speakers around her what to call things in Korean. In addition, her vocabulary knowledge was facilitated by reading picture- and story-books. As Mary grew up, her ability in reading letters expanded to reading environmental print, longer phrases and sentences, picture books, and literature in both languages.

Reading literature. According to her mother, when Mary was 3-4 years old in 2002-2003, she showed more interest in storybooks than Kevin had when he was the same age. Mary frequently asked her parents to read stories to her, especially before bedtime. She liked to pick out books by herself and asked her parents to read them aloud, and Mary also asked me several times to read books aloud when I was in her home.

She seemed to know how to flip each page by quickly looking at drawings and skimming sentences without decoding each letter and word (called pretended reading). Overall, Mary seemed to be building a general understanding about story-books: (a) each page contains either text or illustrations or both; (b) as she flips the page, the storyline goes further, which means she understood that each book delivers interesting but different stories; (c) all letters and sentences are written one direction, from top to bottom, from left to right. Regarding the third concept, the direction of writing, Mary sometimes held books upside down, which she corrected whenever the mother said, “메리야. 책 거꾸로 들었네 (Mary, you’re holding that book upside down).” She held English books in the right direction most of the time, whereas she held Korean storybooks upside down more often. This made me wonder about her familiarity with English-written environmental print: she knew how to hold English books because she
was more familiar with the English language from street signs, media, and available text at home in her daily life.

During my home observations in 2003, Mary liked to play with books. For example, she grabbed a small (B5) Korean book and asked her mother to read aloud. If the mother seemed too busy, then Mary held a Korean folk storybook upside down and skimmed the illustrations. When I was available, I also read Korean books to her. Her interest in books extended not only to Korean books but also to books written in English. Because Mary said “한국말 (Korean language)” when she grabbed a Korean book, she seemed to recognize the two different linguistic systems around her. When I asked her in Korean “예리야, 한국말로 된 책 읽는데 더 좋아 아님 영어로 된 책이 더 좋아? 아님 돼 다? [Mary, do you like English books or Korean books or both?]” She answered “음... 돼 다 조야 [um... I like both].” As Mary expressed in casual conversation with me, she showed a great interest in books, whether they were Korean or English.

When I was observing Mary in her Montessori preschool classroom in 2004, she also showed a great interest in books in the classroom. For instance, at center time, she walked to the library corner, carefully looked through all of the books displayed on the bookshelves, and finally picked the most appealing book to her. Then she sat on the floor, looked around once, and then seemed to concentrate on reading or skimming the illustrations and flipping the pages slowly. Throughout my long-term experience with her, I was able to speculate that she had been exposed to environmental literacy and printed words, including literate activities in various social situations with classmates and school staff.
Mary had been exposed to English printed words and storybooks in the classroom, but she tended to read more Korean books at home. Her mother’s intention was to display Korean literature at home to provide balanced exposure to the two languages. At this time, Mary spoke more Korean than English at home, so that she became fluent in Korean, while her oral speaking ability in English was quickly catching up with her Korean ability. On the other hand, her exposure to literacy was much more focused on English rather than Korean, because of the natural characteristics of her daily life, living in the United States.

As Mary showed the most interest and rapid development in language and literacy in both languages when she went to all-English kindergarten, she began to be exposed to many picture books written in English. It seemed literacy events around Mary’s daily life quickly became dominated by picture books written in English. According to my interview with her mother, Mary’s exposure to literature was great at that time:

She loves books, and it’s different from Kevin. She just reads a lot, I mean she really likes to read all the time. However, she reads Korean books at home but it’s changed to reading books written in English because of school. She brings books from school, of course, those are all written in English, and she keeps reading it even at home. So I often remind of her to read Korean books as well. Once she begins to read Korean books, she likes it but it has been challenging to make her pick up the Korean books by herself these days. (A casual conversation in December 2005)

In 2006, Mary obviously preferred reading English books more than Korean books. When her mother suggested she read Korean books, Mary rarely refused through 2005. As time went by in 2006, however, she refused more clearly and frequently, saying “No, I will read this book,” picking up a book written in English. At other times, she replied, “Why? I am in the middle of reading the other book,” pointing to the books
brought from the school library. She tended to read thicker books, such as *Magic School Bus* or *Fly High Fly Guy*. She rarely read Korean books voluntarily. According to her mother, Mary kept reading English books in her free time as “fun reading,” while also being exposed to literature introduced at school. She always took several books home from the school library with the guidance of her classroom teachers. When I visited her home, I saw stacks of books on the main table in the den of the house, but none of them were Korean books.

During 2006, Mary read an average of one or two Korean books each month, but this increased to one book per week, due to her mother’s encouragement in 2007. I also noticed that while most of the books on the table in the den were written in English, I observed 냉미 요 (Pumpkin Soup) and 무지개곰 (Rainbow Bear) on the table or floor. The mother was concerned about her children not speaking and sharing their mother tongue during 2007, and she had made up her own mind again not to give up on her children’s and family’s heritage language. According to the interview with the mother and grandmother in late 2007, Mary read 3-4 Korean books per month, which had been steady and consistent up to mid-2008.

In late 2008, I asked Mary to recall her favorite literature in both languages from the last 5-6 years. I provided a simple blank table for her to systematically record her thoughts; a scanned copy of her table follows.
Writing development: Writing letters.

Three to four years old (2003 to 2004). According to Mary’s mother, Mary began writing by attempting to write the first letter of her English name in 2002. Her mother explicitly expressed Mary’s writing activities as “copying and drawing” at this time. Mary’s mother further explained to me why she used the word “copying” first and then “drawing” next, because Mary took a look at the model letter first, then drew a big, ill-shaped letter D on the whole A4-sized paper, (Her pseudonym is Mary, but her actual name starts with the letter D). Mary began writing the upper case D as the first letter of her name in English. When I watched her copying process, it reminded me of drawing
rather than writing because Mary often grabbed crayons to write rather than pencils or pens. Her mother also explained that Mary seemed to enjoy drawing and copying things. Although Mary seemed to identify what she was doing with writing like her parents and Kevin did, most of her letters looked much closer to drawing rather than writing in 2003 and early 2004.

Mary continued to improve in her copying of her mother’s or Kevin’s model letters of her English name. Her English name contains four letters total, so she was able to copy her English name relatively quickly. Furthermore, she used to write one or two letters on the A4 sized paper, but her letters got smaller as time went by, so that she wrote all four letters of her English name on one page in 2003. When Mary went to preschool, writing her name every day as part of the classroom routine helped her to see many models of written names and to learn how to write each person’s name.

Regarding her directional orientation in written Korean and English, Mary seemed to acquire book/print concepts—that is, that letters are supposed to be written from left to right and top to bottom in English and Korean. When Mary wrote her name in English and in Korean the first time, she seemed to know this rule and wrote in the correct direction. Although she copied the example letters, she copied them from left to right. However, when she tried to write her English name without the example letters, she often wrote “YRAM” rather than “MARY” (see below). Even when she copied a Korean word like “선생님 (teacher),” she mixed up the direction and order from the middle part of the word (see Appendix E), though she started writing in the correct direction, from left to right. On the other hand, she wrote well-formed letters in English but wrote from the opposite direction, from right to left.
One interesting characteristic of Mary’s writing process is that she produced different writing characteristics each time in terms of the direction, space orientation, and her choices/preference of words, even though she wrote about the same things. However, her interest and excitement in writing about her family members and herself remained constant.

In preschool, she always signed her name in English but she was often encouraged to write her Korean name as well at home. This repeated encouragement at home seemed to get her accustomed to writing her English name first, with her Korean name beneath it. Mary sometimes voluntarily attempted to write her Korean name right after writing her English name, and she seemed to enjoy it. However, when she wrote her English name and moved onto drawing a flower next to what she had just written, her
parents or I encouraged her to write her Korean name as well. She quietly wrote her Korean name, except for a few times when she complained, “No, I like drawing.”

Once Mary was able to write her English name quite confidently, she became used to writing her English name first and then wrote her Korean name right away on the same line. Mary had been trained to write her name in English, followed by her Korean name, since she had always been encouraged to write in that way by her parents and me. English names are supposed to be written with the given name first, followed by the family name; on the other hand, Korean names are supposed to be written with the family name first, followed by the given name. In Mary’s writing sample below, she wrote her Korean name in the same order as her English name, because she believed that writing her Korean name was a kind of translation from her English name. Specifically, she wrote her English name as Mary (メリ) Yoon (윤). Then, according to Korean culture, Mary should have written her Korean name as 윤 (Yoon) 메리 (Mary) but she wrote 메리윤 (the same order as English).

In sum, Mary’s acquisition of writing her name in two languages moved from her English name to her Korean name. This order of achievement in writing her name in two languages is different from Kevin’s. Kevin was able to write his Korean name first, and then moved on to writing his English name. I speculated three major reasons for this difference: (a) the emphasis on Korean language and literacy development in this household decreased as the mother acquired English proficiency; (b) Kevin began all-English schooling; (c) different kinds of environmental printed word in this household had changed from predominantly Korean to English as the family was exposed to United
States life as time went by. As I described Shelly’s literacy acquisition, she also picked up her English name first, as Mary had. This also explains that the length of residency in the United States caused the two younger sisters to acquire their English names first while Kevin, the first child in this family, acquired writing his Korean name first.

Mary often asked me to provide a modeling of the word “teacher.” By copying what her mother and older brother call me, she often called me “teacher (선생님)” in Korean, although her pronunciation was not correct. Because she knew how to refer to me as a Korean teacher, she wanted to write about me. The mother and I provided model letters, explaining the order of the pencil strokes; at the same time, we slowly and clearly pronounced the word. Mary usually corrected her pronunciation right after she had just heard me say the word, but her corrected pronunciation did not last long. She quickly went back to her original incorrect pronunciation. Since she had acquired the sound-symbol relationship by learning how to write her English and Korean names, she was able to write the sample below without model letters.
In terms of spatial formation, Mary did well with the spacing between syllables and within the syllables themselves. She seemed to know that writing is composed of distinct letters (or this effect could have come from the words that her mother wrote for Mary as examples). However, she used a lot of space on the paper, because her letters were so large; for example, she wrote only two words on one letter-sized piece of paper. When she wrote the words in Korean, if she did not have enough space for the last letter, she often overlapped them with previous letters, so the word appeared to be mixed up. Therefore, writing each example letter was of greatest concern for Mary. She was less concerned with the shape of the letters or the direction of her writing.

*Five to six years old (2005 to 2006).* While Mary stayed with Kevin and me during private Korean classes in 2005, she seemed excited and willing to write something on paper and in her scratch notebook. I used those times as teachable moments or observed her literacy activities. She seemed to like to show me her drawings and writing
to get positive responses. Her parents and I always responded to her literacy activities with compliments and/or rewards. Every time she wrote something, she started writing her English name, and then moved to writing her Korean name. Sometimes she wanted to stop writing after that; however, other times she wanted to write the names of her family members, such as “dad,” “mom,” and/or the name of her older brother, both in English and Korean. She gave me her scratch notebook and asked me to model written letters because she was not confident about writing those letters by herself. She tried to copy the letters even though she could not read. To teach Mary about writing Korean syllables in a square box, I wrote the model/example syllables with a well-formed shape; however, her writing never stayed within the imaginary square box, possibly because of her young age. Kevin sometimes grabbed the paper that Mary had given to me and wrote the example words for her, such as “dad” in Korean. To encourage her writing in both languages, her parents and Kevin sometimes used the strategy of giving her examples. It was interesting that she was sometimes successful at writing on her own but other times were not. She often told me “못해 (I can’t),” but she was sometimes able to write “dad” or “mom” in Korean on her own. This process probably reduced her stress about literacy learning and helped her to enjoy her free writing.

The following example is a piece written by Mary while I taught Kevin how to write complicated Korean words. The mother wrote model words so that Mary could practice writing the letter representing the /a/ sound in Korean [a-changed to Korean vowel]. The mother wrote some words that have that letter in them: “apple,” “mother,” “baby,” and “go out.” Interestingly, rather than copying the model words, Mary used her creativity to write more words that contain [a-changed to Korean vowel]: her name,
“daddy,” “older brother,” “mother,” and “sweet potato.” Mary also showed her creativity by writing two words vertically to save paper space as presented below.

![Figure 8. Mary’s writing sample 4.](image)

From 2005 to early 2006, Mary consistently showed an interest in and positive attitude about language and literacy in both languages. She exhibited curiosity about new words, pronunciation, reading, and writing. Mary liked to talk, listen, read, and write. Furthermore, people around her encouraged her linguistic development with compliments. The entire year of 2005 was the most progressive year for Mary in her acquisition of Korean literacy proficiency. She had been acquiring the ability to read and write all of the Korean letters since 2004, and then moved on to the stage of acquiring word identification and recognition. Mary especially showed her enthusiasm for learning
Korean fast so that she would be able to please her grandmother, who could not communicate in English. Thus, Mary often asked the mother or me how to say a specific English word in Korean. For example, she asked me in Korean “선생님, chair을 왜라고 해? 쓰는거는... 한국말로... [Teacher, how can I say ‘chair?’ How can I write it? In Korean?]” She often asked her mother such questions, so I had some discussion about using her curiosity as a chance to challenge her further by saying

(writing down chair in Korean) 이의저, 의자라고 해. 따라해보자. 의자, 의자, 의자! 그러면, 의자랑 같이 있건어야 하는 거는. 데스크처럼 말야. 데스크는 한국말로 왜라고 하지? 따라서 써 보자. 게다가 자기 카우치나 소파는? [That’s ‘chair.’ ‘Chair.’ Repeat with me: ‘chair, chair, chair!’ Then, what about the things that can be paired with a chair, such as a desk? How do you say ‘desk’ in Korean? Write it by copying my writing, ‘desk’ in Korean. What about that couch?]

When I invited her to draw or write something on paper while I was teaching her brother, she wanted to write Korean words rather than English words during 2005 when she was a six-year-old. Most of the time, she began with her Korean name, and then moved on to family members’ Korean names or titles (호칭, naming; 아빠, father; 오빠, big brother; 언니, big sister) because these names are the most frequently heard or used in Mary’s daily life, especially at home. Overall, she presented the most achievement in her writing during 2005. One of the reasons was her rapport with me (her Korean tutor/observer). She seemed to very much enjoy my visits, writing as much as possible to draw my attention, and she got a lot of compliments from me and many other adults around her whenever she produced writing pieces. Mary often looked happy to see her improvement and tried to keep her writing samples, because I encouraged her to keep them to make a writing portfolio.

While Mary acquired many vocabulary words in both languages, she was able to produce many writing pieces in the two languages with simple words. Her writing began
with one or two words. Next, lists of words expanded to writing simple sentences containing a few words in Korean. At this stage, she especially enjoyed writing lists of words as presented here. She produced similar examples whenever she enjoyed free writing time at home. In the example below, If Mary wrote the Korean word correctly, I have provided the meaning of the word in English in parentheses. If she wrote the Korean word incorrectly, then I provided the correct form in Korean as well as the meaning of the word in English.

책상 (desk), 인형 (doll), 피아노 (piano), 의자 (의자: chair), 시계 (시계: clock), 부엌 (부엌: kitchen), 자동차 (자동차: car), 식탁 (식탁: dining table), 마당 (playground), 그림 (paint), 화장실 (restroom), 심자가 (cross), 창문 (window), 현관 (main door), 소파 (couch), 씨름거 (쉬운것: Easy Words), 보너스 (Bonus Words), 옷장 (closet), 세탁기 (세탁기: washing machine), 접시 (plate), 호박 (pumpkin), 잔디밭 (field), 옷 (clothing), 나비 (butterfly)

Mary wishes for 100% (smile)

The following attachment (Figure 9) is her actual writing sample.
Figure 9. Mary’s writing sample 5.
The following writing sample (Figure 10) is interesting because Mary voluntarily wrote it by writing the title of one of her favorite books. Then she paused to think about what to write, and immediately wrote the series of words. When I asked her what she was writing, she answered “I am trying to remember the words in this book,” so I asked her how she remembered these words without taking a look at the book. She replied, “I can’t remember all of them but I remember some.” By the time this short conversation had taken place, she had written four words. Then she opened the book and began to skim it to remember the words written on each page and remember the mechanics of writing each letter. Another interesting point is that Mary presented a somewhat competent level of writing Korean letters; on the other hand, she made a mistake in writing her Korean name at the end of her list of words. I asked her “다인에게 누구야?” [Who is Da-In?] to call her attention to what she had written. She immediately corrected her name.

입큰 개구리의 아침식사 (Wrote this as the title: Mary underlined this part)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>납은</th>
<th>사랑</th>
<th>개별자</th>
<th>영필</th>
<th>꽃</th>
<th>누구</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>착안</td>
<td>말타기</td>
<td>안데</td>
<td>아침</td>
<td>개구리</td>
<td>창문</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>참대</td>
<td>구두</td>
<td>이름: 윤다인</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the examples illustrate, Mary enjoyed listing Korean words, and she also wrote some English letters. However, she asked for her mother’s help or copied some letters from a book in order to write words correctly; at the same time, she mainly relied on the oral pronunciation of the target words that she originally intended to write.

Writing stories. In Mary’s early years, she listened and read stories but she was able to write short stories after 2006. More accurately, her writing was a close copy of the
writing of others, such as short sentences from books, but she also often added her own words. She wrote 일권책 (읽은책: books that I read) as the title of this short writing sample, and then she listed two titles of Korean books that she had read.

Figure 11. Mary’s writing sample 7.

In order to encourage her to read books written in Korean, I asked her to make a list of book titles that she had read every time I visited Mary’s home. One day in late 2006, she wrote the three book titles below. The third one was not a book title, so I asked her what that sentence meant. Mary explained to me that these two books were what she read to her mom; her mother did not read them to her. She wanted to stress reading to her mother.

1. 빨간 단추는 싫어요 [I hate red buttons]

2. 왜! 얼룩말이다! [Wow! There are zebras!]
She copied numbers 1 and 2 from the title page of two Korean books, but she wrote the rest of it herself. She wrote Korean words the way they sounded, so she had some spelling mistakes.

Figure 12. Mary’s writing sample 8.

Most of Mary’s free writing samples were related to stories from books that she had recently read, or from popular culture, such as Korean cartoons or stories told orally by the grandmother. However, the following example was interesting to me because she was telling me about her group of friends and then suddenly grabbed a paper and pencil, and began listing their names. She titled her writing “한국친구 (한국친구: Korean friends), and then she listed numbers 1 to 6, as follows. In this list of Korean names, numbers 1 and 2 both contain the word 언니 (un-ni). This is the Korean affix meaning “older sister”; therefore, this example shows Mary’s understanding of both the Korean
writing system and the culture, which requires that she write 언니 (un-ni) after the names of older female friends.

1. 영지언니
2. 영수언니
3. 윤서  4. 예진 5. 윤주  6. 예은

Figure 13. Mary’s writing sample 9.

Until early 2006, Mary had not segregated her Korean or American friends, so the above writing example surprised me. When I asked her mother about it, she explained that at the new Bible study that the family had become involved in, Korean children played together while Korean adults studied the Bible. Thus, Mary wrote a few sentences about how the playtime went. “청구 (친구: friends) 들이 재미있게 노래요 (놀아요: play). 어때든때는 (어떤때는: sometimes) 카드로 놀고, 점노리 (점놀이: play doll in the house), 하고 우긴 (웃긴: funny) 이야기 (이야기: story) 를 말해요. 재미있어요. 아무대나” [I played and had fun with friends. Sometimes we played with cards, but other times we played house or shared funny stories. It’s fun, anywhere . . . ]
More surprisingly, during late 2006, I asked Mary to write about herself, and the following is what she wrote:

나에 대해 [All about me!]

할머니 너무 보고 싶어요. [I miss my grandmother, missing face]

一음모 도 보고 싶어요. [I miss my older aunt, missing face]

一 어모는 수술했어요. [My older aunt had surgery, sick face]

내가 빨리 낳으라고 기도함 [I prayed for her to get well soon.]

했어요. 一음모와 一음모가

아기 빨리 낳으면 좋겠어요. [I hope my two aunts have their babies soon.]

나는 그림 잘 그리요. [I am good at painting.]

나는 샐리랑 잘 놀아요. [I played with my sister well.]

나는 샐리이 사랑해요. [I love my sister.]
I love to do crafts.
I miss my younger aunt.
I miss my aunt’s husband.
I love my family.
I will become a first grader.

(Don’t read this yet!)

My friends are listed:
Camilla, Delaney, Angie, Ellie, Madison, Corinne, Morgan, Aleya

Figure 15. Mary’s writing sample 11.
In contrast to her previous list of friends in Korean, she listed the names of all of her native English-speaking friends as her close friends at this time. As she loved to be in the first-grade classroom, she wanted to list her classmates’ names in that writing sample. However, the writing homework was supposed to be written in Korean; thus, Mary wrote her friends’ English names phonetically in Korean. For instance, she wrote the first name as 카미라 (Camilla) because sound “ca” could be written in Korean as “가,” and the rest of English name, “milla,” could be written as “밀라” because of double “l” sound in English. However, as usual, Mary spelled this word out in the way of English language by missing one Korean consonant “nosis (L sound in English)” under the first letter “디.” Overall, Mary mostly wrote correct Korean letters to represent the pronunciations of the names of her English-speaking friends.

This is the best example of Mary’s Korean writing until this point. She wrote a full page about herself, and it was voluntary. She had totally forgotten her writing homework that I had given her a month before, so she chose to write in front of me. In order to assess her own writing ability, I did not provide much input except to answer her questions while she was writing, such as “How can I say ‘my aunt’s husband’ in Korean?” I helped her learn how to say family kinship relationships in Korean, and then she inserted those words in her writing. Every time I reviewed her writing, I was able to feel that she was attached to her own and extended family very much, especially her younger sister, Shelly, as well as her two aunts and grandmother. This writing piece (her diary) did not follow a beginning-middle-end storyline. However, she kept in mind the main theme of writing about herself, and it was obvious that she was very aware of Korean family kinship as a first grader. She seemed to like her classmates as well, so she
listed many of their names. Mary’s writing practices about her family and herself reflected her kind and caring personality. From a longitudinal observation, family kinship and her relationships with people around her influenced her heritage language and literacy practices more they influenced her two siblings.

At the end of 2006, Mary wrote a short diary entry filling only a quarter of a page. Seeing that entry made me feel guilty about not being available to teach Mary for the entire year of 2006. In early 2006, although I stopped teaching her, she seemed confident about writing in Korean, because not so much time had elapsed for her to lose her proficiency in Korean writing. At each monthly visit, I made sure her mother was encouraging Mary to continue to write in her Korean diary every day. In addition, I asked Mary and her mother to keep a reading journal together, because Mary loved to read books. Whenever Mary read Korean books and then wrote a short journal entry about that story, I felt she would be exposed to both reading and writing in Korean; although I would not be able to teach her anymore, I would be able to keep track of what she had been reading in Korean. Mary’s mother understood my intention and she liked my suggestion; however, she confessed to me that she had been too busy to keep track of what Mary was reading and writing in both languages.

Lack of Korean literacy tutoring, Mary’s intensive schoolwork and homework in English, and her mother’s neglect of her Korean literacy resulted in Mary’s writing shorter sentences and paragraphs with many grammar mistakes in her Korean written pieces. I was not able to find interesting plots or strings of thought anymore, and she often complained to me about not having any idea of what to write. I felt lost and embarrassed, because I expected to see this decrease in her Korean proficiency later and
at a much slower rate, not within a year. Whenever I visited her at the end of each month in 2006-7, I felt very guilty, but at the same time, surprised about the extent to which young students’ development or loss of their heritage language proficiency can be affected by instructional intervention as well as socio-cultural surroundings. In Mary’s case, she was not exposed to Korean language or culture as much as she had been in the past; at the same time, she began to identify herself more as an American than a Korean (as described in the following chapter).

Here is an example of her writing from December 2006.

Title: 학교 [School]
학교에서 과학 실험을 했어요. 이리케 했어요. 빈일봉질에 물을 넣어요, 그다음에 밖에 끌어어요. [There was a science experiment at the school. This is how we did it. We put water in a plastic bag, and then we placed it outside.

Figure 16. Mary’s writing sample 12.
On Kevin’s birthday in early 2007, I arrived at this home right after his birthday party with family and friends from the neighborhood. Mary and Shelly were especially resistant to studying Korean language and literacy, being in the mood for play right after the party, so I suggested that Mary write about the birthday party. Mary asked me what the rationale would be for her to write about Kevin’s birthday party in Korean. I had to explain to her that I (the Korean tutor/researcher) would appreciate it if she told me what happened and what she did at her brother’s birthday party, because I had missed it. In addition, I emphasized that she might not write in Korean for another month. She admitted that that was true and began writing about her brother’s birthday party for me, as follows.

오빠 생일이에요. 그러나[but] Cake 대신에 Pizza를 먹어요 [yo]. [It’s my brother’s birthday. But we ate pizza instead of birthday cake.]

엄마를 사랑해요. 그래서[so] 뽀뽀를 만히 해요. [I love my mom, so I kissed her a lot.]

학교에 다녀오고, 선생님과 한글공부하고있어요. [I came home from school and I am studying about Korean literacy with a tutor.]

학교에 다녀오고, 왔어요. 그리고 집에오고 한글선생님과 한글공부를 하고있어요. [I came home from school, I came, and I came home then I am studying Korean with a Korean tutor]

This time, Mary emphasized connecting phrases (transition words), such as “그러나 (but)” or “그래서 (so).” I asked her why she even inserted English words right after these connecting phrases in Korean. Mary answered “오늘 학교에서 배웠어요 [that’s what I learned today at school].” It was amazing that she connected what she learned at school in English to her writing in Korean. Thus, she wrote “but” right above “그러나” (“but” in Korean), and wrote “so” right above “그래서” (“so” in Korean). I noticed that Mary
liked to apply transition words in Korean, so I encouraged her to write the list of
transition phrases in Korean, and then write the English words next to them as follows.

그러나. [But, however, yet]

그래서 [So, and, then, thus, therefore]

그리고 [and]
The mother and I both recognized this teachable moment, so we extended the literacy time to explain about conjunctions. The above writing sample shows Mary’s drills for learning conjunctions. I intentionally picked this worksheet to check whether she got the concept of conjunctions or not; thus, she had to choose from coordinating, correlative, and subordinating conjunctions.
Every time I visited this home, I tried to connect what Mary had learned in her language arts classes at school with the same concept in Korean language and literacy. Writing about connecting phrases in Korean and in English was an example of this connection. This kind of direct translation of literacy activities seems to help young bilingual learners to build two concepts: (a) the two languages/literacies are not that different; and (b) once they know what to write/read in one language, then they can read/write the same way in the other language. This approach seemed to work when Mary maintained some proficiency in Korean literacy, but she became reluctant to do these connection activities as time passed; she forgot how to write some Korean letters or words, so that she constantly had to ask me or her mother for help.

Another interesting point in Mary’s writing was that she wrote the two English letters “yo” right after her Korean letters “ㅋ,” which are pronounced /yo/. In Korean, there are common affixes to show courtesy to older adults, and they usually end in the sound /yo/ (ㅋ). If Mary wanted to write English letters right after every Korean letter, then she would be able to do that. However, she somehow chose to write only “yo,” so I asked her why. She answered by shouting “yo!” so I had to ask her to clarify whether she wrote “yo” for fun or not. She explained further that “셀리이랑 엄마랑 선생한테 보여주려구, 왜냐하면 /yo/ sound 똑같애 (I wanted to show this to Shelly, mom, and you, because it sounds the same, Yo!).” Mary thought it was funny that the one syllable “ㅋ” in Korean and the two letters “Yo” in English are pronounced the same, especially since she had heard the English word “Yo!” in the context of Hip-Hop music. As presented in this example, Mary sometimes switched between or compared the two languages, especially when she believed that it would be fun for herself or the people close to her.
At the end of 2007, Mary’s older aunts visited and stayed at their home for two months in order to have a baby. This big change in the home influenced Mary to write a lot about her extended family members. Because Mary’s favorite maternal grandmother also visited with the pregnant aunt, Mary had a chance to be exposed to Korean oral and written language again. Mary mentioned that she loved to learn Korean from her extended family members. Her parents added that although they would be busier because of the family members’ long-term visit, they welcomed it because it impacted their children’s maintenance of their heritage language and identity in many ways. Based on my observations and the parents’ interviews, Mary came to write more in Korean again, as much as she had done before 2006. However, the grandmother and aunt noticed that Mary’s Korean writing ability had decreased since 2005, so they shared their concern and willingness to help Mary to catch up on her Korean literacy during their stay. Thus, developing Mary and Shelly’s Korean language and literacy proficiency as well as shaping their Korean-American identity became a major issue in this household, and this issue became a kind of family project with me.

One day in December 2007, Mary wrote about her aunt and grandmother. She wrote the following paragraph.

[She is going to have a baby. The baby’s name is “Gu” . . . I like “Jae-Won” more. But she had the baby so the name became “Gu.” . . . The baby came to the world . . . but I still prefer calling him “Jae Won.” Then they went back to Korea.]

Mary wrote these 7 sentences in less than half a page. The flow sounded ok, but she made many spelling mistakes, so I could not understand what she was trying to say in the fifth sentence. Although Mary wrote this piece at the end of 2007, it was comparable
to her Korean writing ability in early 2006. She was slowly getting back on track improving her Korean literacy; however, the amount of mistakes made me worry about how long it would take to improve her Korean writing ability.

After the above piece, she also wrote:

할머니가 맛있는 밥을 만이 [grandmother cooked a lot of delicious meals . . . ]/Milk/나비 [butterfly]/ Supecalifraglexpyexpyaladocios/Mary/메리아빠 [Mary’s dad]/엄마 [mom]/오빠 Kevin [Mary’s brother]/나비는 우유를 싫어요 [butterfly hates milk].

As evident in her many writing pieces, she often inserted English words into her Korean writing, similar to her oral code-mixing. During the course of this longitudinal study, Mary had consistently showed more code-mixing than switching.

Mary was liked to create new English words at the end of 2007. She told me that she and her classmates liked to make funny sounds by creating new and long English words, which do not carry any meaning or relationship to other vocabulary words. Mary wrote in this piece, “supercalifraglexpyexpyaladocios.” Although she made some mistakes in spelling “supercalifragilisticexpialidocious,” originally from Mary Poppins, I learned that that movie had inspired her to create such words of her own. She played with arranging letters without any spaces between them, and she laughed at the sound by reading aloud what she had written. I asked her what she was doing and what that word meant, and Mary answered in English, “No meaning, I am making words. I am a word creator!” Then she smiled. She seemed to really enjoy creating new words and the sound of the new arrangement of letters. Mary called Shelly, and they played at this for a while. The only difference between Mary and Shelly in creating words was that Mary’s words were spelled with strings of letters, while Shelly’s words were spelled with letters representing sounds that she was promptly creating at the time of her writing.
When Mary’s grandmother, aunt, and newborn cousin left on December 31, 2007, Mary went back to writing English more, as she had done prior to the extended family members’ visit. My bi-weekly visits did not seem very helpful, because Mary’s attitude had changed so much since 2006. Now she seemed to like my visits, but at the same time, she knew that my visits meant studying Korean literacy. Thus she sometimes expressed her preference to keep playing with her American friends or continue to read the English books that she was reading when I arrived at her home.

The following writing sample clearly shows that Mary’s Korean writing proficiency had decreased significantly, and that it would still take a long time to get back to the same level that Mary had achieved earlier. Not only the mechanics but also keeping the Korean syllables within their imaginary square boxes in her mind had suffered when compared to previous writing samples. Furthermore, Mary often showed reluctance to write something long in Korean, other than lists of short words. By this time, it was too difficult for Mary to write even short stories in Korean.

Figure 19. Mary’s writing sample 15.
The following is a vignette from early 2008 illustrating Mary’s most current psychological and physical status regarding the language and literacy of her two intermingled languages, literacies, and cultures.

Mary’s sister, Shelly, has a birthday at the end of May. I was scheduled to have Korean class on that day because I teach them every Thursday; coincidentally, her birthday was on a Thursday. When I called around 2:30 p.m. to confirm my visit that day, the mother was whispering to me on the phone. When I asked where she was (to find out why she was whispering), she replied that she was in Shelly’s classroom celebrating her birthday.

The mother asked me in a soft voice, “I have been hesitating about canceling your visit today. I don’t think Shelly wants to study Korean on her birthday. If it’s not too problematic for you, could you visit us next Monday, please?” I totally understood the mother’s wish for her daughter to have a happy day on her birthday, so we rescheduled my visit for four days later. When I arrived, Shelly showed me some stuffed animals that she had received for her birthday, including a panda, a rabbit, and brown and white bears.

I shared in Shelly’s happiness for a while, and then I asked her, “그럼 우리 생일 날 워했는지 써볼까? [How about writing what you did on your sister’s birthday]?” Then I asked Mary, “너도 . . . 언니로서 워했어? 같이 잘 놀아졌어? 아님 동생 생일날 책 읽어졌어? 워했어?” [What did you do as the older sister? Did you play with Shelly? Or did you read a book to your younger sister?]” Mary told me right away in English, “We played laser tag and other games.” I looked at Shelly in the hope that she might answer in Korean; however, she read my mind and never opened her mouth. I asked again, looking at Shelly, “아무것도 안했어? 네 생일인데??” [You did not do
anything although it was your birthday?]” Shelly said, pointing at Mary, “She already told you what we did!” I said, “그레 그건 맞는데 네가 한국말로 선생님한테 설명해 줘봐.” [Yes, you are right, but I want you to explain what happened in your own words.]” Of course, I already knew that Shelly would smile at me, instead of answering in Korean. Shelly smiled because she was not confident about telling me in Korean about what she did. I said, “Shelly, I know you can do it. It’s simple, right? How about one short sentence?”

Shelly said “응, 우리 game 하고 놀았어.” [Yes, we played games.]” I said, “혼자? [by yourself?]” Shelly answered, “아니, Mary랑 (She could say “un-ni” in Korean culture) 윤서랑 은지랑 영주니까, and Stephanie랑” [No, it was with Mary, Yoon-Seo, Eun-Ji, Young-Ju-un-ni, and Stephanie.]”

I was surprised at the ethnicity of her inner circle of friends from her first year of school. She attended a public kindergarten, so I had assumed that she would have more American friends than Korean friends. Furthermore, Mary had spoken Korean fluently at Shelly’s age, but Shelly was confident/fluent only in English, so I assumed that she had become Americanized regarding language, literacy, identity, and culture.

When Mary started to write about Shelly’s birthday, her “imaginary box,” important to Korean writing form, was not visible, and her writing looked poor and disorganized. So I asked Mary to imagine a box for each letter, and she complained, “Then give me a boxed writing paper!” Mary expressed her reluctance to learn or use Korean literacy, especially that day. I felt Mary was saying, “I am writing something in Korean, so please do not make me write anything else.” Encouraging Mary and Shelly to have fun with Korean literacy had never been easy, and I had become desperate to find
interesting instructional tools, such as media, programs, songs, games, and digital literacy to get the three children motivated to develop their heritage language and literacy.

Mary’s classmate, Grace, and her mother, both of whom were Korean, visited the focal home as scheduled a little after 4:30, and the three women (the focal mother, Grace’s mother, and I) discussed their educational concerns for their children while the three girls (Grace, Mary, and Shelly) seemed to have fun coloring, playing with puppets, and eating the bread that the mother had baked for all of us. We all had to go home around 6:00 because Mary had a ballet performance at 7:00. A typical day with the focal family was less academically oriented than other Korean-origin families, but they were busy with lots of events and linguistic interactions. Especially for Mary and Shelly, what they did seemed less important than who they talked to and what kinds of relationships they cultivated.

**Mary’s Perspectives and Attitudes That Affected Her Bilingual/Biliteracy Acquisition and Development**

In this section, I will discuss three major issues about Mary’s perspective, personality, and attitude toward her bilingual/biliteracy acquisition and development. Based on my longitudinal data, Mary’s most influential characteristics in becoming a bilingual/biliterate were (a) her strong attachment to family (to parents, siblings, and/or extended family members); (b) her language and literacy usage in the hybrid space (using the internet); (c) schooling, and (d) her own intellectual curiosity (about bilingualism and my audio recordings).

**Mary’s biliterate practices influenced by family relationships or her attachment to family members.** Mary’s strong attachment to and loving relationships
with her parents, siblings, extended family members, and close friends were represented in the large number of writing pieces, including small notes, cards, letters, and emails in two languages. The most frequent topics for Mary to discuss or write about were her maternal grandmother or aunts. This phenomenon has been consistent over 6 years not only in home literacy events but also in school literacy practices. Mary’s first and second grade teacher commented that she liked to write about family events such as traveling, spending time with family, or family members’ long-term visits from Korea. Both teachers were sure that Mary lived in a happy family with a lot of interesting events. The first grade teacher asked me whether these many family events were typical of Korean culture or not. I explained that Koreans tend to value family time and events a lot, but there are individual differences depending on SES, each family’s own culture and orientations, and each parent’s personality, similar to United States culture.

Mary’s comfort zone in practicing her second-language (Korean, in this case) accelerated Mary’s practice and progress on the weakest parts of her Korean speaking/writing. When Mary’s older aunt visited the home while she was pregnant, the aunt tried her best to take advantage of teachable moments, as described below.

Mary: 이모, 나 이거 먹어도 돼? 이 사과와, 아니, 사과과 과자 [Aunt, can I eat this? This apple and, no, apple and cookies: In Korean, there are different versions of “and” depending on the word and situation. Mary made a mistake in her use of “and” in Korean.]


Mary: 사과와 과자? 아이 혼란하다... [Apple and cookies? It’s confusing...]

Aunt: 그래, 사과와 과자... 조금만 연습하면 안 헷갈려. 여기있는 사과과 과자 다 먹는 대신에 우리 어떻게 때 “과”를 쓰고 어ARRANT
“와”를 쓰는 지 이모양 30분만 연습하자, 알겠지? [Yes, apple and cookies . . . It won’t be confusing if you practice with me. If you eat all of these, then we should practice for half an hour when you should use “and” and when you should use “then,” ok?]

Mary: 알았어. 맘 20분? [Ok. For twenty minutes?]

Aunt: 그래, 시간이 중요하게 아니라 내가 이해 할 때까지, 녀 먹고 하니깐 금방 이해할 수 있을거야. [Yes. It’s not important how long, but you need to practice until you fully understand. You will understand quickly because you are a smart girl.]

Mary: (Smile)

After for a while, Mary brought me a piece of paper with a lot of Korean connecting phrases (see scanned copy, below). The phrases are translated as follows:

apple “and” cookie (사과와 과자); mom “and” dad (엄마랑 아빠); older brother “and” younger sister (오빠와 동생); dining table “and” chairs (식탁과 의자); rice “and” soup (밥과 국), etc. As a reader might notice, “and” in English corresponds with several different Korean forms, such as “와,” “과,” or “랑.”

If I provide a direct translation from these Korean words to English, they all mean “and.” In Korean, the word for “and” depends on what kinds of words (nouns) come right before it, After a forty minute lesson from her aunt, Mary acquired this confusing rule. Mary’s aunt had caught a teachable moment to show Mary a complicated concept in Korean literacy; at another time, it would not have been so easy to motivate Mary to learn such a rule. Mary once mentioned, “Korean is difficult!” because of these complicated concepts, such as changing suffixes to show courtesy for elders, and choosing words carefully depending on the situation. By the end of 2008, I noticed from the following writing sample that Mary had forgotten a lot of these nuances.
While Mary was playing with Shelly, coloring something in the den, sometime in early 2008 when she was 8 years old, I asked Mary to develop a title page for her coloring book. She asked me whether she should do it in English or Korean. I answered, “What about both?” So Mary titled her coloring book “A Family Coloring Book” in English and wrote many letters with black crayons. She wrote “Story to Finish on the Back.” (It should have been “Finish on,” but she left out the space between “Finish” and “on”). At the top of the page, she also wrote “In order old to young I mean young to old find YOURS!” and then she colored the entire background with orange crayon. On the next page, she tried to develop the same title page in Korean: “가족 색칠하는 책 (A family coloring book).” Then she wrote the following sentence under the title: “순서대로
Because Mary was not confident about her Korean writing, she crossed out many letters, but she tried her best to write it in Korean. She made a big mistake on the last Korean word, so Mary and I discussed about how to improve the last word. Then Mary wrote that word 8 times at the end of page: “ 찾 아, 찾 아, 찾 아, 찾 아, 찾 아, 찾 아, 찾 아,” but every time she wrote the word bigger and bigger. I asked her why she had done that, and she answered “Just for fun!” (See the following sample.)

Figure 21. Mary’s writing sample 17.

Her strong attachment to her siblings, especially with Shelly, due to being the same gender and having only a two year age difference, resulted in cooperative literacy events, in virtual space. For example, when the mother was cooking in the kitchen, located right next to the den, with a PC on the corner of the kitchen, Kevin was searching
for something fun on the web while Mary and Shelly were reading storybooks. Whenever Mary or Shelly thought something was funny, they called their mom and Kevin right away, so they could show them the source of their amusement. Often Kevin ended up sitting with the girls at the table in the den, reading books. (As he became older, he moved on to cartoon books in the two languages or adventure literature like *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy or the *Harry Potter* series). Whenever something funny came up on a website or in their reading, Mary often initiated conversation and invited the others to join in her fun and share the joy of reading. Sometimes Shelly tried to take Mary’s book, so they got into a small fight, but they usually got along well during these literacy events.

The following field notes from my observation on March 28, 2008 indicating one of naturally happened literacy events when two sisters spent time together after school at home.

While their mother took Kevin to his tennis lesson, Mary and Shelly stayed home by themselves. Mary was trying to play the piano while Shelly was reading an English book on the couch. The title of the book was “I Will Never NOT EVER Eat a Tomato,” by Lauren Child. Shelly told me that she really wanted to read that book to the end, so I asked her to translate each sentence into Korean. Then Mary shouted to me, “She (Shelly) even can’t read this!” (pointing to English sentences). I said, “No, Shelly is reading now. Look at this!” Mary replied, “She is just memorizing.” Actually, her memorization ability was amazing—I had observed her recalling entire Korean and English storybooks.

When Shelly read the first two sentences this time, she read the first sentence perfectly, but skipped some words in the second sentence. Thus, I asked Shelly to read it over again, and she tried to read carefully, but she couldn’t read the longer words, such as
“difficult” or “because.” When Shelly translated some short sentences into Korean sentences, she translated “little sister” as “un-ni” (older sister) in Korean. Mary interrupted, telling her, “Shelly, that’s dong-saeng (younger sister), not un-ni.” Then she wrote two Korean affixes/words: 언니 (un-ni, older sister) and 동생 (dong-saeng, younger sister). After she had written these two words, she wrote English explanations: “big” under “언니 (un-ni)” and “little” under “동생 (dong-saeng).”

This is a typical example of the sibling-generated literate events that usually involved both languages. In this excerpt, especially, the older sister, Mary, tried to teach her younger sister about what to call an older or younger sister in Korean. Learning affixes in order to show courtesy in Korean is one of the hardest parts of learning Korean. When Shelly was struggling with that, Mary taught Shelly what to say in the correct form, even including her own written model. As Korean-American students who reside in a Korean home, these two girls always discussed translation, naming words, and family relationships in Korean, and proper expression in English, and they shared some of the funnier aspects of these topics with each other.

Once, in late 2007, Kevin came home from school to find his two younger siblings doing writing activities on the table in the den. He sat with them and said, “I will show you something fun.” He folded a piece of paper into 8 parts, and then he began to draw a bug in one of the sections. Mary and Shelly were impatient to figure out what he was doing; but at the same time, whatever he was doing didn’t look that fun yet, so they went back to their reading. When I asked Kevin what he was doing, he told me, “You have to wait!” He kept writing and drawing, filling out the 8 sections. All of us—Mary,
Shelly, the mother, and I—waited for Kevin to finish this literate activity, and then he finally showed it to us.

His finished project was a game for us in which we could answer either “yes” or “no” by following his instructions. In the first column, he wrote “You see a bug, EWWWW! (accompanied by a drawing of a lady bug); Yes: go to #3; No: go to #2; by Kevin Yun.” In the second column, he wrote “Brute strength is everything (accompanied by a drawing of a guy’s biceps); Yes: go to #16; No: go to #4,” and so on. In order to better illustrate his game, his drawing is attached below.

I was amazed by what he was doing and the opportunity that he, as an older brother, had brought to his younger sisters. As I expected, Mary said, “I got it!” and grabbed a piece of white paper and folded it into 8 sections. As I observed what she was writing, I realized that Mary was basically copying her brother’s game. However, it was created in her own way, which was more feminine, caring, and more connected to her daily life, related to her family, food, and hobbies.

The content of the 16 columns of Kevin’s and Mary’s writing games was different due to gender differences and individual characteristics. Kevin wrote about a bug, a masculine guy, stealing, silent attack, a warrior, an archer, a magic man, and an evil man, while Mary wrote about her family, a book, milk, and painting. However, Mary also wrote about stealing and a bug, because she copied Kevin’s ideas when she ran out of her own ideas for what to write. Age and gender factors might play an important role in these differences in the content of the game. In the following example, Mary’s writing is presented in her own creative way, except the two columns that she copied about a bug and stealing.
Shelly also shared her literacy activities with her sister Mary all the time. Shelly carefully observed what Mary was writing/drawing, and she got really excited, saying “It’s fun, it’s fun, hehe (smile).” Shelly looked very excited, and then she too quickly began folding papers, thought about what to draw for a second, and began writing/drawing as Mary had done in the first column. While she worked on the second column, she sighed once, perhaps because it was a lot of work for Shelly to complete 16 columns, including the front and back of the page.

This example represents the typical sibling-generated literacy activities in this household, in which Kevin’s modeling motivated Mary to develop something similar in her own way, and then Shelly tried to copy most of what Mary was doing but tended to give up in the middle or copied only part of Mary’s written pieces.

After a while, Shelly was interrupted again by Kevin and Mary, because the two older siblings were already done with this “Yes or No Game,” as Mary called it. Because Mary was done and was taking a little break watching Shelly, I suggested that Mary develop another version of the game in Korean. Mary asked why, but then she picked up a fresh sheet of paper without waiting for my answer. She filled the first column in Korean, but then she gave up, saying, “It just takes too long,” and sighing. At this point, I did not ask her to write anything further, because these literacy events are meant to be fun, without causing too much stress. If Mary had seemed to be having fun, then I would have encouraged her to write more, but I believed that it was time to stop pressing them to write in their heritage language.

Similar to her attachment to her extended family members and siblings, Mary also wrote many emails to her close friends, whom she called “my lovely circle.” I was
included in this circle, so I have received personal cards, short notes, and emails from
Mary generated only for me, or mass emails addressed to her entire group of friends. The
following examples are emails she sent to her entire circle.

Figure 22. Mary’s writing sample 18 (white board for family website).

Figure 23. Mary’s email sample.
Due to her lack of confidence in her Korean writing, Mary wrote Korean only to her grandmother, aunts, and me; she always wrote the mass emails in English. Mary wrote one email with mixed Korean and English words to her family members in early 2007, but that was an email only for family members. According to Mary, it seemed ok to write in Korean for her family members, but not others, because she was not good at it. Although her parents and I told her that it would be ok, because everybody makes mistakes, she kept refusing, saying “No, no, no.” Writing and reading these emails is connected to the next section about her literacy activities in hybrid space.

**Biliteracy practices in hybrid spaces: Using the internet.** There are three major ways that Mary engaged in literacy in both languages on the web: (a) reading and typing on her family website; (b) searching for information in Yahoo Koo-reo-gi (a Korean Yahoo site for young children, supported by Yahoo Kids) and Google; and (c) sending emails. Mary did not use these three internet tools at the beginning of the study, but she gradually learned about them from her best friends, parents, and siblings, beginning in late 2005.

**Literacy events in two languages in the family website: Cyworld.** Most Koreans abroad use a personal blog service called “Cyworld.” Cyworld is comparable to Facebook, although Cyworld was created about 10 years earlier. Cyworld is extremely popular in Korea, so most Koreans between the ages of 10 and 50 have a personal Cyworld page. Some young American students and some Korean-Americans also like to visit Cyworld in order to post about their own life, to connect with people, and to stay up-to-date about their friends’ or family members’ lives. Like many Koreans, the father in this home has had a Cyworld account for more than 15 years, and it serves as the entire
family’s site. If people want to find about this family’s daily life and/or family events, such as family trips or birthday parties, they can visit this site at any time. In order to protect their privacy, the parents are selective about whom they give permission to access the site. In order to view the family’s site, interested parties have to request to become “friends.” This family and I are “friends” on this website, so I can access their site, and they can access mine. This means that whenever we want to know about each other’s recent or not-so-recent events/activities, we can find such information on each other’s site at any time.

When I interviewed the grandmother and parents, they told me that accessing their family’s website, uploading pictures and stories, and reading others’ comments or replying to their comments had been huge part of how they spent their free time. The father added that surfing Cyworld was not only a huge part of the parents’ lives, but of the three children’s as well. The maternal grandmother expressed her appreciation for this website, because she has been able to keep up with her daughter’s family whenever she wanted to do so. She also liked to post comments about their events/activities, and revisit to the site to check whether her grandchildren have replied to her comments. She told me that the extended family members in Korea often visit this site to find out how this family is doing and to talk to the children. She confirmed that Cyworld had been a convenient and efficient way of communicating in this family. When I asked her whether she and her husband (Mary’s grandfather) were good at reading or writing in English on the website, she answered that Mary tended to type answers in English to her aunts, while she tended to type in Korean to her grandparents. According to Mary, the rationale behind her code-
switching on this website was that she knew her grandparents would not be good at reading and writing English.

The mother, who was known to her Korean community as a talented baker, often posted pictures of her cakes, cookies, foods, and breads on this website. When these pictures became popular to the Korean residents in the town where she lives, the family website became more popular. People who visited the website to view and order cakes also took a look at the family pictures, including the three children, and left comments. Mary often monitored what people wrote on the website, especially about pictures of herself. For example, when people left comments under her picture, such as “Mary looks so cute,” then Mary would write “Thank you^^” in English. She had some reluctance to write comments in Korean, because she knew that people might notice her mistakes. Here are some examples of Mary’s replies/comments on the family website.

Figure 24. Mary’s family website 1.
Figure 25. Mary’s family website 2.

**Searching for information in Yahoo Koo-reo-gi (a Korean Yahoo site, supported by Yahoo Kids) and Google.** Mary learned how to use Yahoo Koo-reo-gi from her older brother, Kevin. While Kevin read or looked at Korean cartoon characters on Yahoo Kids, Mary stood next to him and watched what he was doing. Once Mary discovered the amazing characters that Kevin found on that website, she searched for the best Korean girl characters on her own. Mary sometimes copied those characters into her own email and sent it to Korean friends, including her Korean classmates.

Mary also watched Kevin searching on Google for his homework, and she was soon able to look up some information on Google as well. When I interviewed her, she told me that she liked to find simple things on the web, like the weather for the following weekend or the meaning of an unknown word. For example, when Kevin asked her, “Mary, do you know what Katrina is?” Mary answered “No.” Kevin made fun of her,
calling her names in Korean. Mary felt bad, so she began typing “Katrina” into Google. When she did not know the exact spelling, she often asked her mother or father.

Although Mary sometimes used the Yahoo Korea site for Korean cultural information, Mary usually surfed Korean sites for leisure purposes, much like Kevin. While Kevin visited Yahoo Koo-reo-gi to searching for cartoon characters such as 사오샤요, 줄라맨, 로봇 태권 브이, or 파워레인저, Mary learned about the more feminine Korean cartoon characters. For example, she loved to learn about Korean songs for children, games, dramas, movies, and she sometimes communicated through MSN Instant Messenger with her grandmother, aunts, uncles, and Diana (a friend who is a little older than Mary). She liked to chat with Diana through MSN so much that it became another big motivator for Mary to communicate in Korean on the web, which she did about 40% of the time. Mary added that they used both languages, because Diana was not competent in English at the time.

Mary’s mother provided some examples, including a carrot song, a frog song, some ice cream songs, and some cartoon movies like 줄라맨, 마시마로, 초코마로, 복기마로, and 토마토갈기게임 (games for “slicing tomatoes”). When the mother watched Korean dramas such as 궁 (kingdom) and 거침없이 하이킥 (sending a high-kick), Mary watched them with her mother/parents.

**Emailing her acquaintances.** Mary’s connections with her “lovely circle” via email, to her family members and other Korean friends was a large part of her daily biliteracy practices. However, her rate of email use and the percentage of Korean she used changed over time. The following is Mary’s own account of her emailing practices...
in 2006, 2007, and 2008. Before 2006, she did not know how to type, and she was not interested in using the internet.

In 2006, Mary's grandmother forwarded me an email from Mary. In the email, Mary wrote “할머니, 사랑해요 (Grandmother, I love you).” I asked Mary whether she usually typed in Korean or English:

Researcher: Mary, do you often type in Korean?

Mary: 나 가끔 하는데 잘 안해. [I sometimes do, but not much.]

Researcher: Why? 그때 “할머니 사랑해요”는 어떻게 했어? [Then how did you write “Grandmother, I love you!” in Korean?]

Mary: 천천히... 근데 넣 느려... [Slowly... but it's too slow...]

Researcher: (To mother): 왜 이렇게 되는가 같으세요? [Do you know why?]

Mom: 한국말을 더 이상 잘 이해 못하니까요. 시간이 가면서 이젠 영어만 해요. [They just don't understand Korean much. As time goes by, they use English only.]

Mary: 음. But 할머니 이모랑 얘기할땐 한국말 많이 해. [Yes. I often talk to my grandmother and aunts in Korean.]


Mary: 화상 캠 [camera on the pc]으로 할때 말로 하고, 보통은 Messenger 로, 전화가끔 하고. [When I was on the pc with a camera, then I spoke to her. But we usually use “messenger,” and talked to her on the phone sometimes.]

Researcher: Camera 알예선 말로 할때 한국말해 영어해? [In front of camera, do you speak Korean or English?]

Mary: 한국말... 영어도 가끔 해... [Korean... sometime English...]

Researcher: 어떤때? [Like when?]

Mary: 말 하고 싶은 거 잘 못말할 때. [When I can’t speak what I want to say]
When I asked Mary how she contacted relatives or friends, she answered that she talked on the phone about 50% of the time, emailed 40% of the time, and wrote cards or letters 10% of the time. Two years later, in 2008, she answered differently, saying that she used the phone 75% of the time, email 25% of the time, and never wrote cards or letters. When I asked the reason for these changes, Mary explained, “It’s just too difficult to write in Korean,” in an assertive way. Her grandmother added, “없날이나 지금이나 메리가 가장 할머니랑 얘기할 많이 하고 한국말을 많이 하긴 하지만, 셋중에서, 그래도 이젠 많이 (한국말을) 하기 싫어해요. 난랑 이멜이나 대화도 많이 줄었어요.” [Among the three grandchildren, Kevin, Shelly, and Mary, Mary used to speak the most Korean to me, and I communicated with her more than anyone else. But she doesn’t seem to like to speak to me in Korean anymore. Her emails and conversation with me have decreased, because she does not want to do it in Korean].”

Sending/receiving emails to maintain and practice the heritage language is one of the most effective, although not the easiest method—a strong bond between the two parties is necessary to maintain constant contact and discuss many life issues. For Mary, one challenge was not only the difficulty of typing in Korean, but also the fact that she did not have many issues to talk about with her grandmother, except “Grandmother, I miss you,” (할머니, 보구써어요) or “I love you” (or 사랑해요). Several series of emails between the grandmother and Mary follow; however, there are not many emails written in Korean with other family members such as the grandfather, aunts, or cousins.
Figure 26. Mary’s email to Grandmother 1.
During my yearly interview with Mary in 2006, she told me that she sometimes used Korean when typing on the computer, especially when she was online. When I asked her the exact percentage of her Korean typing, she answered that it was around 20%, while her typing in English was around 80%. After that, in each yearly interview, she changed her answers to 15% Korean/85% English in 2007, and finally it to 1%
Korean/99% English in 2008. In order to check whether Mary was recalling correctly, I asked her mother to sit with us and I intentionally extended this chance to discuss about language use at home. The mother agreed about what Mary wrote and told me, “하라 그래도 잘 안하고 . . . 예, 거의 맞아요, 물론 몇 퍼센트의 차이는 있었지만 . . . .”

[They obviously tend to use less Korean . . . so yes, although there might be a few differences between real life and her figures, it’s mostly right.]

When Mary talked to Grace, one of her close Korean friends, they emailed once a day, but they wrote in English only. The reason was the same as other cases: Korean writing took too long. The mother added that Mary sent emails to her grandmother both in Korean and English, while she wrote only in English to her two aunts. Once the grandmother visited here and then went back to Korea, Mary tended to write emails in Korean, but as time went by, she changed the major language from Korean to English within two weeks. When I interviewed the grandmother about this, she shared her opinions about how technology might help Mary to maintain and develop her heritage language.

 계속 해야되, 계속 . . . 메리가 그냥 쓰라고 하면 할머니 보고싶어요, 사랑해요 . . . 밖에 안하니까, 내가 계속 메리한테 답하기 쉬운 글로 움

[It (The effort for Mary to become bilingual and biliterate) should be continued, keep going . . . If I ask Mary to write emails, she often writes only two Korean sentences like “I miss my grandmother. I love you.” In order to help her expand her answers more, I should develop questions for Mary to answer easily, and I should also find some cute characters so Mary will be interested in my emails in order to practice Korean reading and writing. Then Mary could write further, “Grandmother, what is this? (asking the character’s name) How did you find this? So we could communicate longer in emails. Right? Difficult . . . but I appreciate that we still are able to communicate in Korean although it’s not perfect.]
As Mary’s Korean tutor, I also tried to send her emails in Korean. I sometimes got responses either in Korean or English; however, most of my attempts received a short answer, written in English. I wondered whether her replies to me were so brief because I was not a friend or family member. But when I talked about this with Mary and her mother, they both answered that it was because Kevin or their mother was waiting for their turn to use the computer. In addition, the mother told me,

If I knew that Mary was replying to you, especially in Korean, then I would rather she use the PC longer. I just assumed that Mary was killing her time by emailing her classmates back and forth in English, so I asked her to write quickly all the time.

On the other hand, Mary added,

I can’t write to you in Korean any more . . . I used to do that with my grandmother, aunts, or to you with my mother’s help, but she was not always available, and I don’t know many words anyway. I like to write important words only either in Korean or English, no, English is better.

As Mary had told me about her Korean writing, the following example shows that she preferred emailing in English, although she tended to communicate with me in Korean because I was her Korean teacher. This was an email exchange between Mary and me at the end of 2007, while I was out of country for a month.
Figure 28. Mary’s email to Researcher.

Schooling. From weekly observation with five teachers, I was able to observe how busy they were just covering their daily curriculums. Mary’s second grade teacher was the only teacher who actively shared the focal child’s language and literacy activities that he/she observed in class and showed some concern for their confused bilingual/bicultural identity.
All of the teachers clearly stated in their individual interviews that they value multicultural education and heritage language retention. Among the five, two teachers specifically mentioned these academic words, so I asked them whether they had taken graduate courses about this issue when they were pursuing their master degrees. These two teachers emphasized that these classes were practically and conceptually helpful in their daily practices when they have English language learners or linguistically/culturally diverse learners. However I was not able to observe any connections or teachable moments in which these teachers encouraged their students to expand their heritage language and culture. The following is from the interview with the mother in January, 2008.

**Me:** Do they tell you that? How often? How important do teachers believe bilingual education is? What did they say to you?

**Mother:** There were only two teachers who were expressive about that. They might have taken a course about that issue. They [e.g., Kevin’s 2nd grade teacher] told me that we should speak Korean at home. Even when I asked her “Am I supposed to reduce the portion of speaking Korean at home?” she said “No, no, no, it’s really important to speak your home language at home. Bilingualism is beneficial for every aspect of development. Kevin is totally fine at school and his English is totally ok. It’s better to keep speaking Korean at home. Don’t worry about his English proficiency. He is fine!” But other teachers said “No, it’s ok,” but they didn’t encourage or make extra comments about that. They did not seem to care about it much.

**Me:** Yeah, I saw that in school. There are not many opportunities to connect with the home languages in school. When they see Korean letters in their writing pieces, do they ask you what they mean or make comments about it?

**Mother:** Yeah, some. Actually two teachers showed me my children’s Korean letters/words when I visited school. “Are these Korean letters? Right?” But I’m not sure whether their intention was to find a discussion topic or whether they valued Korean literacy. They might.
Mary’s second grade teacher was the only teacher who I observed showing excitement whenever she caught scaffolding moments for Mary. This teacher showed me the following writing sample that Mary wrote in class. According to the teacher, they were having a writing workshop, and the teacher found a Korean word in Mary’s writing journal. The teacher asked Mary what the word meant, so Mary explained, “I just thought it would look nice with the Korean word (ﾝｶﾝ[buterfly]).” After that, the teacher often asked her to write Korean words next to her English writing, but Mary often said “I don’t know.”

*Figure 29. Mary’s writing sample 19.*
Mary’s intellectual curiosity. During the course of this study, Mary consistently showed an interest in and positive attitude toward language and literacy in both languages until late 2006. She exhibited curiosity about new words, pronunciation, reading, and writing. Mary liked to talk and listen, read and write. Furthermore, people around her encouraged her linguistic development with compliments. For example, on Father’s Day 2005, while I was teaching Korean to Kevin, Mary suddenly opened the study room door and said:

Mary: Look at this, I wrote it. (spoken in Korean)

(She showed me her first writing sample. I was so surprised and happy because I saw she had written her name in both languages a few times, but I had not seen any other writing for 3 months.)

Researcher: Wow! Good job! What did you write? (Korean)

Mary: Dad, Dad! (Korean) [very excited]

Researcher: Did you show this to your Dad? (Korean)

Mary: Yeah. (Korean) [looked proud]

Researcher: Can you write it for me one more time right now? (Korean)

Mary: Yeah (Korean). Give me (Korean) paper! (English) [excited]

Researcher: Here you go. (Korean)

Then she wrote “Dad” in Korean again in front of me; she appeared to draw the letters rather than write them. This encouragement from the family members and me about her writing in addition to her own excitement helped to motivate her to expand her skills to writing other words, such as “mom” or “brother,” and may have helped her develop the ability to write her name in Korean.
Until early-mid 2006, she was consistently willing to speak, listen, read, and write in Korean. Unlike her siblings, she completely understood the perspective of “additive bilingualism.” She seemed to enjoy switching between the two languages, feeling more accomplished than others because she was able to utilize two languages while most people dealt with only one language. Young children, including Kevin and Mary, especially like to communicate in their own secret language in public so that they can discuss anything they want in front of others. In this case, Korean served that purpose. Mary mentioned that an advantage of being bilingual was that she could understand others, but they (English speakers in this case) could not understand her Korean.

The following excerpt is an example of Mary’s bilingual voice and interest in word play. Her curiosity and creativity expressed itself in linguistic play in English and Korean. More specifically, she played with a Korean word by writing two different Korean one-syllable words, әә (bear) and әә (door). The first letter of the first word is the consonant ә (/g/), the second letter is the vowel ә (/o/), and the last letter is the consonant ә (/m/). The vertical combination of these three letters is әә, meaning “bear,” while putting the ә first followed by ә and ә results in the second word, әә, meaning “door.” If you turn the first word upside down, it becomes the second word. I never thought about such a relationship between these two words, so I was amazed by Mary’s creativity at finding this linguistic coincidence. I asked her mother whether anyone in her family had taught this to Mary, but the mother was surprised and answered, “Did she do that? How amazing! We never told her about that . . . I didn’t know Mary was able to flip Korean words to find another word. How smart! (smiling).” No one in the family had taught this to Mary; however, Mary discovered it by herself while she played with
Korean words by copying words from Korean books with Shelly. Mary drew Shelly’s attention and said, “Shelly, look! Look at this! (by writing the first word) 내가 “공”을 썼는데 이걸 이렇게 뒤집으니까 . . . see . . . 문!” (I wrote “bear” in Korean, and then I flipped the page like this. Then see, it’s “door!”). Then Shelly asked Mary, “문이 왜야? 나 “공”은 알여, 나 공 좋아해 (smile)! (What is ‘문’? I know ‘bear.’ I actually like bear (smile)!

Mary wrote the word “door” in Korean and flipped the page again to find the word meaning “bear” in Korean, showing it to Shelly. Mary’s curiosity and creativity helped her to find interesting literacy activities not only in English but also in Korean, so that her siblings learned what Mary discovered and often engaged in those activities for a while until they got bored with them. Mary’s initiation/discovery of these linguistic activities in her heritage language was not paralleled by Kevin or Shelly. Shelly, who was the least bilingual of the three siblings, spent a lot of time with Mary, so Mary’s creativity at applying what she learned served Shelly well, too.

I wanted to collect voice recordings of this focal family’s daily oral interactions when I was not around, so I gave them a digital voice recorder to use anytime they wanted. As a researcher, I explained to the parents that I did not want to intrude in their personal lives, so that they should record what they felt comfortable with. The father suggested, “What about this? We (the parents) will control what to record and when to record. I guess we could probably turn on the recorder right after school when they have activities and do their homework in the den, as well as lunch or dinner times at the dining table. Because that’s the time when all the family members gather on a daily basis, and other times when we have dessert in the living room while I read books to them.”
responded, “That’s a great idea! I hope you feel comfortable with it. Do anything you want, and please feel free to delete any recordings later if you feel some conversations should not have been recorded. Again, my purpose is to find about the daily oral interactions among family members when I am not present, because they might try harder to speak, read, and/or write Korean with me.” Therefore, we easily came to an agreement about these recordings without my presence (as a researcher and Korean tutor) in the children’s daily lives.

Mary appeared not only to be creative with linguistic elements in two languages, but also to be curious about my roles as teacher and researcher, particularly about my research methodology (recording, in this case). She wanted to know my rationale for recording her daily conversation. However, she chose to ask her mother while I was away, not me. The following transcript of one of the voice recordings shows Mary’s curiosity about the purpose of the recording in 2007.

Mary: What she is learning from that? (recording)
Mom: She is learning?
Mom: Ahh... 선생님이 될 배우... 워 가지고 study 하느나면은 메리가 이거 이렇게 말해서 여기 녹음하잖아? [Your Korean teacher is trying to learn... what she is studying is... if we record your daily conversation?] You’re bilingual children, type 이야.
Mary: Yes.
Mom: Bilingual이 왜야? [What is bilingual?]
Mary: No, I say something now she knows what to say to the other. Now she knows what to teach to the other children.
Mom: 그게 아니라... 선생님이 teach만 하는게 아니라 She’s also study about the language, 그런데 language를 두 가지 language를 다 말할 수 있는 아이들에 대해서 연구를 하는 거야, 연구가 왜야? study하는 거야. [No... she is not only teaching Korean language,
she’s also studying language, but she is researching children who speak two languages. What is research? It means studying.]

Mary: 응 [yes]

Mom: 그래서 (She) develop more teaching skill if she knows more about the children who use both language 그럼 she can teach them.

Mary: English.


Mom: 그리고 메리가 you’re helping her, 메리가 도와주고 있는거야, 선생님을. 알았어? [So Mary, you are helping her, Mary is helping her, your teacher. Ok?]

Mary: Not Shelly!

Mom: Not Shelly? (thinking for a second)

(To Shelly) 응, 년 한국말을 좀 더 말하면 좋야. 알았지? [Shelly, it would be better if you speak more Korean, ok?]

Shelly: 응 [yes]

Mom: 아주 맞아? 어? (Pointing to some food) [Is it that delicious? Huh?]

Mary: Don’t (you?) turn that off.

Mom: 왜? [Why?]

Mary: Because . . . (It seemed the mother turn the recorder off at this point.)

Mary’s curiosity about language, including other things about her daily life facilitated her engagement in her language development. She often compared the two
languages, asking her mother or me, for example, “How do you say this in Korean?” or “Mom, what is the English word for 바늘 (needle)?” Furthermore, she often taught Shelly how to say English words in Korean. Especially in literate events, Mary usually helped Shelly write correctly in both languages, and often challenged her by asking, “Do you know how to write this in Korean?” If Shelly did not know the answer, Mary would say, “I will show you how to write it, and you can copy it.” Then Mary wrote an example. As shown in numerous excerpts and examples, Mary’s curiosity about new things and languages accelerated her acquisition of two languages to a greater extent than her siblings.

**Mary’s Identity Construction and Negotiation**

Mary’s identity construction and negotiation fluctuated over the course of 6 years. Because she was such a talented student in language learning and development, it was interesting for me to look at the relationship between her concept of identity and her linguistic development, which also fluctuated over the years. Mary’s identity development with regard to linguistic issues includes her self-concept about being a bilingual/biliterate and her difficulties and frustrations with acquiring/developing two languages. Ethnic issues are related to her concerns, attitudes, and changes in her concept about being an Asian-American, especially as a person with a different skin color living in a White-dominant culture in the Midwest United States. Although I divided these issues into two categories—linguistic and ethnic—my observation of these three children over the course of six years has brought me to believe that identity construction, negotiation, and transformation go hand-in-hand with language acquisition and
development. Therefore, most of the data presented in this section does not fit neatly into one category, but often relates to both categories (linguistic and ethnic issues) and involves social settings.

**Self-concept of becoming and being bilingual and biliterate (living with two languages).** In 2006, Mary did not know what “bilingual” meant. As time went by, when she heard me or her parents use the word “bilingual,” she fully understood what the word meant and even explained it to her sister, Shelly (find page number of that excerpt from Shelly’s chapter 7), just as Kevin had done for Mary in the following interview (recorded in November 2006).

Researcher: Are you bilingual and biliterate?

Mary: What is that?

Kevin: The person who speaks two languages, like Mary, you speak Korean, so you are a bilingual.

Mary: (looking at me and Kevin) Umm . . . then I am. What is bi . . . What? The next one.

Researcher: Biliterate? The same thing. A literate one means the person who reads and write in two languages. Mary, can you read and write in two languages? In Korean and English?

Mary: U-Huh.

Researcher: Yeah, right. I know that (smile). Then you are a biliterate, too. Do you like that?

Mary: (strongly nodding)

Researcher: Kevin, what about you?

Kevin: Uhm . . . sometimes are good, but mostly no.

Researcher: Why?

Kevin: I don’t need to speak Korean but it’s cool others can’t understand.
Researcher: Like when?
Kevin: When mom came to classroom to pick me up, I usually spoke Korean to her so nobody understood what I’d saying. It’s cool—
Mary: I like it! (Smiling and nodding)
Researcher: Which words do you like the most? English or in Korean?
Kevin: I don’t know . . . I don’t have it..ah! maybe 케빈 I like my Korean name is better than English name, Kenneth.
Researcher: Why?
Kevin: It sounds cool . . . I don’t know, I like FEATURES more.
Researcher: Mary, what is your favorite word in Korean and in English?
Mary: 메리!! (smiling, shouting her Korean name)
Researcher: In English?
Mary: Mary . . . (smiling again)

Until the end of 2005, I was able to communicate with Mary through a series of casual communications during which she seemed to be feeling good and concentrating. Due to her young age as preschooler in 2005, it was impossible for me to conduct an intensive interview with Mary for half an hour. Until the end of 2006, when Mary became a first grader, I continued to have casual conversations with her, especially when she brought up these issues from her daily experiences. During one such casual conversation with Mary, I asked her whether she was a Korean or an American or a Korean-American. Mary was a full-bilingual at the time, so she answered in perfect Korean, “나 한국 사람이야 (I am Korean).” I asked her why, and she told me, “엄마 아빠가 나 낳았는데 들 다 한국 사람이고 나도 한국 사람이래. 그러구 나 미국에서 태어났지만 한국말 잘해.” (She looked proud of herself at this point.) Based on Mary’s answer, I was
able to make the assumption that her parents had taught their children about their ethnicity and identity. In order to check my assumption, I asked her mother about their attitudes and discussion with their children about the children’s identities. The importance of Korean and English oral language and literacy as well as Korean culture was demonstrated in the following excerpt taken from an interview with Mary’s mother:

> We are Korean, so we should know how to read and write Korean at the same time as English, because we are in the United States now. Although my children, all of them were born here, we can’t be the same as Americans. We are not sure we will go back to Korea or not, but we want our children to master both languages. Then they can be confident in any situation in both countries.

With the parents’ consistent education of their children regarding their Korean identity, along with Mary’s Korean language schooling and private tutoring, Mary seemed to be a full-bilingual with a strong Korean heritage identity. In 2005, Mary strongly believed in “additive bilingualism,” because she often felt proud of her ability to speak, listen, read, and write in both languages.

In addition to her account above, the mother often told me that her children were Korean until 2006. When I had these kinds of conversations with the mother, the father often added his belief about their children being Korean.

> Yes, they are Korean and we want that. However, we also should understand that they were born in the United States, they are living in the United States, and they will be living in the United States for a while or forever. I want them to understand that their parents and their origin are Korean but I don’t want them to be too painfully caught in the middle between two different cultures. They have to choose what kind of person they want to be and I just hope that they are happy about who they are and where their parents came from.

Whenever I heard such an account from the father, I believed that the father was more concerned about his children being confused about their identities; the father himself spent his childhood on the periphery of Korean culture, because he had to speak English
only. The father’s attitude had been consistent over six years, while the mother’s attitude changed as the children went to school and began to speak English at home, especially after school. The year 2006 was the year that saw the most changes and struggles, and the mother talked about her realities, difficulties, and frustrations once a month when I visited her home for observations and casual interviews. The mother strongly believed that all of her children, especially Mary, who was the most competent bilingual, had been losing their Korean identities as they lost their Korean language and literacy abilities. When I asked the mother the reason they had lost their heritage language and identity, the mother quickly and firmly gave two reasons: the children’s English-only schooling and the lack of Korean tutoring.


**Mary’s self-concept about her ethnic identity: Issues and changes.** Mary’s concept about being Korean or American or Korean-American changed over the course of this 6 year study. Due to her young age, Mary did not and probably was not able to make any comment about herself: on the other hand, in November 2005, Mary presented herself as Korean. When I asked the rationale for that answer, she said, “My mom told me that I am a Korean because my parents were born in Korea, they are Korean, and they
speak Korean better. I mean my mom. So I am a Korean. My dad told me that I am a
Korean-American. Anyway, Korean comes first.” And then she added one more sentence
in Korean, “나 그리고 한국말 잘 해 [And I am good at speaking Korean].”

One year later, in November 2006, I interviewed Mary formally for the first time.
Kevin had already done this kind of interview in 2005, so I invited Kevin to help Mary be
comfortable enough to provide honest answers. In the end, the three of us had an in depth
and honest conversation for an hour and a half with the mother, which was even better
than the interview I had originally planned. Whenever Mary had difficulty thinking about
how to answer my questions, the mother or Kevin helped her reflect on her linguistic
usage and cross-checked whether her answer was consistent with what they had observed
in their daily lives.

According to Mary in this 2006 interview, Kevin said, “I am a 60% American
40% Korean, but it might be different for Mary.” When I asked him why, he said, “I
don’t know, but Mary speaks Korean more than me. That’s why . . .” Mary answered, “I
am a 50% American and 50% Korean.” So I asked why. She answered, “Because I speak
English better . . . and a lot more!” I asked, “Mary, you told me you were Korean last
year. So did you realize that your answer was changed during one year?” And Mary
nodded her head, and she did not say anything further.

In November 2007, I conducted the yearly interview while the grandmother and
Mary’s older aunt were visiting this home. About the same question, Mary answered
“I’m a Korean-American.” Then Mary looked her grandmother’s and aunt’s faces and
added, “My mom told me that I am officially a Korean-American.” I asked “Because?”
and she answered “Because I was born here, but my parents were born in Korea. So I
have Korean blood. That’s what my parents told me.” At this point, I realized that Mary had absorbed how she was educated or what she had overheard from influential people in her life, such as her parents, teachers, and/or extended family members, as she got older. Her answer has been different every year for three years so far, so I became very interested in what her answer would be in the following year, 2008.

In November 2008, Mary said, “I think I am an American, because I was born here.” After hearing this answer, I found myself to be a little embarrassed, because there was a discrepancy in her series of answers. For many years, Mary had clearly known that she was born in the United States, but she had still answered that she was either a Korean, in 2005, a Korean-American (half and half), in 2006, or a Korean-American, in 2007. Therefore, I asked, “I remember that you told me that you were born in the United States for many years. Right?” She nodded. So I said, “Then you might remember that you said you were Korean, although you knew you were born here at that time.” Mary paused for a while and then told me, “In preschool (2004-2005), I thought I was a Korean person because I knew Korean more. In kindergarten (2005-2006), I thought I became American because I spoke English better.” Thus I had to confirm her confusion by asking her, “So, are you saying that your nationality has been depending on your linguistic ability whether you better speak Korean or English?” Mary quickly answered “Yes (she nodded and became quiet for a while).” I was also quiet in order for Mary to deeply reflect about her thoughts on this issue. She then said, “아니, 나도 모르겠어. [No, I don’t know.]”

The following table shows Mary’s conceptualization of her own linguistic and ethnic identity over the course of 6 years. This is based on her own words during the yearly focused and semi-structured interview, supported by ongoing casual conversation.
with her. These answers were also cross-checked with her parents and extended family members.

Table 3

*Mary's Conceptualization of Her Own Linguistic and Ethnic Identity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Korean</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Ethnic identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Korean-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Korean-American (official)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Details in the above table were also matched to the following writing sample (Figure 30) that Mary’s own writing about herself in 2007.

As illustrated in the writing sample below, the previous table represents her own conceptualization about the ratio of daily usage in two languages for six years, and I added her changing recognition about herself as I have interviewed her every year. The above writing sample was produced when Mary was 7, and it also delivers her preferred ways of explaining anything in detail as she tried to deliver exact concepts of portion or ratio.
Mary’s use of numeric percentages is characteristic of the focal family; I was able to observe this phenomenon not only from Mary but from all members of this family. The father had a strong background in math, and they all referred to numbers frequently in their daily lives. As a Korean myself, I sense this characteristic of explaining portions or
degrees with numbers or percentages is common among educated Korean families. It is common practice to use the Ku-Mon education system to facilitate the acquisition of math concepts from an early age in Korea. Mary was no exception, and she often used percentages to explain the degree of her heritage language usage compared to the use of English in her daily life.

In conclusion, language and literacy usage, acquisition, and development influenced Mary’s concept of her own ethnic and national identity. Her identity construction, negotiation, and transformation have gone hand-in-hand with her linguistic acquisition, development, and daily habits/usage. From Mary’s accounts, including her parents’ and my experiences, identity negotiation depends on a student’s daily life experiences. Daily life experiences included the focal student’s interaction with family members, classmates, neighbors, and friends at home, in school, around the neighborhood, and in other community places. They also involved the people with whom Mary interacted most of the time. Mary spent the most time with Shelly, who only interacted in English with Mary; her mother, who used to speak to Mary in Korean but changed to English later in the study; and all others, including her teachers and classmates at her all-English school.

As Mary lost her linguistic and ethnic Korean identity, she did not feel any necessity to read and write Korean, especially in her daily free time when she came home from her school. The following field note shows Mary’s reluctance to write Korean letters neatly, because she did not consider Korean tutoring to be necessary or fun. The longer she was involved in American schooling, the more she lost her motivation and
interest in learning her heritage language and literacy even at home, where everybody
communicated in oral and written English.
Chapter 7

The Case of a Reluctant and Limited Bilingual/Biliterate: Shelly

Introduction

This chapter addresses how Shelly, the youngest child in this family, participated in her daily language and literacy events, and how she negotiated her bilingual/biliterate identity in her immigrant home. I will begin this chapter with a brief discussion of Shelly’s educational path (history of schooling and education), and personal characteristics and parents’ goals. Subsequently, to understand her consistent reluctance and practical and emotional challenges, three major parts will be discussed: (a) language and literacy development in two languages, (b) social factors on her bilingual/biliteracy development, and (c) her identity construction/negotiation.

Educational path. Shelly is now an outgoing first grader. Shelly’s educational experiences were both different and similar to her two older siblings. In January 2006, Shelly began attending a Montessori preschool, where her older sister had gone for one and a half years (unlike her brother, Kevin, who did not attend daycare or preschool). Next, Shelly attended the same kindergarten that her two older siblings had attended. All three children were taught by the same kindergarten teacher. The three siblings had similar educational experiences, except for a few differences in their participation in extra-curriculum activities, such as piano, ballet, tae-kwon-do, violin, Korean heritage language school, tennis, swimming, etc. In comparison to her two older siblings, Shelly showed the least motivation for learning new things and engaging in new activities; for example, she only agreed to learn ballet after Mary’s interesting ballet performance.
Shelly’s mother explained that she and her husband learned how to educate their children from the experiences of raising their first child Kevin, so they could make better decisions for their two daughters, Mary and Shelly. However, the children’s gender seems to have accelerated the differences in educational decisions among Kevin and Mary/Shelly. For instance, if one private institute or lesson seemed to work well for Mary (e.g., ballet or piano or violin lessons), then the parents also tried the same class with Shelly. Yet, Shelly had less interest in participating in extracurricular activities, so the parents’ intentions and actions did not work well all the time.

Despite this, the parents tried to lead Shelly to follow Mary’s educational path, except that they did not send Shelly to the Korean heritage language school. This decision did not necessarily mean that the parents had a negative experience with Mary in the Korean language school. In fact, the parents talked about Mary’s participation in the Korean school either positively or neutrally, during casual conversation. However, during a casual interview with the mother, she explained why she did not send Shelly to Korean language school. (The interview was conducted in Korean to allow her to fully express herself; it is translated into English below.)

Shelly is a very different and difficult kid in comparison to Mary. Mary always listens to us [parents] well and is curious academically and culturally. Mary rarely complains about what she is supposed to do and made big progress in the Korean language school because she learned how to read and write in there. On the other hand, Shelly showed an inability to concentrate and always gets easily tired or distracted from what she is supposed to do. She is very difficult to handle. I believe it would be a waste of money if I sent Shelly to the Korean language school. I often see you getting frustrated, especially when you teach her Korean. I have observed the same thing not only from you, but from all of her tutors. I struggle with her every day. (The mother looked very frustrated.)

Overall, Shelly’s participation in formal learning activities was similar to that of her older sister, except that Shelly did not participate in the Korean language school or formal
Korean tutoring. Consequently, her educational path was very similar to her other classmates in her white-dominated classroom who also participated in extracurricular activities like learning piano, ballet, reading, etc.

**The parents’ goals for Shelly.** Although the mother acknowledged that Shelly’s language and literacy development in two languages was slower than Mary’s, the mother never attempted to speed up Shelly’s linguistic development because of her deep belief in her children’s innate learning abilities.

I hope Shelly can manage school work. Based on what I experienced with Mary, young learners will catch up to their appropriate level when the time comes. However, there will be individual differences... (sigh)... Shelly is slow in academics so I can’t even expect her to be good at Korean language and literacy. I hope at least that she will be ok in school.] (From an interview with the mother in April, 2006)

Although the mother talked about her hope and belief in Shelly’s innate ability to become better overall in learning and development, the mother’s frustration was obvious. For example, by observing the mother’s attitude toward her three children over a long period, I was able to keep track of the mother’s changes in her treatment of Shelly: the mother often reacted as if she was annoyed, shouting at Shelly about her behavior, and this was different from her reactions to the two older siblings. The mother often commented to me, “재가 왜 저러는지 모르겠어요 [I don’t know why Shelly is such a trouble-maker],” and the mother often looked frustrated.
It was obvious that the parents held the lowest expectations for Shelly to develop and maintain her heritage language/literacy and cultural identity. This was clear not only from my longitudinal observations, but also from the mother’s consistent comments and her decision not to send Shelly to Korean language school. The mother seemed to have given up on Shelly becoming a truly smart or diligent student who could fully speak, listen, read, and/or write in two different language systems.

Throughout my longterm engagement with this focal family, I was able to observe that the parents set different educational expectations for each child. Low expectations and minimal attention to Shelly’s heritage language/literacy development occurred because Shelly was viewed as a troublemaker. The mother showed her disappointment in Shelly not developing her heritage language/literacy proficiency and cultural identity; on the other hand, the mother believed that Shelly would be fine in her United States schooling. Thus, the mother often tried to dismiss her worries about Shelly. In the next section, Shelly’s overall stage of language and literacy development in two languages will be described from her birth to the current stage.

**Shelly’s Bilingual and Biliteracy Acquisition and Development**

In this section, I describe Shelly’s bilingual/biliteracy acquisition and development. Understanding Shelly’s overall usage and development of oral and written language both in English and in Korean is critical for three reasons: (a) Bilinguals tend to explore two languages orally and then move to literacy practices (Chiappe & Siegel, 1999; Salinger, 2001); (b) Oral and written languages are deeply connected to each other (Carla & Richard, 2000); and (c) Two different language systems are possibly
interdependent (Baker, 2005; Cobo-Lewis et al., 2002; Cummins, 1979). Therefore, I provide her language and literacy acquisition, usage, and development in three different time frames in two separate language systems: English and Korean. I selected the three time-frames (i.e., birth to two years old, two-four years old, and four to five years) for systematic presentation based on Shelly’s overall development.

Regarding biliteracy development, exploring literature, reading, and writing will be discussed chronologically. To help readers understand Shelly’s language and literacy development, a summary of her oral and written language acquisition and development during the three time frames for each of her two languages is presented in Table 4.

**Shelly’s oral language usage and development.**

**Birth to 2 years old (mid-2002 to mid-2005).** Although most babies often make one syllable sounds, such as /uh/, /ma/, /he/, etc., Shelly’s mother recalled her beginning sounds as reserved and limited. On the other hand, similar to other young children who began to engage in linguistic events, Shelly started “cooing” at the beginning stage of her early language development in 2003. When the researcher and parents tried to interact with her, she often smiled and became active physically but not verbally. Shelly’s mother often expressed her concern to me that Mary was much more expressive when she was Shelly’s age in terms of the frequency of her cooing as well as her attempts at oral speaking.

When Shelly was the age that most children speak their first word—about one year old—she said, “/ma/.” According to her mother, Shelly said “Ma” and “Mu-Ma-Ma” as her first word, so the parents were confused whether Shelly was saying “mom” in Korean or in English. The other two older siblings’ first words were “mother” in Korean:
“엄마” (/Um-ma/: mother) and “맘아” (/mam-ma/: sounds like “mother” in English but is baby-talk for “food” in Korean). Since the pronunciation of the words “mom” or “mother” in English are similar to the sound of “mother” in Korean, many Korean parents who live in English-speaking countries have experienced linguistic confusion about which language their babies used to speak their first word. However, the mother clarified that Shelly’s first words were probably Korean, because this family spoke more than 80-90% Korean at home until 2004.

During this early period, there was no specific Korean tutoring for Shelly. Weekly Korean tutoring was requested by Shelly’s parents mainly for Kevin’s and Mary’s Korean literacy acquisition and development. However, Shelly often looked at me curiously, listened to my tutoring, and liked to sit next to me during the hour-long tutoring sessions.

**Two years old to 4 years old (mid-2005 to mid-2007).** Shelly was increasingly exposed to English, because by the time Shelly was three years old in the Fall of 2005, Kevin was a fourth grader, while Mary was a kindergartener, both in all-English public schools. This period was clearly a time in which all three children were exposed to United States schooling, even as the parents themselves were improving their English. Consequently, Shelly made significant gains in English proficiency as her Korean continued to develop.

**Single words in both languages.** Shelly’s socio-cultural environment impacted her English and Korean vocabulary development. With the parent’s nearly consistent use of Korean at home, Shelly often referred to objects in single Korean words, such as “엄마” (i.e., “mother”), “차” (i.e., “car”), “물” (i.e., “water”), or “밥” (i.e., “rice”). At the same
time, due to her exposure to English language and literacy at home and in preschool she was equally able to speak single words in English as well (e.g., “book,” “cookie,” “milk,” “school,” “teacher”).

*Outside Korean support.* Another critical aspect of this period in Shelly’s life was the absence of Korean tutoring. Because I was not available to teach the three children once a week, I only visited their home once a month to observe linguistic events as a non-participant observer: I sat at their kitchen table to watch their naturally-occurring activities and events. Thus, this period, when Shelly was four years old (i.e., mid-2006 and mid-2007), was a turning point regarding Shelly’s Korean language and literacy development because she had little outside support (i.e., Korean tutoring, Korean language school) for her Korean language and literacy exposure.

*Rapid development in English/Losing interest in developing Korean language/literacy.* Exposure to English in a school setting in January 2006 facilitated Shelly’s oral language development in English. This is the time that I visited her home only once a month, so I was surprised by her rapid development of English proficiency during every visit; on the other hand, I also found that there was increasingly little reason for Shelly and her siblings to communicate in Korean during this period. Largely because all of the children in this family went to English-speaking public schools, their communication at home and in community places changed from Korean to English. Social exposure in preschool, on the playground, and playing with English-speaking peers and parents accelerated Shelly’s English language proficiency. However, at the same time Shelly exhibited a decrease in Korean language proficiency and a general loss of interest in learning to speak Korean. During an interview in May 2007, I asked Shelly, “When do
you speak English, and when do you speak Korean?” Her response was illustrative of the usefulness of Korean in her daily life:

I spoke Korean with only 외할머니 and 할아버지. 이모는 영어해. [I spoke Korean only with grandmother and grandfather. I speak English with my aunts.]

When I asked Shelly, “Do you believe you communicate everything with your parents fully in detail in English? You are a native English speaker but your mom is not. How does that affect you to talk to her about everything?” Shelly responded with a single sentence in English: “I wish my mom would talk to me in English only.”

Shelly was developing linguistic skills. However, given her environment, in which Korean was increasingly less important, her English was developing more rapidly. This appeared to also result in Shelly having less interest in learning Korean.

**Four years old to 5 years old (mid-2007 to present).** This period was another turning point for Shelly in that she had outside support including weekly Korean literacy tutoring and an extended family member’s (i.e., her maternal grandmother) long-term visit. Although Shelly visited Korea once a year and her grandmother also visited yearly, her yearly visits were for less than a month. However, at this time, the grandmother stayed with Shelly for three full months, so that Shelly had enough time to be exposed to Korean language, literacy, and culture.

Shelly’s family traveled to Korea once a year during the summer to visit family members in person and to attend weddings for extended family members. Only during these visits, all three children showed dramatic development in their Korean language. Once they came back to the United States, they rapidly lost their Korean proficiency as the frequency with which they spoke Korean decreased. Shelly never seemed to get stressed about losing her heritage language; on the other hand, she believed that losing
Korean proficiency and speaking only English was natural because she had come back to America.

In early October 2007, Shelly’s maternal grandmother and aunt came to the home so that her aunt could have her baby. Her aunt was pregnant, and the due date was Thanksgiving Day, 2007. After her mother, Shelly’s favorite family member was her grandmother. Consequently, Shelly had great motivation to start speaking Korean to communicate with her grandmother. In contrast, Shelly’s aunt attended graduate school in England, worked for an English company in Korea, and was a fluent English speaker. Shelly acknowledged that because her aunt was able to communicate in English, she never tried to speak to her in Korean. The only motivation for Shelly to use and learn Korean language and literacy was to please her favorite grandmother because Shelly knew that speaking and reading Korean would make her grandmother happy. Upon my suggestion, the grandmother initiated teaching Shelly how to write Korean letters, resulting in Shelly learning how to read and write 7-10 Korean consonants.

However, once these extended family members went back to Korea, Shelly rapidly reduced her frequency of speaking Korean. To maintain her Korean proficiency, the mother and I continued to teach Shelly how to write Korean letters and short words once a week, so that Shelly slowly continued to learn Korean while her language and literacy development in English was much faster than Korean.

**Consistent characteristics in daily oral language usage (code-switching).**

Although most of Shelly’s educational opportunities were the same as Mary’s, their linguistic abilities continued to diverge. One of the biggest differences between Mary and Shelly was their daily communication at home and in the community. Shelly never felt
comfortable communicating in Korean except when she was speaking with her grandparents. When she spoke and listened to her grandmother, Shelly often code-switched when she changed communication partners, for example, talking to her mother in English then to her grandmother in Korean. Most of Shelly’s responses to her grandmother were one- or two-word simple Korean utterances in 2005 and 2006, but if she would have followed Mary’s linguistic development, she would have produced longer sentences in 2007 and 2008. Unexpectedly, Shelly presented some reluctance to communicate in Korean due to her lack of proficiency and exposure.

Mary, who had higher Korean language proficiency when she was the same age as Shelly, showed less frequent code-switching when she talked to her grandparents. Mary was confident communicating in Korean with anybody most of the time. As research has illustrated, communicational pragmatics is one reason for young bilinguals to switch linguistic codes, and the switching can be dependent on their conversational partners’ preferred language (Bauer, 2000; Bauer, Kruth, & Hall, 2002).

One day in May 2007, the mother was cooking while Shelly was sitting on the kitchen table.

Mother: 내려와, 셀리아! 식탁위에 앉아있음 어쩔해! [Get down, Shelly, you shouldn’t sit on the table!]

Shelly: Okay . . . I was about to sitting on the chair anyway! (Then she got down and sat on the chair.)


Shelly: 네 . . . (means “yes” to older people).

Mother: (Pointing a cooking pot) 너 이거 먹을거야? [Do you want to eat this soup?]
Shelly: Uh-huh! (meaning “Yes,” as indicated by her intonation)

Mother: 밥도? [Rice, too?]

Shelly: Uh-uh. (meaning “No,” as indicated by her intonation)

Grandmother: (to mother) 난 알아들어? 먹겠다는 거야 안먹겠다는거야? [Do you understand Shelly’s answer? Does she mean she wants to eat them or not?]

Mother: 국은 먹고 밥은 안먹겠대. [She will eat the soup, not the rice.]

Grandmother: 창, 똑같이 얘기하는데 어떻게 알아들어? [She is saying the same thing, so how can I recognize the difference between two?]

(We all laughed because we could understand why the grandmother was confused: the sounds that Shelly used to indicate “yes” and “no” were very similar, differentiated only by intonation. The grandmother, who had not been exposed to American English very much, did not register this intonation difference, so she could not hear a difference between these two sounds.)

I noticed that Shelly also laughed; thus, I realized that Shelly was listening and understanding her grandmother’s Korean speaking, and she responded because her grandmother used a lot of facial expressions and gestures.

Many home observations, including the above excerpt, clearly showed that Shelly was able to speak only one or two words in her heritage language, while she was proficient with longer sentences in English. When I asked her why, Shelly told me in English, “I don’t know . . . 어려워 . . . 언니랑 있음 조금 하겠는데 언니 없으면 그냥 영어가 조아.” [difficult . . . when I am with my sister, then I can do a little bit; without her, I prefer speaking English]. I asked her why it should be related to her sister, and Shelly replied “I don’t know,” in English. As close sisters who share everything together, Mary had been a comfort person, a person to turn to,” for practicing Korean language and literacy. Furthermore, Shelly was always looking for the easiest way, the fun way, and
always avoided challenges. Thus, she was often reluctant to challenge herself to practice Korean language and literacy.

In the following section, Shelly’s natural negotiation of two languages/literacies and cultures will be displayed in chronological order, divided by language: English and Korean.

**Shelly’s biliteracy development.** From Shelly’s birth to 2008, she presented the most astonishing development both in Korean and in English as a five-year-old kindergartener in 2007-2008. This is the age that Mary also showed great interest and rapid development in general literacy, both in Korean and in English. On the other hand, Shelly’s detailed and personal characteristics regarding biliteracy acquisition and development are unique in many ways. In this section, Shelly’s biliteracy characteristics are described using the categories of reading and writing in English and Korean.

**Reading development: Letters and literature (English).**

*Reading letters.* Shelly learned the English alphabet at her Montessori preschool. This preschool does not especially focus on early literacy; however, there was a library corner where children could freely choose books, as well as whole-class story times. Similar to other children (need citation), Shelly learned a few letters, starting with the letters in her name. At home, I observed her early literacy development through interactive language activities, such as playing a game to find words starting with the letter “C” in books or magazines.

Shelly was beginning to write simple alphabet letters, and even expanding to some simple words, such as “cat,” “bat,” “baby,” “cookie,” and “hi.” I also observed Shelly’s interactions with her mother. When her mother asked Shelly to state words
starting with the same sound as the first letter of her name, Shelly shouted out “cookie.” (Shelly’s real name begins with “C.”) Then Mary told her sister that there are many other words that start with C, such as “coat,” “cups,” “car,” etc. Shelly seemed to enjoy these literacy activities with family members.

Shelly’s family members always encouraged her to read her English name or simple words like “cat,” “mom,” and “cake.” When Shelly read a word, all of her family members tried to teach her how to pronounce its phonemes, as when teachers teach phonics in school. For example, when Shelly attempted to read “cat,” the mother slowly sounded out each phoneme, saying, “c-c-c-a-a-a-t-t-t.” Then the mother explained one more time to Shelly with similar-sounding words “크, 크, 이건 cake 활때 크아 크크크.” [k, k, this is /k/, k, k, k, k, when you read aloud “cake.”] Because Shelly loves cake, her mother tried to explain with the first sound of “cake.” Even though the mother explained this idea using Korean pronunciation, she explained with another English word that has same sound as “cake.” In addition, Mary helped Shelly by providing another example: “Shelly, Car! Cake! Cat! Listen to me, can you hear all same /k/ sound?”

With the cooperative efforts of all of her family members, one and half years of education in preschool, and one year of education in public school as a Kindergartener, Shelly showed a steady/stable development from reading a few syllables to reading many words in a sentence in storybooks in English.

Reading literature. When I observed Shelly’s free activities at home, she often drew pictures with crayons, played with dolls, or read picture books. She seemed to know the joy of reading storybooks in English, and she liked to have them read to her, or to
figure out the storylines from the illustrations. According to Shelly, she had many chances to read various kinds of interesting picture/story books in school, and also liked to read more at home.

When Shelly mentioned books, she referred to many kinds of books, mostly written in English rather than in Korean. Just like for her brother Kevin, Korean books were difficult for her to read, so she wanted to avoid reading them. Yet, when she found an interesting book cover or some interesting illustrations/animations in Korean books, she often asked her mother to read them aloud. According to the mother, she always tried to respond positively to Shelly’s requests that she read literature, particularly when the books were Korean. When the mother was not able to make time to read the Korean books aloud, she asked Mary to read for her sister. Mary read to Shelly when asked; however, there were times neither the mother nor Mary could read to Shelly. During these times, Shelly pretended to read books by herself by flipping pages and skimming illustrations.

Shelly often pretended to read books on her own, not only looking through many illustrations but also skimming entire sentences. Based on both her speed and attitude toward her pretend reading, I found that she was not carefully reading each word. Recognizing the importance of Shelly’s pretend reading, her family members tried to interact with her by encouraging or expanding on her literacy activities. When I asked Shelly to read an English book for me, she chose her favorite book and seemed confident. When she read the book for me, she seemed to read quite fluently. But, when I let her go back to read again the parts where she had made mistakes, she took a long time figuring out how to read those words again. Thus, Shelly had memorized the words on each page.
She tried to figure out the sound of the first letter of the word, and then she guessed the word starting based on its beginning letter and the context. As Shelly developed her understanding of letter-sound relationships and her phonemic awareness, she guessed the word from the first syllable.

One day, I asked Shelly to read an English pop-up book titled, *I Will Never, NOT EVER Eat a Tomato*, by Lauren Child. Shelly seemed to be reading fluently, and I glanced over at Mary in amazement. Mary told me right away that Shelly was not reading but had memorized the entire book. It was quite a long book, so I was a bit skeptical. I asked Mary how Shelly was able to memorize it verbatim. Mary tested Shelly by hiding some letters of a word that Shelly had just read. Using her two index fingers, Mary hid in the initial letters (“di-”) and last letters (“-lt”) of the word “difficult.” When Shelly could not read that word, Mary looked at me and said, “See? She can’t read. Just memorizing.” I continued to let Shelly read by herself. Shelly read the story almost perfectly, but then she could not remember the last two pages. At that point, Shelly pretended to read aloud by making sounds, “uh-hum-uh-hum-uh-hum-uh,” as her eyes followed the text and skimmed through the illustrations. She recited nearly the entire book perfectly; thus, it seemed that she had read the whole book from beginning to end. Although Shelly enjoyed the figures that popped up throughout this book and remembered which pop-up picture was next, she did not understand the entire story line, so Mary always helped her by reading aloud. Thus, it was obvious that Shelly had acquired a minimal level of phonemic awareness, alphabetical knowledge, syntax, and comprehension; on the other hand, she was already confident about book/print concepts and the storylines, likely
because of her continual exposure to a rich print environment. In addition, she liked to read and seemed to enjoy storybooks.

One day in February 2008, I introduced a book titled *My Name is Yoon* (2004), written by Helen Recorvits and illustrated by Gabi Swiatkowska. When I found this book on Amazon.com, I had to purchase it, because Shelly’s family name is Yoon, and the illustrations of the main girl in the story looked similar to Shelly. I was sure that it would be great gift for her and her siblings. When I showed it to Shelly, she shouted out, “It’s Yoon! I’m Yoon!” I said, “그래! (That’s right!),” and I also showed her that the girl on the title page looked exactly like Shelly. At that, Shelly looked like she was about to cry. When I asked why, she told me that the girl in the book looked ugly. Her mother was listening to our conversation, and she helped me out, saying, “Your teacher told me (pointing to the title page of the book) this girl looked very cute!”

After that, Shelly looked like she felt better and she quickly skimmed the book. As I felt that this would be a teachable moment for introducing some other books about Korean names or culture, I also introduced *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (2002). Shelly enjoyed *My Name is Yoon* more than *The Name Jar* because it was about an immigrant girl forming her Korean identity in a United States school, and eventually accepting her family name.

After these literature activities, I asked Shelly to fill out a table about her historical memories of reading literature written in both languages. She was able to recall some books that she read, but her mother also helped her remember her favorite books from earlier in her life, like books she had read in 2004 and 2005.
Reading development: Letters and literature (Korean).

Reading letters. Shelly was much slower than her two siblings in reading Korean. She was not so interested in reading Korean letters and did not seem motivated to learn anything about Korean literacy except when she was rewarded with candy, or if her favorite grandmother asked her to read some Korean letters. She seemed stressed by learning how to read Korean letters, perhaps because everyone in her family was better at reading Korean letters and literature.

Prior to mid-2007, when she was four years old, Shelly was able to read only three Korean consonants: ㄱ, ㄷ, and ㅂ. The first two were the initial consonants of her sister’s and her Korean names. The third Korean consonant was the initial letter of “mom” in Korean. She copied other letters in Korean from model letters or from title pages of Korean books.

Figure 31. Shelly’s writing sample 1.
Shelly presented the most rapid development in reading Korean letters beginning in fall, 2007. To evaluate her progressive stages of reading Korean proficiency, I applied Salinger’s (2001) scale of early literacy development. Shelly improved from level 1 (Early Emergent) to level 2 (Early Beginning Reader) out of 7 levels ranging from 0 to 6 (see Appendix B for a detailed explanation of each level). Her literacy level in mid 2007 was 1 out of 7 on the scale, but she seemed to attain one level of improvement by the end of April, 2008.

During the summer of 2008, she was able to read the most basic syllables, which are those made up of one consonant and one vowel. The example letters were 가, 나, 다, 라...우유 (i.e., “milk”), etc. Like other young children, she showed the most interest in the letters of her Korean name, 헤 or 서 or 유. Shelly also showed great interest in the Korean letters that began the names of her other family members (기, 이, 다, etc.) kinship terms of family members, such as “mom,” “dad,” “brother,” “sister,” and “baby” (엄, 마, 아, 쓰, 오, 쓰, 아, 기.).

Reading picture books/literature. Prior to 2006, Shelly played with Korean picture books, but there was no attempt to read. She loved to look at illustrations in Korean books. Once she entered preschool, however, she presented some understanding of various book concepts, such as recognizing the front and back covers, holding books, flipping pages, and predicting/getting clues from the pictures.

Beginning in 2007, Shelly seemed to enjoy reading several Korean picture books. Although she understood the story lines and often recalled the story contexts when others ask her, Shelly’s reproduction/recall of Korean stories was quite simplified, and she often showed frustration that she could not express a better understanding of a book’s storyline.
In my weekly observations, she often asked her mother to read Korean literature; yet, she was reluctant to independently try to read it. Shelly often pretended to read Korean books, though it was obvious that she was just pretending to read rather than comprehending the texts.

Shelly was insistent that it be her mother who read her the Korean books. In an interview with Shelly, she explained why: “My sister is too slow. She is too slow to read Korean books, but I like medium reading.” I asked Shelly what “medium reading” meant. She replied that her mother’s reading speed was “medium,” or fast enough to understand, but Mary’s reading speed was too slow. Mary confirmed that Shelly preferred that her mother read Korean literature to her, saying, “Shelly always asks mom to read Korean books!” I explained to Shelly that Mary’s reading speed might have been slow because Mary was reading in her second language. Shelly nodded but she did not make any further comment on this issue.

Over time, Shelly presented a strong preference for reading English over Korean storybooks. On the other hand, she had several favorite Korean books as well, such as 할구 시왕, 코, 개구리 왕자 (“Gas” “Race” “Nose” and “The Frog Prince”). Among the many books in her house, there were several that she enjoyed listening to as they were read by her mother or sister. Shelly remembered almost all of the words in these books.

Researcher: Shelly, did you read some Korean books over the weekend?

Shelly: I did, but English books.

Researcher: What about Korean ones?

Shelly: (Making embarrassed face) Well, I like them more (pointing English books).

Mary: She can’t read without me or mom.
Reseacher: I know. That’s why I asked you or your mom to read Korean books to Shelly.

Shelly: But, I like to read the other ones (referring English books/making an unhappy face).

Reseacher: What about 색깔도둑? 아님 코? [i.e., The Color Thief or Nose?]

Shelly: I love 색깔도둑 [The Color Theif, but . . .]

Reseacher: 셀리아, 색도둑이 아니라 색깔도둑 . . . 무슨 뜻일까? [Shelly, it’s not “cor-thief,” but “color-thief” . . . what does it mean?]

Mary: Color Thief . . .

Reseacher: 그래, 색도 맞긴 한데 full name으로 색깔이라고 해. 따라해보자, 색깔, 색깔, . . . [yes, it’s ok to say Cor-, but the full name is “Color.” Repeat with me, Color, Color . . .]

Shelly: 색깔 . . . 색갈 [Color . . . Colo]

Reseacher: 아니, 발음 잘 들어봐, 색/ 깡/ 색깔! [No, listen to my pronunciation carefully, Co/lor/Color!]

Both: 색깔, 색깔. [Color, Color]

Reseacher: 그래, 근데 “코” 네? [Yes, By the way, what about Nose?]

Mary: 코는 너무 쉬워. 서셀리이한테 . . . [If she reads it herself, that’s ok, but if I read it to her, it’s too easy. And she (Shelly) might have memorized it already.]

Reseacher: Shelly, can you say what you just said in Korean?

Shelly: Silence . . . (making an embarrassed face).

Writing development: Letters (English writing).

Until she was two years old, Shelly drew frequently anywhere in her house. Many simple crayon figures lining the walls in the den illustrated Shelly’s active drawing habits (see Figure 33), which set the stage for later writing events. Drawing animals or people, such as her parents or siblings, were one of her favorite activities. Like other three- to
four-year-old children, after a “drawing-only” period, Shelly started writing/scribbling English letters, which still appeared to be “drawing” rather than “writing” (need citation from “What did I write?”), but Shelly always seemed to try her best to write/draw the best product.

In 2006 and part of 2007, Shelly attended Montessori school, but she rarely brought her written artifacts home. Additionally, unlike Kevin or Mary, Shelly did not produce many written artifacts at home, a fact consistent across the 6 years of this study. Drawing figures/animals came first, and then she moved to writing her English name, which became one of her favorite writing activities when provided with a pen and a piece of paper.

However, I was able to observe her extensive exposure to writing English letters, especially during her first experiences in public school as a Kindergartener in 2007 to 2008. Indeed, attending an English-only academic setting provided great exposure to English language and literacy, and appears to have had a significant influence on Shelly’s literacy development. With the main teacher’s guidance, Shelly wrote and published a picture book (Figure 6), and she produced many sentences, although they were not always easily understood. Shelly’s main teacher used a red pen to correct her spelling mistakes, which, according to Shelly, occurred during “writer’s workshop.” Shelly sometimes showed motivation and willingness to write on paper, although those desires did not last long enough to write more than two short sentences in English.

Writing development: Letters (Korean writing).

Shelly rarely attempted to write Korean letters, either spontaneously or at my invitation, until 2005. At the end of 2005, when Shelly was about three and a half years
old, she sometimes sat with me while I was tutoring Kevin and Mary. Shelly’s partial participation in these Korean tutoring sessions became regular in 2006. She seemed to enjoy my company, being part of her siblings’ lives, and pretending to write Korean. In 2006, during each tutoring session with her older brother, Shelly always joined us. She looked at the letters, repeated the Korean words that I taught Kevin, and liked to sit next to us and independently draw. As Kevin’s heritage language tutor, I believed that these were teachable moments for her early language and literacy; thus, I always encouraged her to sit with us, provided pens and ample paper, and interacted with Shelly when I gave Kevin his own time to write. She sometimes copied some Korean model letters, so Shelly wrote/drew a few Korean letters, but she usually changed her writing events to drawing activities after a few minutes. Therefore, during 2006, I was able to collect only a few actual writing samples.

While Shelly went to her Montessori preschool, she sometimes wrote her English name, but she copied her Korean name only when I was in her home or when asked to by her mother (Figure 7.2). When she wrote her Korean name, it was more like drawing, similar to any other beginning writers. She tried to copy the model letters on the upper part of the same paper, although her copying process was not always successful. For example, when her mother and I tried to teach Shelly the Korean alphabet, she copied many times, but she didn’t stay inside the imaginary box as she should have, so they looked more like drawing than writing.

Similar to when she was beginning to read English letters, Shelly started to learn how to write her name in Korean beginning in 2007, when she was four and a half years old. She seemed to feel a little stressed when she was asked to read her name, because
she was not familiar with many of the Korean letters. Many Korean syllables are composed of three Korean characters in the form of consonant + vowel + consonant; for example, her last name is composed of three letters as follows: ◐ (consonant) + ◘ (vowel) + ◐ (consonant) = ≣ (i.e., “Yoon”). Before she had acquired all of the Korean letters, Shelly tried to write her name, simply copying the model letters. Then she moved on to other letters to write other words.

![Figure 32. Shelly’s writing sample 2.](image)

Shelly’s progression from learning Korean letters to writing was unlike that of her siblings. Kevin and Mary learned how to write all of the letters first, and then they learned how to write one-syllable words like ≣ (“milk”). In contrast, Shelly did not wait until she had learned all of the letters before she practiced writing a few consonants.
Next, she began writing a simple word that contained the consonants she had just learned. Thus, Shelly’s order of learning how to write Korean letters was unique, so it was difficult to pinpoint when she finally acquired all 24 Korean letters.

Starting in mid-2007 when she became 5 years old, Shelly showed astonishing development, especially in writing Korean letters. Three main reasons contributed to this positive outcome: (a) I visited her home weekly as a Korean literacy tutor; (b) the mother decided to work on Shelly’s Korean development again (having given up throughout 2006); and (c) two extended family members visited her home for three months at the end of 2007. With the cooperative efforts of these adults, Shelly showed constant interest in copying Korean letters and was able to write her name on her own without looking at any model letters by late 2007. In particular, every other day Shelly’s favorite grandmother taught Shelly how to write Korean letters. In contrast to her earlier attitude, Shelly often wanted to study Korean with the grandmother, and sometimes with me, her Korean tutor. During every weekly visit, I found evidence that Shelly was quickly developing Korean literacy as well as oral speaking ability. To illustrate, Shelly wrote some Korean consonants and copied simple words that were composed of two separate letters. For example, she learned how to read and write two consonants, ㅈ and ㅊ, and then she copied a word containing those two consonants: 시자 (“lion”).

From January 2008 until the present, Shelly’s mother and I promised to work on maintaining and developing Shelly’s reading and writing of Korean letters. We both knew if we missed this chance, Shelly would fail to learn how to read and write Korean. Weekly tutoring for six months seemed to work well, because Shelly was writing not
only consonants and vowels, but also her favorite words, such as 오빠, 언니, 기린, 엄마 etc.

*Figure 3.3. Shelly’s writing sample 3.*

At this point, Shelly had not yet produced a sentence, but she was learning and was willing to develop more proficiency during each tutoring session.
The history and overview of Shelly’s 6-year language and literacy acquisition and development in two languages are briefly presented in the table provided below.

Table 4

*Overview of Shelly’s Oral and Written Language Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child age</th>
<th>Oral language</th>
<th>Written language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth-2 years</td>
<td>Making single syllable sounds (e.g., /uh/, /ma/, /he/)</td>
<td>Cooing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 years</td>
<td>Single words; three-four word utterances</td>
<td>Began single-word then longer utterances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>Longer utterances but increasingly difficult; rapid decrease in ability after grandmother’s departure</td>
<td>Attained age-appropriate fluency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As detailed earlier and summarized in the table and graph, Shelly became a fluent native English speaker, a beginning reader, and a confident writer who could write a short diary entry on her own. Her Korean development was far behind, although Shelly was slowly developing Korean literacy proficiency in 2008. Shelly made consistent progress in Korean but not to the same level of proficiency as English. In the next section, the socio-cultural factors that contributed to Shelly’s historical and current level of language and literacy proficiency in two languages will be discussed.
Socio-Cultural Factors Impacting Shelly’s Bilingual/Biliteracy Development

Observations at home and in the community, including interviews with her parents, resulted in a rich educational environment full of resources for the development of bilingualism and biliteracy. Shelly’s parents and extended family members acknowledged that their high socio-economic status is one of the most influential factors on their children’s bilingualism/biliteracy. This family could afford yearly travel to Korea, at an approximate cost of more than $5,000 for airfare for the five family members. In addition, extended family members also flew to the United States every year from Korea. These visits might have influenced Shelly to practice and improve her Korean.

However, as an outsider to this family and a qualitative researcher who tried to understand the factors impacting Shelly’s bilingual/biliteracy development, I found that the high socio-economic status of this family also played a negative role on the children’s Korean language and literacy development. For example, the extended family’s ability to afford travel and educational costs may also have hindered the children’s Korean language/literacy development. This seems counter-intuitive, but their ability to travel and afford extra educational costs meant that most of the extended family members were fluent in English, which meant that the children had little need to learn Korean to communicate with them. Thus, Shelly was surrounded by family members who were well educated, full bilinguals in Korean and English, so that she never felt a need to become bilingual/biliterate, except to communicate with her grandmother.

Home literacy events. In this family, the mother acted as the educational manager, especially for her three children’s heritage language retention and development.
She took this role for practical reasons—she was the homemaker, and her husband worked until 6-7 p.m. daily. In addition, in the culture of Korean education, mothers tend to play the role of decision maker for their children’s educational activity (Park & Ablemann, 2004). The mother in this family grew up and lived in Korea for 30 years, so she held traditional Korean educational values and beliefs. For example, the mother tried to take Shelly and Mary to local public libraries and let Shelly choose what books to read and DVDs to watch. Except for a few times when the mother chose Korean books for them, most of materials that Shelly borrowed were written or spoke in English.

The places in the community that this family visited (e.g., playgrounds, Bible study groups, churches, family friends’ gatherings) were populated mostly by United States-born Korean-American children, like Shelly. Only a few children in these community activities were born in Korea and came to the United States when they were 2-3 years old. Thus, most of the children were native speakers of English, although their parents were first-generation immigrants or temporary visitors. Whenever Shelly played with friends, she had little occasion to communicate in Korean unless she was with a child who had recently arrived from Korea. Once, in late 2005, the family had visitors from Korea, including a child with whom Shelly had to speak Korean. I was interested in observing how Shelly interacted with her, and found out that Shelly talked to her in one- or two-word simple utterances, such as “일루와,” (“come here”) “먹어,” (“eat”) “재밌어,” (“interesting”) or “엄마, 과자!” (Mom, snacks!).

Other times, Shelly’s mother shouted to her children in Korean, “Do something about improving your Korean!” Unlike her daily habit of speaking English in late 2006, when she ordered Korean study for her children, she spoke Korean. The children replied,
“Like what?” in English. In response, the mother often said, “You can read some books or write a short diary entry!” This is a typical illustration of the mother strongly encouraging her three children to improve their Korean language and literacy. The children felt confused about how to respond to her. When Shelly heard the word “writing,” she often frowned and said “No, you (mother) can read a book to me!” Especially when the mother was busy with household duties, she did not read in Korean to Shelly; instead, Mary read to Shelly.

The following excerpt provides a picture of home literacy events, reflecting Shelly’s point of view of Korean literacy. This interview was conducted on April 22, 2008, which clearly illustrates that Shelly spoke only easy Korean words and could generally understand easy Korean when spoken to. This excerpt shows Shelly’s oral Korean development during 2007 and 2008.

Researcher: 그래도 언니랑 엄마가 책 읽어주고 하니깐 점점 늘지 않아? [Don’t you feel that you are getting better in Korean because your mother and sister read Korean books to you?]

Shelly: She (Mary) is too slow in reading Korean books.

Researcher: What does that mean? Do you prefer listening to Korean stories faster than your Mother’s speed?

Shelly: Like medium. I like my mom to read Korean books for me.

Researcher: Is your mom fast enough in reading?

Shelly: I said I like medium! She is reading medium (speed).

Researcher: So, you meant “speed” in reading, right?

Shelly: Yes, I love my mom to read.

Mary: 내가 읽어주면 (If I read it to Shelly) she said “Don’t don’t don’t! Mom! Can you read this for me?” (sounds of pretending to cry)
Researcher: (to Shelly) 오빠나 아빠는 책 읽어준 적 없어? [Has your father or brother ever read books to you?]

Shelly: Never, 아빠 책 안 읽어, 근데 오빠는 한번 읽어. [I don’t read books with daddy, but my brother read to me once.]

Researcher: 그래? (Did he?) Did you like him to read books for you?

Shelly: I like him to read.

Researcher: 왜 읽어줬는데? [Which book did he read to you?]

Shelly: *Fly High Fly Guy*

Mary: 난 어제 한국책 읽어줬는데. [I read a Korean book to Shelly yesterday.]

Mom: 제가 한 번쯤 읽고서 그다음 sister가 나머지 읽어줬어요. [I read half and Shelly’s sister read the rest of it.]

Researcher: 그래요? 무슨책이었어요? [Really? Which book was it?]?

Mary: 아기곰의 멋진 꼬리 *Baby Bear’s Cute Tail*]

Shelly: 곰, 곰 나 곰 좋아 [bears, bears, I love bears.)

Mary: 곰 셰마리가 한집에 있어, 아빠곰, 엄마곰, 아기 곰 셰마리, 아빠곰 셰마리가 한 집에 있어 아빠곰, 아빠곰, 엄마곰 셰마리, 엄마곰 셰마리가 한집에 있어~ (It is a Korean bear song that has a repetitive rhythm, similar to *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*)

Teacher: 그거 한국 곰 송 누구한테 배웠어요? [Who taught you that Korean song?]

Mary: Tina, my cousin이. She taught this to me. (Then Mary kept singing this Korean song.)

Mom: 애네 보다 한살 위인데요, 매년 여름마다 영어 배우러 오고 이번 가을부터 2년 동안 와있어요. 영어배우러. 그당첨 엄마까지 같이 와서 1년 정도 자격증 따면서 같이 있어요. [Tina is one year older than Mary, and she comes to the United States every summer. Especially this year (2008), Tina will stay with us for 2 years to improve her English. Then her mother will come for a year as she goes to graduate school here.]
This excerpt presents four perspectives: (a) a sample of home literacy events for family members’ reading of books to Shelly, (b) their daily linguistic habits of code-switching and mixing without any regulation, (c) the two sisters growing up with Korean songs, and (d) the transnational education of extended family members. These kinds of naturally-occurring home literacy events exposed Shelly to Korean conversation, books, songs, and culture.

**The importance of the heritage language school.** Sending children to the Korean language school is a critical factor in maintaining and developing their heritage language and literacy proficiency. According to my experience in this research context, most parents who value Korean language and literacy send their child(ren) to the weekly Korean language school. Many colleagues and educators also agreed to the critical importance of sending children to heritage language school (Song, 2008; Yoo, 2003). Sending young bilinguals to heritage language school is not only an illustration of the value of heritage language education by spending money, time, and physical effort to drop off and pick their children up, but it also lets children know that learning their heritage language and literacy is an important educational activity.

However, Shelly’s parents decided not to send her to the Korean language school based in part on convenience, because of the family’s weekend schedule. In a discussion, the mother implied that there were more important Saturday family activities than sending Shelly to the Korean language school. Furthermore, the mother indicated her concern about several administrative and educational issues in the Korean school:

A friend of mine also taught at the Korean language school last year. It is different than when you [the researcher] taught there. She often shared her frustration about the principal and the educational approach of the Korean language school. No matter what she did there, she got many complaints from parents and even from
the principal. Once I knew about the internal problems in the Korean language school, I did not want to send my children there anymore (Casual Conversation in October 2006).

In addition, the mother expressed her own frustration: “When we sent Kevin and Mary to the Korean language school, they seemed to improve in Korean language and literacy, but their Korean abilities decreased again when they were not able to go to the heritage language school.” Thus, the parents concluded that even if their children went to the Korean language school, they were not likely to become bilingual/biliterate.

No matter the reasons for these decisions, omitting an influential Korean academic and cultural input propelled Shelly further from Korean proficiency. According to Shin (2005) and Yoo (2005), Korean language schools positively impact young Korean learners linguistically and socio-culturally, as well as helping to shape healthy transnational identities.

**Connection and influence of extended family members.** The focal family’s strong connection to their home country and their extended family members in Korea played various roles in Shelly’s heritage language and literacy development. One of the positive roles was Shelly’s strong affection for her maternal grandmother. Shelly repeatedly indicated that her only reason to learn Korean was for her grandmother, saying, in Korean, “I need to speak to her in Korean because she can’t understand English.”

When the Korean tutor and the mother were having difficulty teaching Shelly Korean letters due to her short attention span and strong reluctance to participate in academic tutoring, the only person who got Shelly to study Korean literacy was her grandmother. Once her grandmother arrived in the United States, she started teaching
Shelly Korean letters. For a half hour every day, Shelly practiced how to read and write Korean characters with her grandmother. For three months at the end of 2007, while the grandmother was staying in their home, Shelly developed Korean language and literacy at the fastest rate.

In informal discussions, the grandmother indicated that she wanted her grandchildren to maintain and develop their Korean identity and language. She exhibited great motivation to speak to her grandchildren, and they believed it was too late for her to learn English, at over 75 years old. She clearly hoped that all three of her grandchildren would learn Korean so that she could form a close relationship with them. Additionally, the grandmother recognized the importance of Korean literacy in fostering a positive relationship with her grandchildren. She liked to e-mail them, but she indicated that there was a significant linguistic gap between them—the children had a hard time understanding their grandmother’s writing. As a consequence, she felt unable to e-mail them often.

Although communicating with her grandmother was the only reason that Shelly needed to speak and write in Korean, even this desire was negatively impacted by her lack of Korean language ability. For example, the mother expressed frustration that Shelly sometimes tried to hang the phone up quickly when speaking to her grandmother, because she had difficulty communicating in Korean. With intervention through private tutoring and her Korean grandmother’s intensive effort for three months, Shelly’s literacy and oral linguistic ability temporarily increased. However, Shelly’s Korean literacy development during one year of private tutoring resulted in the least development, compared to her two older siblings of Shelly.
Living in a transnational family/home. The focal family also visited Korea once a year. The father specifically mentioned that yearly trips to Korea were very important for his family, especially for his three children, because it was their only chance to be immersed in Korean culture and language, and to interact with people who shared their physical features. The father emphasized that he expected visiting their home country to have an important influence on his children’s Korean ethnic identities. When talking about this subject, the father repeated that his children are Korean rather than Korean-American. In order to find out more about how Shelly perceived her regular visits to Korea, I asked the following questions during an informal interview in March, 2008.

**Researcher:** How often do you travel to Korea? How do you feel when you are there?

**Shelly:** I like to go to meet grandma, uncles, aunts, and cousins. I like Korea because there are chicken, fish, toys, 감, 밥, 할머니.

**Researcher:** 네가 지금 말한거 여기에도 있고 더 많잖아, 할머니 배고 [What you just said, there are much more in the United States, besides your grandmother . . .]

**Shelly:** (laugh)

**Mary:** Shelly, chicken and fish는 여기에서도 맛 먹잖아! [We eat chicken and fish everyday here (in the United States).]

**Shelly:** (laughing harder). (Obviously, Shelly knows that her comments do not make sense.)

Although Shelly was too young to really be able to shape any further thoughts about what specifically she liked about Korea, this conversation illustrates that she was comfortable with Korean culture, although she had been born and raised in the United States.
Shelly’s maternal and paternal families combine to form a large transnational family not only for kinship, but also to fulfill their own transnational, educational, and socio-cultural purposes and desires. Shelly’s favorite extended family member, the grandmother who resided in Korea, even improved her English listening proficiency by engaging in her three grandchildren’s daily lives during her time in the United States. The transnational characteristics of this family led each individual to work toward his or her own linguistic goals, especially to improve English proficiency. Each member in this family maintained and developed English proficiency to become transnationally and globally competent; English proficiency was required for their occupations as well as to maintain their current high SES. For example, when the two maternal aunts visited from Korea, they always wanted to practice English with Shelly and her siblings in a safe environment; yet, Shelly’s parents expected their children to learn and practice Korean with her sisters.

In addition to maternal extended family members, a 9-year-old paternal cousin was scheduled to live with Shelly’s family for two years beginning in August 2008, primarily to learn English. This girl’s mother (the father’s younger sister) was also planning to arrive in the United States in the summer of 2009.

As I described in chapter 4, this entire family is a typical example of a high SES, educated, linguistically and culturally diverse family who engaged in activities to be globally competent. They assigned significant resources and time to transnational travel, education, and values. Especially Shelly, although she seemed to struggle in daily bilingual and biliteracy practices, as she ages she may appreciate having been exposed to two cultures, languages, and supportive family members.
Learning and practicing Korean language and literacy by singing songs. An additional factor that positively impacted Shelly’s Korean language and literacy learning was her engagement in singing. Singing some simple but rhythmic, repetitive Korean songs always made Shelly happy. Whenever Shelly saw or listened to Korean children’s songs, she sang along repeatedly. Unlike most linguistic events in this home, which were generated by the mother or Mary, Shelly initiated the singing of Korean songs. Once Shelly started singing these songs over and over, Mary sang along. Sometimes the mother joined in as well. As a consequence, even when Shelly did not know all of the words to a particular Korean song, this kind of practice helped her memorize entire songs.

In terms of oral Korean language development, Shelly’s involvement in singing Korean songs facilitated her oral Korean pronunciation. I heard her use appropriate pronunciation of Korean words, which she learned through these songs. The following vignette portrays how we used Korean songs (Observed in May, 2008).

Singing a Korean song 들매지 (i.e., “Honey Pig”) with SeoYoun (Mary’s friend). Mary, Shelly, and SeoYoun were playing together in the living room.

Everyone moved to the big table in the den. On the table, I found a new Korean book called “고릴라의 힘” (The Power of Gorillas). The mother said that the children had had the book for a long time, and that Mary read this book many times.

Researcher: Mary, did you read this to Shelly?

Mary: I did.

Shelly: No, she didn’t; she never read that to me.

Mary: NO, I did, you just don’t remember.

(All of this conversation was spoken in English)
Suddenly, SeoYoun’s mother came in to pick her daughter up. She entered the room and sat down with the group, which included Shelly’s mother. From that point, Shelly’s mother became Shelly’s teacher, while SeoYoun’s mother acted as her daughter’s.

While SeoYoun copied various Korean verbs, then developed full Korean sentences by using the verbs with my guidance, Mary struggled to write a traditional Korean song called “Long Song.”

While SeoYoun copied various Korean verbs, then developed full Korean sentences by using the verbs with my guidance, Mary struggled to write a traditional Korean song called “Long Song.”

Monkeys’ butts are red, red refers to apple, apples are delicious, delicious refers to banana, bananas are long, long refers to train, trains are fast, fast refers to airplane, airplanes are high, high refers to “Back-Du-San” (the name of a mountain in Korea), “Back-Du-San” is . . . . .

I wondered how Mary learned that traditional Korean song, which I had also sung 20-25 years ago. It could have been either from the mother or from the grandmother; as I assumed, Mary told me that she had learned this song from her maternal grandmother first, and then her mother had sometimes corrected and reminded Mary whenever she forgot some words or phrases.

I asked Mary whether she knew the names of the days of the week in Korean. Mary answered that she didn’t know, but I remembered that she had known the days of the week two years ago. However, at this time Mary couldn’t even recall that she had known them.

I sang a “Days song” in Korean: “일요일, 월요일, 화요일, 수요일, 목요일, 금요일, 토요일” [Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday]. Mary looked amazed at my ability to sing that song in Korean. Her amazement was a great chance to teach her how to sing this song and remind her of the days of the week in
Korean. Therefore, I repeated this song over and over, phrase by phrase, for Mary to easily repeat after me. Since she had already acquired some days in Korean, it didn’t take long for Mary to master this song. The homework for the week was for Mary and her mother to teach this song to Shelly.

Next, I talked with the two mothers about how to teach children the Korean names for the days of the week. Mary’s mother suddenly hit the table and began to talk:

Mother: “아, 고무줄 놀이하면 되잖아요. 월화수목금토일, 월화수목금토일” [We can play with a rubber band, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday (because when we were young, we memorized by singing “the name of days” song while we played with a rubber band).]

Researcher: “아고무줄이 있으세요? 아이들 어떻게 하는지 모른데, 집에서 아이들이 그렇게 하고 놀면 네 종 졸겠어요.” [Do you have a rubber band? The children might not know how to play, but it would be great if you could play with them (they need a specific kind of long rubber band to play it).]

Mother: “안 그래도 할머니가 어릴때 어릴때 운동구를 전전긍긍하며 사다주셨는데 . . . 요새는 저거 잘 안판대요, 운동구랑 가게들을 알아가 돌았는지 . . . 힘들겠나 보드라구요.” [That specific rubber band is not available anymore, so the grandmother had to shop around at a lot of stores to buy that. She put so much effort and time into it.]

Researcher: “재미있겠당 . . . 나중에 저도 같이 할까요.” [It would be so much fun, I want to play with them later.]

Then I realized that it was time to introduce the new Korean tutoring file that I had prepared for Mary and Shelly. I included a Korean literacy worksheet from A-Z (in Korean, ㅏㅜㅓㅏ), short stories, comprehension questions, and a large section on Korean songs for young children.

The mother looked at the file and opened the pages of “아기돼지 꼬돼지.” (“Baby Pig, Honey Pig”). Suddenly, Shelly showed excitement and said, “Look, mommy look,
look! I love this song, let me look.” The mother suggested that she read it. Amazingly, Shelly, who could read only a few easy Korean letters on her own, started to read, “아기 돼지 곰곰곰, 엄마돼지 곰곰곰, 곰곰곰곰곰곰.” All of us were surprised by her ability to read Korean letters.

Researcher: 너 지금 진짜로 네가 읽고 있는거야? [Did she really read all of those letters?]

Mother: 아닐거예요. 제가 “아기 돼지 삼형제” 책을 하도 좋아 하기도 하고, 제가 아기돼지 노래랑 “구”가 태어났을 때부터 아기만 말을 많이 썼기 때문이오. [Maybe not. Shelly loves the story “The Three Little Pigs,” and I taught her to sing the “Baby Pig Song,” and she practiced the word “baby” when we had baby “구” (/gu/: the name of the baby born to the household in November 2007).]

Researcher: 그래서겠죠? 그래도 진짜 갑자기 읽기 시작한것 같아. [Yes, that’s true, but she is suddenly reading sentences!]

All of us were so happy that Shelly found something interesting about Korean, and I hoped that this would improve her bilingual/biliteracy proficiency.

**Shelly’s passionate interest in Korean songs.** Unlike her older sister, Shelly constantly presented somewhat of an obsession about singing Korean songs. Once she liked a Korean song, she kept singing it all day long. According to Mary, this behavior went on for a few days or even a week. Then Shelly slowly forgot that particular song as she became interested in other things, such as game or movies. The following is part of casual conversation that occurred in February 2008. The mother often lightly slapped Shelly not for studying rather than playing. One day, right after my arrival at Shelly’s house, the mother told me,

공부는 안하고 한국 노래만 불러대서 미치겠어요 . . . [She never studies but sings Korean songs instead. It drives me crazy . . .]

Shelly listened to what the mother told me and started singing again.
I realized that her pronunciation and sentences were almost native-like. She sang a song similar to *Brown bear, Brown bear, What Do You See?*. The main character of this Korean song is a frog.

아기 개구리가 노래를 한다. 꽃 ['./quek//quek/']
아빠 개구리가 노래를 한다. 꽃 ['./quak/ /quak/']
엄마 개구리가 노래를 한다. 꽃 ['./quik//quik/']

The first line starts with a baby frog and describes a baby frog’s sound as “﴾“ (i.e., /quek//quek/). Then the second line describes the father frog’s sound as “﴿“ (i.e., /quak/ /quak/). Finally, a mother frog’s sound was described as “﴿“ (i.e., /quik//quik/).

With repetitive lyrics, young children practice how to speak Korean, and they learn that small changes in vowels make big differences in pronunciation. Interestingly, although nobody encouraged or asked her to do this, Shelly changed the word “frog” to other animals, then continued singing. She started with the original word, “아기 개구리” (i.e., “baby frog”), then she changed to “아기 호랑이” (i.e., “baby tiger”), “아기 부엉이” (i.e., “baby owl”), “아기 엽소” (i.e., “baby goat”), and then “아가 강아지” (i.e., “baby poppy”). I was surprised that Shelly already knew so many words. Mary saw my look of surprise and told me that Shelly was learning from a Korean encyclopedia for young children, called “동물백과사전 [Animal encyclopedia for young learners].”

Furthermore, Shelly changed the last part of each line of the song pronouncing each animal’s unique sound. She changed all the sounds on her own, except for the owl and goat. Every different language has its own unique sounds to describe animal sounds. Shelly did not know all of the animal sounds in Korean, though she knew them all in English. She only knew the sounds for common animals, such as dogs, frogs, and tigers in Korean. Thus, when Shelly wanted to sing about an animal that had a sound she did
not know, she looked to Mary for help. In response, Mary sang the animal sound, which helped Shelly learn it.

Similarly, once when I was tutoring Mary, Shelly wrote the word “개구리” (“frog”) in Korean. I asked Shelly if she had copied this word. Shelly replied that she had looked at the model letters, but that she had not copied the whole word. When I asked her how she had memorized the letters, Shelly answered, “Because I looked at them so many times.” By properly presenting and holding her interest in more Korean songs, it was possible for Shelly to improve her Korean language and literacy in this fun and natural way.

**Mass media (television series and movies).** Another important factor for Shelly’s Korean language and literacy learning was mass media. Shelly’s mother expressed a strong interest in teaching Korean in a fun way. The mother believed that her children, particularly Shelly, would only learn Korean through fun and interesting activities. Consequently, she urged her children to watch Korean cartoons, television series for young children, and rented Korean movies. All of Shelly’s family members seemed to enjoy watching these shows, such as “거침없이 하이킥” (“FREE High-Kick”) during 2007. The father stated that Shelly and her siblings seemed to understand only parts of the shows, but they watched because it was fun for them. He added that he wanted to continue to watching these shows with them because listening to Korean language and being exposed to Korean culture might be helpful for his children to develop their Korean identity.

Some books had accompanying television shows or movies, which further added to their interest for the children. For example, Shelly and Mary usually called one of their
favorite books “Hamtaro,” though the full title was “How to Be a Ham-Star,” and it was written originally in English but was also translated into Korean. The children said that they read the Korean version when they were in Korea during the summer of 2006. When Shelly and Mary were reminded of this book, they also remembered a Korean television series called “ GPI” (Pippi), which they enjoyed watching in Korea. This television series was based on a book, which, according to Mary, was “Pippi Longstocking.” The mother added that they (the children and their mother) enjoyed watching this television series, although it was dubbed into Korean from English. Thus, according to Mary, though they had difficulty fully understanding Korean television shows and movies, they had great fun watching them and reading the accompanying books. Recognizing this, Shelly’s mother said that she wanted to own her children’s favorite books, movies, and television series as a way to help them acquire and be exposed to Korean language and culture.

**Technology.** As described in chapter 5, technology allowed Mary a safe educational space that she explored writing in both languages. Thus, I also expected technology such as email and internet chats to allow Shelly to explore bilingual and biliteracy practices in a specific transnational space, especially for continuing her close relationships with extended family members. However, because Shelly was young and not yet able to type on a computer, technology was not yet a significant factor in her learning. For example, Shelly rarely checked her email, unlike Mary, who checked her email at least once a day. The following is part of an interview transcript, conducted in April 2008.

**Researcher:** When learning Korean, do you prefer books or computer programs?

**Shelly:** Computers.
Mary: No, she always asks my mom to read Korean books.

Researcher: How do you contact your friends or relatives in Korea (e.g., letters in Korean, e-mail in English)? How often?

Shelly: I talked to grandmother on the Phone like 99% of the time and send her greeting cards.

Researcher: Then cards would be 1%?

Shelly: Un-huh (meaning yes)

Mary: I use the phone about 84% of the time and E-mail her about—(seemed like she was doing math in her head) 16% of the time. (Smile)

The following observational field note provides an overall picture of Shelly’s literate practices in a community setting, and this was when the mother with two daughters visited a public library in town with me.

An observation field-note: Visiting a public library. One day in March 2008, I informed the mother about a public library event about “immigrant experiences.” She was really interested in this event, and brought her two daughters, Mary and Shelly, along with some of their other classmates—Mary, Grace and Jane. I have known Grace a long time from when I observed Mary in her classroom, but it was the first time I had met Jane. After a short conversation with the mother, I found out that these four girls were often sleeping-over because all of them resided in the same part of the town.

Grace was born here and went back to Korea when she was three months old. She lived in Korea for 5 years then came back to US to enter the school system here two years ago. Now she is a second grader who is in the same classroom with Mary. Grace is good at speaking Korean, but she hardly speaks Korean to her parents at home. The only major time she has for learning Korean is in a Korean language school and she has consistently
attended Korean language school for two years since arriving in the US. In terms of speaking Korean, she is on the same level as Mary.

Jane, another friend of Mary’s, is a 7-year-old Korean girl who was born in Korea. When she was two years old, she came to the US, but she visited Korea quite often—at least one month each year. Jane’s family loves Korean drama and Mary’s mother assumed that’s why Jane is good at speaking and writing Korean as well as her yearly visits to Korea. Jane has one younger brother and she also stays in close contact with her four other male cousins.

The library held the special event about “immigrant experiences” as a family event. Librarians shared a book called [Esperanza Rising] then led a family sharing time, including craft and drawing activities as a means of sharing of young children’s own immigrant history. It was quite a thick book and we were supposed to have read this book before hand (although advertisements for this event never mentioned the pre-requirement reading of a book).

The whole event was mostly held in simplified English and a little of Spanish, causing the four girls to look bored. Shelly listed the long summary of the book with broken English and series of English words, (written in English: Eggplant/ Heart/ Scissor/ Telephone/ Earings/ one/ two/ three/ four/five) but then she came to me to write Korean letters with drawings, sitting next to me. Mary was playing with a red string with Grace, and Jane observed what Mary and Grace did. Grace also talked to me a little, then wrote her name in Korean.

Shelly wrote her name and the name of the new baby, “Gu” in this family, but she wrote it in the reverse way. While her mother was away for 15 minutes to pick-up her
brother, Shelly looked for her mother. I let her know that her mom would come back soon. Then Shelly missed her mother so much, so I suggested her to write a letter to her mother in order to deliver Shelly’s feeling about her mother. Shelly nodded and started to draw herself and her mother with 3 heart shapes. Under each person’s drawing, she wrote her name and her mother’s, both in Korean. She made only one mistake—missing one consonant (ni-eun) of her last name; on the other hand, other letters were perfectly written. However, she could not write even a few sentences for the mother.

I asked her whether she would draw and write about her dad, so Shelly drew her dad, next to the mother. She missed one consonant again for the first letter of dad in Korean, but then I discovered that Shelly had actually missed the first consonant of each first letter of each word (but this writing habit is not consistent only for her name).

The mother shared with me about home literacy activities they engaged in during the previous week. Mary read a few books to Shelly, one to two short books each time. Those were about “gorilla and witch” “nose” “big coin in the glass bottle” “color thief” the mother brought those books to the library to show me. Then she explained Mary sometimes does not always know the meanings of words herself when she reads to Shelly, so she asks her mother about the meanings of those words. For example, she asked “Mom, what does this mean, “Dup-Suck?” Then the mother explained to Mary and Shelly about the Korean written expressions in Korean literature.

These four Korean girls played “Book store,” selling small books to earn money. They closed all the doors in the play area, set out all kinds of small books as bookstore owners, then opened the store door at 9am. I acted as a customer by asking, “Did you open the door? Can I look at the books and buy some?” in Korean. Mary replied to me in
English, “Yes, those are 25 cents each.” I nodded and asked why she had not replied in Korean. She did not say anything.

**Shelly’s Identity Construction and Negotiation**

Shelly has been reluctant to deal with Korean language and literacy. I asked her several times why she had not been enthusiastic about being Korean and learning Korean language and literacy; Shelly provided a consistent answer since 2006 when I interviewed her for the first time: “I’m English,” which meant, “I’m American.” The following is an excerpt from one interview, conducted in September, 2007. This excerpt is from part of an interview script, but the question was the same question that I had asked Shelly from time to time throughout the study:

**Researcher:** Do you know who you are? 어느 나라 사람이지 알아? [Do you know which country are you from?]

**Shelly:** (Silence)

**Researcher:** 네 부모님은 한국 사람이잖아. 난 어때? 너도 Korean-American 아니계 한국말 배워야지? [Your parents are Korean. What about you? You are a Korean-American, so don’t you think you should learn Korean language?]

**Shelly:** Why do you ask me the same question?

**Researcher:** Because you hate to study Korean literacy (English)

**Shelly:** Everyone speaks English . . . (looked frustrated) I’m English! I’m not going to learn Korean. I don’t have to (looking at my eyes) right?

**Mary:** Shelly, you are a Korean-American! English is the language and you should talk about the person, like who you are.

**Shelly:** Mary! I’m English and I always speak English!
Researcher:  너 3~4살때는 한국말 잘했잖아, 단어도 점점 배워가고... [What about when you were 3-4 years old? At that time, you were learning Korean vocabulary.]

Shelly:  그때는 한국사람인데 지금은 미국사람이야. [I was Korean at that time, but now, I’m an American.]

Researcher:  Why?

Shelly:  Because I can’t speak Korean anymore! And I was born here!

Researcher:  그럼, 어떤 나라의 말을 잘하면 그 나라 사람이 된다는 거야? [So do you mean that you speak one language very well, then “where are you from? Who you are.” also follows that language?]

Shelly:  . . . .

On the other hand, when I asked Shelly the same question in early 2006, she stated in English that she was Korean. In mid-2007, when I asked both girls the same question, Mary answered first, “I’m a Korean-American.” Then Shelly looked at her sister and copied her response saying, “I’m a Korean-American.”

Once Shelly became a Kindergartener, beginning in mid-2007, she consistently showed that she believed her nationality or ethnic identity was dependent on her language proficiency. If she were able to express comfortably what she wanted to say in one language, her ethnicity aligned with that language group. Thus, Shelly repeated many times, “I don’t know Korean much, I’m English,” meaning that she was American, especially between mid-2006 to early-2008. Shelly’s contention only changed when her grandmother, who talked with Shelly about this issue, was living with the family. Shelly then said that she was Korean. As a researcher, it was amazing how this young child could quickly alter the concept of her own national/ethnic identity and the extent
to which she could communicate in Korean, depending on whom she spent the most time with or felt the most attached to.

**Ethnic identity.** Shelly’s concept of self-identity (in this case, her own conceptualization of who she was) developed differently than that of her older siblings. Although there were times that Kevin and Mary were much more proficient in English, they knew that their ethnic background was Korean. On the other hand, Shelly seemed to conceptualize herself as an American with Korean family members. Interestingly, Shelly presented an unstable concept of her ethnic identity as well as a mingled linguistic identity when the researcher interviewed her in April, 2008.

**Researcher:** Are you a Korean or American? And why?

**Shelly:** American because I was born here.

**Researcher:** (just looking at Shelly for a while)

**Shelly:** Mostly American

**Researcher:** Why?

**Shelly:** Because I know more English than Korean.

**Researcher:** Then have you ever felt that you were Korean?

**Shelly:** Yes, when grandma was here. But she went back.

**Researcher:** So once she went back to Korea, you became American?

**Shelly:** Yes

**Researcher:** Why?

**Shelly:** Because she is gone, she is not with me anymore.

**Researcher:** 그려면 할머니가 옆에 있었으면 한국 사람이 되고 할머니 가면 미국 사람이야? [Are you saying that you are a Korean if your
grandmother stays with you, but you become an American once she goes back to Korea?]

Shelly: Because she is Korean.

Researcher: So you were Korean before, but now you are not?

Shelly: (Anxiously) I was Korean because she was Korean but she is gone! So I’m English!

Mary: Shelly, it’s not like that. She is talking about person.

What kind of person, who you are. You should stay with one thing not being back and forth.

Shelly: Mary! I have to do this for her but I don’t know Korean that much! I don’t know . . . . . . I’m English (means American). I can’t speak Korean well, so I can’t be Korean.

Researcher: Um, so if you can speak Korean well, then you can be a Korean.

Shelly: Uhmm . . . half English half Korean.

Researcher: Do you like to be a Korean or American?

Shelly: (silence)

Researcher: You don’t want to be anything?

Shelly: Both . . . Mostly American because I know many Americans.

Researcher: Did you or do you have any Korean classmates?

Shelly: Nope, I have a friend and she is English (means American).

Researcher: So you never spoke Korean in school?

Shelly: Nope, never . . . 근데 Korean 되면 좋아. (suddenly smile) [It would be good if I can be a Korean.]

Researcher: 그럼 Korean 되고 싶다는 거야? [So are you saying that you want to be a Korean?]

Shelly: 응 [Yes].

Researcher: 왜? [Why?]
Shelly: 한국말 잘해서 한국사랑되면 [If I can speak Korean, I can become a Korean] then I can speak to grandma, aunts, cousins, and 구 ("Gu," the name of new born baby in last November, 2007). 근데 아직은 아니야 [But, it is not possible, though.]

Researcher: 왜? [Why?]

Shelly: Because I don’t know Korean letters.

Researcher: Have you ever wished or dreamed that you were not from an immigrant family so you don’t have to deal with Korean identity and language education? You know, Korean stuff, discussion whether you are Korean or not, or learning Korean . . . .

Shelly: I wish I’m only American because I’m good at English.

I was impressed by Mary’s ability to explain to her younger sister that ethnic identity should not keep changing. Mary further explained, “It’s like who you are!” In response, Shelly seemed frustrated and a little upset about this confusing concept.

Consequently, Shelly shouted at Mary, “Mary! I have to do this for her, but I don’t know Korean that much! I don’t know . . . . I’m English (means American). I can’t speak Korean well so I can’t be Korean.” For Shelly, because she felt comfortable practicing Korean language and literacy with her grandmother, she felt she could be Korean at that time. However, once her grandmother was gone and she lost some level of Korean proficiency again, Shelly appeared to believe that she could not be Korean, because she did not feel comfortable communicating in Korean; in addition, her English was highly developed already.

Because the mother’s own family, residing in Korea, had greater access to the United States, all three children maintained a closer relationship with their maternal relatives than they had with their paternal relatives. In particular, the maternal grandmother and two maternal aunts, who studied or worked in English speaking
countries, visited the family at least once a year. This transnational accessibility fostered the children’s relationships to their Korean kin for many years, although this infrequent input was not sufficient for Shelly to develop a strong ethnic and national identity concept. As Dyson and Genishi (2006) emphasized, these ongoing linguistic events were longitudinally constructed within the involved contexts, and the case was not fixed.

The following table presents a big picture of the construction and transformation of Shelly’s ethnic/national identity:

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ethnic/National Identity (Influential factor/reason)</th>
<th>Linguistic identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>English (American) -&gt; Korean (because of grandmother)</td>
<td>Don’t care/know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Korean (entire family members’ language)</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Korean -&gt; English (means American)</td>
<td>Korean -&gt; English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Korean-American (influenced by Mary)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>English (American) but hope to be Korean (because of the birth of baby “Gu” in this family)</td>
<td>English but hope to be Korean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Linguistic and cultural identity.** Linguistically, Shelly’s comfort level was high because she could communicate in English at home, and no one pushed her to speak only Korean. Culturally, she seemed to be confused, because she had been immersed in American schooling and had been well-accepted by her mainstream American peers. However, at home, she always played with her older sister, Mary, even when Mary’s friends were at the house. Thus, Mary’s friends became Shelly’s friends, and vice versa, and they played together often.
This circle of friends was largely connected to the friendships of the parents. For example, the parents often invited their Bible study team to their home. Five to six Korean families often visited the house and talked, ate, and played together, staying until midnight. While the parents socialized, their children played together in the basement. Most of these children were born in the United States, and only a few of them came from Korea. The following is a field note from an observation in March, 2007.

One day, there was a child who was not familiar with English language and American culture yet, because he had recently arrived from Korea. While all of the children spoke English, some bilingual children explained what they were doing in broken Korean when they felt he needed to hear it, or to ensure his emotional inclusion. At that time, I was worried that he would feel isolated, because he couldn’t understand English yet, and he had not yet been exposed to American culture. However, he seemed completely comfortable, probably because he was playing with the same ethnic group, and even with some bilingual speakers who could be his help when he needed it.

I had a chance to talk to this boy’s parents, and they indicated that were very pleased about his opportunity to learn native-like English expressions and pronunciation from this Korean-American group of children. They recognized that the other children were helping their son feel comfortable.

This kind of Bible study group is a type of minority community in the United States. Although the group members all attended an American Catholic church, the Koreans made small groups in which they studied the Bible together, performed social activities like playing tennis and participating in cooking classes together, and most importantly, shared their experiences of being Korean in the United States. For Shelly,
living on the border between American culture in school and Korean culture at home appeared to be confusing for her for many years. Despite Shelly’s bicultural life, she always communicated in English, resulting in her difficulty in becoming bilingual/biliterate.

The following is an excerpt from an in-depth interview during March, 2008.

Researcher: Are you bilingual or biliterate?
Shelly: What is bilingual?
Mary: The person who speaks . . .
Researcher: Only speaking? What about listening, reading, writing, and thinking . . .?
Mary: Yeah. Anyway, who can communicate in two languages like Kevin. He can speak and write in English and Korean, right? (Then everyone looked at Shelly waiting for her answer.)
Shelly: Yes, but 한국말 조금밖에 못해. 아니 마니 잘 못해. [I can’t speak Korean well, actually I really can’t.]
Researcher: Do you feel proud of using two languages?
Shelly: Yes. Because I can talk to 할머니 [grandmother], aunts, uncles, cousins, and ᵂ (“Gu” was a new born baby in November, 2007).
Researcher: The baby will speak Korean better than English. If you can’t speak Korean, how will you communicate with him?
Shelly: No, he was born here, he is English (means an American).

**Shelly’s attitude and motivation.** Shelly, the youngest child in this family, presented the most resistance and the least motivation for developing Korean language/literacy and identity, which is consistently shown both in interview transcripts, observational field notes, and analysis of written products that she has produced over time.
Of the three children in this family, she was the least willing to learn her heritage language/literacy although she seemed amenable to engaging in private Korean tutoring. She sometimes seemed to enjoy Korean tutoring though this was limited by her short attention span. Her behavior was different from Kevin or Mary, who mostly enjoyed learning Korean language and literacy. As a Korean tutor, I felt pressure to make instruction interesting for Shelly. Yet, if the tutoring lasted over 10 minutes, then she often became distracted by something around her. Then, she talked or laughed at things other than Korean language and literacy. She also acknowledged the Korean tutor’s English proficiency; thus, she often started a conversation in English and showed simple forms of code-mixing/switching with me (the Korean tutor/researcher).

The following short excerpt shows that Shelly had little motivation to become bilingual/biliterate, though it was important for her to talk to her grandmother, cousin, and paternal aunts, who were limited English speakers, and the new born baby. On the other hand, Shelly never felt any motivation to communicate with her own immediate family members, because all of them were fluent in English by 2007.

Researcher: So would you like to be a full bilingual/biliterate?

Shelly: Yes . . . so I can speak to grandma, 틴া, Tina, aunts . . .

Researcher: 엄마 아빠랑은 한국말로 안해도 돼? [So you don’t have to speak Korean with your mom and dad?]

Shelly: 음, 영어로 하면 돼. [No, I can speak English to them.]

The parents having given up on Shelly, the length of time she lived in the United States, and her own personality as the youngest child in this family, are all factors that played important roles in her lack of exposure to Korean language and culture. In addition to her parents’ willingness, effort, investment, and attitudes, Shelly’s own
position as having two older siblings who had been exposed to United States schooling for at least three years contributed to Shelly’s loss of interest and motivation in maintaining and developing her heritage language and literacy proficiency.

As the entire chapter described, one important aspect of children’s language and literacy acquisition is attitude, which had been strongly tied to her own personality. Shelly often stated that reading and writing Korean was not necessary in her daily life. In addition, Shelly’s natural exposure to English, English literacy, and the potential benefits of this valuable linguistic code (Wong-Fillmore, 1991a) appear to have overridden any individual or family value of home language and literacy retention. For Shelly, there was little or no motivation to learn Korean literacy and language, because everybody around her was proficient in reading, writing, and communicating in English. Her parents, especially her mother was not proficient in English initially, but she acquired English proficiency as Shelly developed English skills.
Chapter 8

Discussion

The socio-cultural and linguistic identity of the greater linguistic community plays a significant role in one’s language usage (Caldas, 2006; Norton, 2009; Pearson, 2007). Young children are members of various linguistic communities at home, at school, and on the playground, all of which are situated in the context of the larger society. Language and literacy are representative of all the social contexts that come to play in a given community (Vygotsky, 1976), and the linguistic discourse that arises from these contexts reflects the community’s group identity (Hoff, 2006; Miller, 2000; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Language, literacy, and group discourse make up one of the major “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1997) as they are defined throughout this study.

Language and literacy as communities of practice have played a central role in the formation of a unique Korean TEK community (see pp. 59-61), in which Korean-American children and adults engage in extensive code-mixing/switching in their daily discourse and literate practices across two languages. However, language and literacy can also play a negative role in the lives of bilinguals and biliterates, especially where bilingualism has not been highly valued, as in our research context, a city in the Midwestern United States. The value placed by the greater linguistic community on English only puts young children at risk for losing their home/heritage language (Guardado, 2002; Tabors & Snow, 2001, 2007).

Within the socio-cultural theoretical frameworks of social-constructivism (Vygotsky, 1976, 1978) and communities of practices (Wenger, 1997), this longitudinal ethnographic study investigated how three young second-generation learners in the
United States became literate in two languages (English, the community language; and Korean, the heritage language); furthermore, this study investigated socio-cultural factors influential in shaping the identities of bilingual minorities, as discussed in the four major categories addressing the research questions presented at the end of chapter 1: (a) the daily language and literacy practices of an immigrant family; (b) the goals and viewpoints of the focal parents, children, and others involved in their journey toward becoming bilingual/biliterate; (c) the socio-cultural factors influencing their linguistic lives; and (d) the representation and transformation of the ethnic, national, and linguistic identities of the research subjects as second-generation immigrant children in the United States.

The Daily Language and Literacy Practices of an Immigrant Family

This family’s language and literacy resources and environment were abundant and rich, much like those of any mid-high SES family in the United States; the three focal children had been exposed to many oral language and literacy events through plentiful print resources at home that reflected the parents’ value of Korean as well as English language and literacy. Many kinds and levels of Korean and English books crowded the shelves in the children’s bedrooms (each of which had a dedicated library corner), as well as the family den and living room. The biggest bookshelf in the family den, a central gathering place easily accessible by the children, was laden with not only print materials but also audio, video, and software programs. These libraries throughout the house demonstrated the parents’ intentional integration of literacy in both English and Korean into their family’s daily lives.
The books housed in the family library were approximately 60% Korean and 40% English in 2006; this ratio gradually changed to 85% English and 15% Korean by the end of 2007. (These numbers were provided by the mother in an oral interview and were confirmed by oral interviews and written samples from Kevin and Mary, and the researcher’s own observations.) In early stages of this study (2003-2005), all three children frequently read and played with the books and media materials, and engaged in rich communication, although Shelly participated the least in family linguistic events. Nonetheless, the parents often modeled interaction with print by reading Korean and English books to themselves and to the children. As time went by, the children’s changing linguistic lives and the parents’ busy daily lives led to a decrease in the linguistic richness in this household.

Unlike at home, where the parents attempted, albeit inconsistently, to establish a Korean-literate-rich environment, the highly rated public school that the children attended was not supportive of their retention and development of their heritage language, literacy, and socio-cultural identities. Practical matters related to daily instruction were the primary reason, but teachers also exhibited concern about hardships that the children may face due to lack of English proficiency. The children’s homework, naturally, focused on English and did nothing to encourage their Korean literacy and culture. Consequently, their English abilities rapidly surpassed their Korean oral and written language abilities. The linguistic concerns of their teachers focused on the children’s acquisition of English; when the children were fluent in English, the teachers made no further effort to help the children develop their heritage language, literacy, culture, and identity.
The school environment had a profound and continual impact on the spoken language and literacy proficiencies of these children. Because of Kevin’s initial inability to understand his Kindergarten teachers, for example, the family began to speak more English at home. Though perhaps helpful to Kevin’s transition to an all-English environment, this decision likely set the stage for Kevin’s growing difficulties with learning and maintaining his Korean language and literacy. Subsequently, when Mary began preschool, her English oral language proficiency suddenly increased, and Kevin began to speak English even more frequently at home. Shelly’s reluctance to develop her Korean language and literacy was another factor that accelerated the decreasing use of Korean language and literacy in the household.

Other than the tension between the two languages at use in their daily lives, the language and literacy practices of the focal family were similar to those of any other middle SES household in the United States. The educated parents in this focal family strongly believed in their ability to guide their children toward future success in academics and life in general, an attitude common to members of the TEK community. The mother always carefully selected their family activities, including visiting bookstores, participating in community-based events, going to church services/activities, and regularly spending time at public libraries, paying attention to their educational value as well as the balance of Korean and English language use. The parents continually worked toward their goal of raising their children in a global and transnational world, which was the primary reason for educating their children as bilinguals and biliterates.
The Goals, Values, and Viewpoints of the Focal Parents, Children, and Others Involved

The views and goals of the parents. First, through observation and interviews, the value that the focal parents place on biliteracy education for their children can be discerned. Among their various educational interests, including extracurricular classes and local library events, bilingual and biliteracy education was their ultimate goal. Not only did they send their children to the Korean language school and provide them with a private Korean tutor, both at a significant cost, but they also tried to model their own value of their heritage language and literacy. The parents believed that literacy education required extra effort, while language could be acquired naturally through daily life—hence my differentiation between language and literacy in this study.

Numerous informal discussions pointed toward the parents’ strong belief that their children should maintain and develop their Korean heritage by acquiring and developing Korean language, literacy, and culture. The parents often told their children, “You are Korean and you should know how to read and write in Korean,” and they occasionally modeled reading and writing Korean. As educated Korean parents with a high SES in the United States, they also tried to be examples to their children of how to live in the United States as global citizens.

In order to pursue their goal of bilingual and biliteracy education, the parents attempted to counteract their children’s shift from Korean to English, but not in a systematic way, such as implementing a Korean-only rule at home. When Kevin and his siblings tried to speak English to their parents, the parents sometimes intentionally responded in Korean, apparently hoping that the children would recognize the sudden change in language and the reason for it. Sometimes the children followed the parents’
lead and switched to Korean; however, Kevin and Shelly were more likely to continue speaking English, especially in the latter part of the study. Mary often switched to Korean right away, because she viewed code-switching/mixing as a fun verbal activity.

Although the parents believed implacably in the importance of biliteracy education and initially appeared to understand how such education should be conducted, I observed that their actual daily lives did not quite match their intentions. The parents did put effort into their children’s biliteracy education, but faced with the reality of their busy daily lives, both parents may have failed to emphasize biliteracy development enough to help improve their children’s Korean literacy proficiency. Sometimes, they did not keep Korean literacy in mind, and many teachable moments were overlooked. They seemed to believe that literacy education was the job of the public school, their Korean tutor, or the teachers at the Korean language school.

**The views and goals of the children.** The children’s viewpoints about learning two languages and related identity concepts were described in chapter 5, 6, and 7. All three children felt that Korean was much more difficult than English, and they showed a preference for English during interviews. The children also all exhibited stress when writing essays or letters in Korean, preferring to write short dictations rather than long essays. Even Mary, who proved to be the most proficient and motivated of the three children, preferred writing in English. This stress may continue or even increase throughout their lives, and could be linked to Dulay and Burt’s (1977) *affective filter*. That is, as these three students’ literacy and language skills in Korean increasingly fall behind their English skills, they may be resistant to try writing and speaking Korean. Because they were born in the United States, where most people speak/listen/read/write
English only, they naturally developed affective factors and preferences based on their emotional comfort and convenience. Kevin and Mary especially seemed to understand the benefits of developing Korean proficiency, but the “extra” advantages had been filtered by their daily lives and lack of commitment in their early years.

The views and goals of the children’s teachers. Surprisingly, most of the teachers mentioned similar concepts concerning bilingual and multicultural education. Although only two teachers strongly emphasized the necessity of daily bilingual/multicultural education in the classroom, all of them believed in the importance of bilingual/multicultural education to some degree. All of the teachers indicated that they valued bilingual education for young diverse learners to maintain and develop their heritage, language, literacy, and identities. Among the five teachers, two of them had taken classes related to these issues; consequently, these two teachers understood many of the relevant issues facing these focal children and were able to provide more discrete answers with exact terms, such as “heritage language retention and development” or “cultural identity.”

However, I did not observe any attempts on the part of the teachers to connect their lessons to multicultural education, except for one teacher who had an endorsement in ESL/bilingual education and had taken many courses in this area. When I asked this teacher about the mismatch between his/her classroom lessons and his/her claim to value bilingual education, he/she explained that he/she suffered from a lack of time to plan his/her lessons and to teach what he wanted to teach. He/She also added that his/her philosophy of teaching and the reality of the classroom situation were not compatible. The other teachers agreed that, although they cared about heritage literacy education, they
had inadequate time for it. Especially concerning heritage literacy education, the teachers seemed overwhelmed and believed it was the responsibility of the parents. This phenomenon was similar to heritage identity retention and development. Teachers did not seem to be concerned about the children’s identity unless it became problematic.

My monthly observations of all three children at school also indicated that their teachers did not encourage their heritage language, literacy, and cultural identity development. When asked whether teachers supported his bilingual education, Kevin was emphatic: “No, No, [my teacher has] never [discussed Korean language or culture]. It’s an American school! It never happened, never, NEVER!” Instead, the focus was on English oral language and literacy, and American culture only (e.g., mainstream American perspectives on play, American holidays). This phenomenon was consistent with Mary’s and Shelly’s school observations, except in the case of Mary’s first grade teacher, who had taken courses in multicultural education. This teacher proudly showed me Mary’s Korean writing in her daily journals; in addition, that teacher often encouraged Mary to share about her Korean culture, language, and literacy. When the teacher was teaching social studies using a world map, she let Mary come to the front of the class in order to point out Korea. The teacher also let Mary’s mother come to school to present about Korean holidays and culture.

Although the mother had supportive teachers on her children’s bilingual/biliteracy education, she seemed to be skeptical about the school’s role in her children’s heritage language/literacy retention and development in general. The mother also seemed to realize that she was not supposed to have many expectations of the school concerning her
children’s bilingual and biliteracy education; rather, she determined that that was the parents’ responsibility.

**The goals and views of extended family members and community members.**

The views and goals from extended family members in this focal family had been very influential for all three children’s heritage language and literacy practices and development. They had similar views and goals for bilingual and biliteracy education, including maintaining Korean-origin identity, for the same reason as the parents: having positive identities and linguistic skills as transnational figures; being successful in both countries and in any other part in the world; and being strongly connected to family members who reside in Korea. Just as the parents’ goals and views gradually faded as both parents became more fluent in English, I also saw a similar phenomenon with extended family members who studied in English-speaking countries for at least 3 years. The grandmother was an exception because she only spoke Korean, but her behavior also changed when she began to pick up enough English words to have a basic conversation. Although the grandmother answered the children in Korean, she used simple words and short sentences in order for the children to understand her.

The community members’ perspectives were similar to those of the parents, except they were less anxious about the children’s success. They still used the terms “success” and “successful,” but the meaning was different. The parents’ definition of success extended to not only having competent language/literacy skills and a positive attitude towards being Korean, but also being able to hold jobs that are highly valued in the society, such as a CEO of a multinational company (the mother’s dream for Kevin), a professor (the mother’s wish for Mary), or a lawyer (the grandmother’s wish for Shelly).
On the other hand, the principals, the director, and the teachers at the Korean heritage language school mentioned broader views and goals of helping these Korean-origin children to be exposed to Korean culture and language in a naturalistic school and community setting.

All of the views and goals of the parents, school-teachers, extended family members, and community members/leaders have been incredibly influential for all three children. Although Shelly did not seem to care too much about what others thought, Kevin and Mary clearly acknowledged the goals and expectations of others for the development and maintenance of their Korean heritage language, literacy, and cultural/ethnic/national identity.

**Socio-Cultural Influences on Heritage Language Retention, and Development**

From the observational and interview data of all participants in the study, I was able to determine that the parents utilized social and intellectual scaffolding within the ZPD for their children’s linguistic, cultural, and identity development between two transnational cultures. Although the parents did not use the terms “scaffolding” or “ZPD,” what they explained to me exemplified Vygotsky’s (1967, 1976) notion of social-constructivism. Every effort the parents made for their children to be involved in Korean community and cultural events, including their own modeling, also demonstrated that the parents believe in the importance of social-environmental “communities of practices,” adopted by Wenger (1998). After a series of conversations about their children’s education and bilingual/biliteracy development, I decided to explore further the family’s socio-cultural scaffolding and input through this longitudinal study. The following is a
brief summary of this focal family’s socio-cultural, environmental, and economic influences related to the process of their three children becoming bilinguals/biliterates.

**Socio-cultural and environmental influences.** Socio-cultural and environmental factors influenced the parents to encourage not only the children’s Korean heritage identity development but also their retention and development of their heritage language and literacy. In order to explain this in detail, I have divided these influences into two sections: socio-cultural influences and economic influences. The factors affecting the parents’ behavior regarding this subject were already described in detail in chapter 4. The following influential factors will be discussed in this chapter: extended family member involvement; community interaction; relevant linguistic practices from visitors from Korea related to family kinship; and popular culture, including technology. Environmental factors also impacted all three children in their heritage language/literacy and identity retention and development.

**Influences of extended family and community members.** The influence of extended family members was prominent, as evidenced by the details provided in each participant’s chapter—chapter 6 (Mary), chapter 7 (Shelly), and briefly in the previous section; most notably, Kevin was the least influenced by family members among the three children, according to a series of interviews with his mother, and my own observations. When I asked his mother why, she speculated that the main reason might be the gender difference. The mother told me that the two sisters were “kinder” and “sweeter” in many ways than Kevin, so that the two girls had engaged in more written and verbal contact with extended family members.
Although Kevin interacted the least with his extended family members, contacting relatives in Korea necessitated all three children to maintain and develop communicative ability in Korean. Thus, having an interactive and intimate relationship with extended family members who maintained their Korean language/literacy and identity helped Kevin, Mary, and Shelly to use oral Korean on the phone or during on-line voice chats with their grandmother and aunts in Korea. More specifically, Kevin read Korean writing when he received birthday cards or letters from Korea. Kevin often had to write back to extended family members with his parents’ guidance, particularly that of his mother.

Shelly’s only reason to learn Korean language and literacy was to communicate with her maternal grandmother. Shelly even expressed that she felt she was Korean only when she talked to and met with her grandmother. Shelly produced the most frequent and the most developed writing pieces in Korean while her grandmother stayed with the family for three months at the end of 2007. In January of 2008, the frequency of Shelly’s writing activities in Korean decreased dramatically, and she began to say that she was an American again. (When the grandmother had been staying with Shelly, she said she was a Korean-American.) When I asked why, Shelly replied that there was no reason for her to speak and write in Korean anymore. Shelly stated repeatedly, “She is gone! [so I don’t need to use Korean / I am not Korean anymore].”

Mary, with her sweet and kind personality, often interacted with her grandparents and two other aunts through many forms of communication (phone, email, online chat, blogs, and written letters/cards). Yearly visits—whether the duration was for a few weeks or a few months or whether the location was in the United States or in
Korea—influenced all three children to see, feel, speak, and experience that they were Korean-American, so that they communicated in spoken and written Korean.

These influences from extended family members were similar to those of community members who maintained their Korean language and cultural identity. When this focal family was more involved in Korean cultural activities and religious gatherings, their exposure to Korean language, literacy, and culture increased naturally. For example, when the father gave a speech at the Korean cultural center in town, the mother and the three children were automatically involved in communication and interaction with other Korean community members, including other Korean-origin children in town.

The influence of family kinship: Long-term visitors from Korea—language and literacy usage in daily lives. The maternal grandmother and aunts made annual visits to the focal family’s home in the United States. They usually visited from two or three weeks to two or three months. These visits increased the children’s connection to their Korean roots. For example, when one aunt gave birth to a baby in the United States, all three children were extensively involved in Korean language, literacy, and culture (especially surrounding the idea of childbirth in Korean culture). Mary and Shelly produced a number of writing samples in their heritage literacy, in order to write about their newborn Korean-American cousin.

The influences of family kinship were significant and seemed more important because of the value that Korean culture itself places on family kinship. In Korean culture, relationships among extended family members may even require sacrifices to be made in order to maintain family ties. This socio-cultural concept played an influential role in this family. For instance, Mary’s linguistic life changed because of a visit from a
member of her extended family from Korea. Anna was Mary’s cousin; her mother,
Mary’s paternal aunt, held a highly regarded job in South Korea and wanted to raise
Anna as a member of TEK, so she sent her daughter to live with the focal family.
Although the family was already busy taking care of their own three children, the mother
said that they could not reject the aunt’s request, because they had a kinship
responsibility. Anna is a year older than Mary and three years older than Shelly, so that
the three of them always played and studied together; as a result, their oral language skills
were enriched through their use of Korean for the two or three months following Anna’s
arrival. However, it did not take long for all three girls to change their preferred language
from Korean to English.

**The influence of popular culture, media and technology.** The influence of
technology on the children’s exposure to their heritage literacy and culture was noticeable
and much stronger than I had expected. The ability of children to absorb popular culture
and apply it to their daily literacy practices is already well-researched by many scholars
(see Dyson, 2003). Diverse young learners always seek out enjoyable and interesting
ways to learn about their heritage language, literacy, and culture. For Kevin, cartoon
characters were his strongest motivation to visit Korean websites; as a result of his
interest, he read and wrote about Korean cartoon characters and discussed them with his
Korean peers in the community. On the other hand, Mary was fascinated with
communicating through online chats, especially with her two aunts and her maternal
grandmother. Emailing in Korean and writing Korean letters and diaries were Mary’s
typical literacy practices when she was interested in communicating in Korean, and these
literate practices continued until mid-2006. Mary basically believed that typing and
writing in Korean was a “cool” activity, because others were not able to do it. She also enjoyed whispering in Korean to her favorite Korean classmate in school because they could have “secret talks” since their other classmates could not understand what they were saying.

Uniquely, Shelly did not seem interested in any of the Korean linguistic activities that her older siblings liked; however, she loved singing Korean songs, whose repetitive and unique rhythms interested her. Shelly learned these songs from her mother and grandmother, and practiced them with Mary. Her mother was usually present to provide input or correct pronunciation/spelling of Korean words. Shelly also loved watching Korean movies about princesses. She watched such programs often, but this activity decreased significantly as she spent more time at school, because she could not understand them anymore.

In sum, each child was able to find and make good use of his or her own interest in popular culture, media, and/or technology, although the mediating form for each child was different.

**Ethnic, National, and Linguistic Identity Representation, Negotiation, and Transformation**

All three children clearly showed that their ethnic, socio-cultural, national, and linguistic identities had been initially formed, negotiated in terms of their surroundings, and finally transformed. Details about each child were presented in chapters 5 (Kevin), 6 (Mary), and 7 (Shelly). In this section, I will compare and contrast how these three children negotiated their identity development and transformation over the course of this study.
Common findings among the three siblings. All three children showed a strong correlation between the language they used and their ethnic/national/socio-cultural identities. For instance, when Kevin was exposed to 80% Korean and 20% English in his daily life, he told me unequivocally that he was Korean. But by the next year, after having developed his English proficiency at Kindergarten and through a socio-cultural influx of English, he identified himself as an American. Subsequently, he has declared that he is a Korean-American, but this label comes from societal education; in other words, he had been told what he was supposed to say when he was asked about his nationality/ethnicity. Mary’s pattern of identity negotiation and development was similar to Kevin’s, and was also closely connected with language.

Shelly, who never acquired a comfortable/communicative level in her heritage language, usually answered “I’m English” when asked about her nationality. Obviously, she meant that she identified herself as an American, but the fact that she used the language, rather than the country, in her response shows the strong connection in her mind between language and identity. Only when she was able to hear/speak Korean frequently, when the grandmother who could not speak English was staying with them, did Shelly tell me that she was Korean. When I asked Shelly the reason why she was suddenly Korean, she declared that she changed to Korean whenever she was physically with her grandmother because she needed to communicate in Korean. Again, we can see the correlation here between language and identity.

It is evident that each participant’s identity was closely tied to daily language usage, influential people in their lives, and environmental surroundings, all of which can be called “socio-environmental comprehensive input.” All three children showed that the
more involved they were in Korean language, literacy, and culture (in other words, when their socio-environmental comprehensive input was predominantly Korean), the firmer their concept Korean identity became. This was clear from numerous semi-formal and informal interviews and from their writings about themselves.

**Differences among the three siblings.** The development of each focal child’s identity was extremely dynamic and different; for instance, Kevin presented a typical bilingual child’s identity, in which his language proficiency directly correlated with his concept of nationality/ethnicity, as illustrated above. Mary, on the other hand, retained a strong emotional attachment to all of her family members, including those still in Korea, and she also seemed to maintain a strong Korean identity and linguistic proficiency for the longest period among her siblings. However, she also experienced a period when the amount of Korean socio-cultural input in her life decreased, especially from 2006 to mid-2007. Shelly presented the least linguistic proficiency in both languages among the three siblings, and she also showed the weakest identification with her Korean background. Shelly’s basic attitude was different from her siblings as well. She seemed to be apathetic toward learning language and thinking about her identity.

All three children’s physical conditions/background, such as being born in the United States, being exposed to two cultures and languages, and having the same Korean parents were the same. Nonetheless, all three children presented both subtle and profound differences in language and literacy acquisition and development in the two languages (Korean and English) as well as the conceptualization of who they were, why they looked and spoke differently from others, and their motivation and attitude toward becoming bilingual, biliterate, biethnic, and bicultural.
Concluding Remarks

**Early bilingual and biliteracy education and practices.** Many children become bilingual and biliterate as they grow up in the United States. Despite this, a large number of these children lose their home languages (Fillmore, 1991a; Grady, 2009; Lai, 2009; Tse, 2001), including those whose parents are bilingual. Taking a socio-cultural perspective (i.e., social constructivism and communities of practice) provides insight into both the challenges of and potential strategies for supporting bilingualism and biliteracy in children like Kevin, Mary, and Shelly by looking at the interactions and contexts in which these children develop.

The greater linguistic community can play a significant role in a child’s language choice (Caldas, 2006; Caldas & Caron-Caldas, 2000), placing many of them at risk for losing their home language (Obied, 2008; Tabors & Snow, 2001, 2008). These influences affect even families who have substantial financial and socio-cultural resources, as did the focal family in this study. Interestingly, given the link between oral language proficiency and literacy (see Bialystok, 2001; Grosjean, 1982; Olvando, Collier, & Comb, 2003), it may be that children from families with fewer resources and who only speak the home language have a greater opportunity to become bilingual and biliterate.

Despite the noted benefits of heritage language schools (Shin, 2005; You, 2005) this study suggested that they are not sufficient, not even with the inclusion of bi-weekly tutoring and strong support from the parents. Krashen (1981) asserted that children acquire language when they have exposure to language that is at and just beyond their current level of development. This was important to the Korean language and literacy acquisition and development of these three children. Because Kevin and Shelly were
increasingly less proficient in oral Korean by the end of 2007, they likely had more difficulty acquiring Korean literacy proficiency (i.e., reading and writing). Oral language development and literacy skills are linked (e.g., Geva & Zadeh, 2006). Greater exposure to the target language, opportunities for meaningful interaction, intensive and structured daily parental support, and daily immersion in the heritage culture and community through the children’s favorite forms of popular culture appear to be critical for children to attain proficiency in the spoken and written forms of the home language.

Another important factor in the acquisition and retention of the children’s oral and written home language is engagement in home language and literacy activities as a family. Clearly, the focal parents were busy with their day-to-day activities. Given the busy lives that many families face, finding the time and energy to devote to speaking and writing in the home language may be difficult. Parents may defer to English even when speaking at home as a matter of expediency despite their desire for their children to experience and use the home language. Code-switching may result in less use of the home oral language, and the increased use of oral English may actually facilitate home language and literacy loss. These pressures likely increase when a family has more children. Moreover, when children, like Mary, attend upper elementary grades, more homework, social events with English-speaking peers, and extracurricular activities demand more time spent using English.

Additionally, children’s oral language and literacy acquisition can be impacted by their attitudes. Kevin, who often stated that reading and writing Korean was too difficult compared to English, did not realize that Korean letters actually correlate more closely to their sounds than English letters do: Korean letters were scientifically developed to fit the
Korean language, which is syllabic. Consequently, Korean-English bilingual students tend to recognize symbol-sound correspondence in Korean more easily than in English (Koda, 1998; Shin, 2005), which means that learning to read and write in Korean should be easier if the children have a strong basis in Korean oral language and greater support within their socio-cultural environment.

Many children in the United States live in a community where English literacy and oral language are highly prized and where children are provided not only with English oral language input but also instruction in English literacy on a scale that seems nearly impossible to match with heritage language/literacy and cultural knowledge input. This exposure to English language and literacy, and the potential benefits of this valuable linguistic code (Wong-Fillmore, 1991a) appear to override that value that individuals and families place on home language/literacy and ethnic/cultural identity retention and development.

Motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) and opportunities for authentic communication (Lindfors, 2008) are other major factors that appear to account for English taking precedence over Korean. Especially for Shelly, there was little or no motivation to learn Korean language and literacy, because she could always read, write, and communicate in English to have her social, emotional, physical, and educational needs met. Little authentic and/or purposeful use of Korean was evident compared to that of English. Despite her parents’ emphasis on the meaning and usefulness of being bilingual and biliterate, the three children in this study and many other bilingual children have few experiences to help them develop a strong motivation to learn to read and write in their heritage language. Moreover, these same children and at times other family
members, due to their recognition of the benefits of English spoken language and literacy, may have little motivation and purpose to continue pursuing home spoken language and literacy learning.

A child’s identity is also likely to play a vital role in oral language and literacy acquisition. Children like Kevin, Mary, and Shelly need a strong Korean-American bi-ethnic/cultural identity to support their bilingualism and biliteracy (Li, 2002; McCarthey, 2002; Norton, 2000). Shelly and Kevin, like many second-generation children, saw themselves as American rather than Korean or Korean-American. This American identity, coupled with their motivation to assimilate with the majority of the peers and adults in their community, obfuscated the usefulness or purpose of reading, writing, or speaking Korean. As a result, Kevin and Shelly may not have been able to recognize any advantages of being bilingual or biliterate, and ultimately, of being Korean.

The presence of all of these obstacles to heritage language acquisition paints a picture that is truly disturbing. Despite significant family resources, early acquisition of the heritage language and literacy, and family value of that heritage language and culture, some children are not likely to become bilingual and biliterate adults. It would be easy to blame the parents for this outcome, because of their failure to remain consistent in their use of the home language (Grosjean, 1982). However, that blame would be inappropriate. It takes an entire community to demonstrate the value of bilingualism to children, in order for them to be intrinsically motivated to pursue more than one language. In societies where bilingualism and biliteracy are afforded greater value, such as communities in southern Florida, Texas, or California, where Spanish-English bilingualism predominates, children grow up seeing the use of two languages as a normal
state of affairs, rather than an aberration. Indeed, such communities have established programs for children in the United States that result in their bilingualism and biliteracy (e.g., Shin, 2005; Tse, 2001). It is through bilingual maintenance programs that children like the focal children of this study appear to have the greatest chance at becoming bilingual and biliterate, and are therefore able to reap the benefits of having diverse linguistic skills.

**Early home/family literacy research.** It is necessary for early literacy acquisition and development to be examined in relation to its context and uses embedded in young learners’ daily realities (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Auerbach, 1989). Understanding the culture of different families and community groups should be the first priority for researchers and educators to facilitate literacy learning at home and in schools (Wasik, 2004). Therefore, this study reviewed a Korean-American immigrant family’s home language and literacy practices as well as their children’s educational and social contexts of early bilingual and biliteracy language and literacy learning and development based on Vygotsky’s social-constructivism and Wenger’s concept of communities of practices.

The growing body of research on family literacy has accumulated descriptive ethnography studies in various homes and communities for the following purposes: (a) to understand how families weave literate practices into their daily realities in diverse groups; (b) to identify the areas that researchers and educators need to work on; and (c) to eventually facilitate early literacy learning and development in our society. In order to fulfill those purposes, we need information about the socio-cultural settings of young students, in which they initiate, absorb, and synthesize their educational experiences.
(Leichter, 1978; as cited in Taylor, 1983). Because family is the major influence in children’s literacy acquisition and development, scholars and educators need to look at family literacy practices and education using a social-contextual approach in which homes and communities can share their cultural/historical habitués, implements, and concerns. The research on home literacy and its practices illustrated in this dissertation were written with the hope that it could be used to help children become successful life-long readers and writers. Students from diverse backgrounds must be supported by synergistic socio-cultural and instructional support from researchers, policy-makers, educators, and parents, especially in the most influential place: home.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations in this study, the first of which is related to the larger contextual question of a single case study. Single case studies have many advantages, such as their in-depth and interpretive presentation of data. The focal children in this study are likely representative of numerous Korean children in with similar backgrounds. However, this study may not be representative of children from other ethnic, socio-economic, and geographic backgrounds. Overall, the researcher kept in mind that single case studies are socio-culturally situated representations of phenomena (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Stake, 1995) rather than a representation of the phenomena themselves. Nevertheless, this case study has value (see Flyvbjerg, 2006) and provides families and educators with important details about the acquisition and maintenance of home language for children with language-minority backgrounds.
Another limitation of this study is related to the difficulty of selecting, managing, and analyzing data from a longitudinal, six-year study. Children’s language and literacy development is continuous, complicated, and developmentally related; therefore, the researcher had difficulty projecting, maintaining, managing, sorting, and applying the enormous amount of data collected over the course of six years. In addition, the researcher lost some of her writing sample hard copies and related data over the course of the six years. In retrospect, managing all data electronically would allow for more systematic file management, as well as keeping backup copies of the data.

The third limitation of this study is the researcher’s changing role. My being a long-term family friend, a literacy coach, a heritage language teacher, a figurative big sister to the three children, an educational counselor for the parents, and an academic researcher may have confused readers. My main role was ethnographic researcher, and I have tried my best to best deliver the most truthful and realistic picture of this family possible.

My other private and personal roles have actually allowed me to observe the family more intimately and see “the truth,” as an insider of the situated context. Critics of case study research might argue that an insider would not be able to be objective, but after having conducted this research, I disagree. There is the possibility of altering or adapting interview answers when research participants are informed about the researcher’s position as a heritage language teacher who wanted them to maintain their heritage language and culture: however, it is common knowledge that people, especially young children, are not able to alter their behaviors in order to match their verbal answers for a long period time, 7 years in the instance of this study. Because I kept in mind the
possibility of intentional answers or those not tied to reality, I had a critical eye and always cross-checked via the triangulation of observation (with and without my presence), interview (in-depth and casual) including casual communications, and written documents for 7 years.

As a researcher, my positionality and knowledge might have influenced research participants’ answers during interviews and change(d) behaviors during observations since the participants knew who I was and what I was seeking for. As Hopkins (2007) declared, positionality might be a subject matter and is debatable depending on disciplines for researchers that affect a research study itself, however, intense and longitudinal data collection decrease the possibility of data alteration due to a researcher’s positionality.

In collaboration with my academic advisor and colleagues, and informed by several relevant graduate courses, I worked hard to ensure that my study was a good example of an ethnographic longitudinal case study.

My various roles sometimes conflicted, because although I had to be careful not to influence the research participants in any way, I also had a personal responsibility to the family. I had to consider the best educational practices for each child in this family. Thus, when the parents sought out my professional opinion, I helped them to the best of my ability; on the other hand, I tried to minimize my scaffolding when I attempted to describe their daily lives.

The last limitation of the study was my passion for heritage linguistic and cultural retention and development. My strong views of the importance of children maintaining their Korean as they develop their English skills may have led me to reveal my bias in
conversations with the children and parents. Since they knew me as a Korean tutor, they understood that I wanted them to speak and write Korean; therefore, I was also not a completely objective researcher. In addition, I provided my advice to maximize the use of Korean language and literacy usage at home, so it is possible that the entire family may have reacted to my presence.

**Implications**

This study, which has presented a detailed analysis of three children's oral bilingual and biliterate development and the socio-cultural factors influential in that development, has important implications for both practice and research.

**Implications for practice.** Children like Kevin, Mary, and Shelly need intensive input and opportunities for interaction in school, in their communities, and at home to be bilingual and biliterate in English and their home language. Parents and educators can put more effort into encouraging biliteracy and bilingualism to achieve the highest levels of bilingualism and biliteracy. In school settings, home language and literacy practices should be connected and visible (Gregory & Williams, 2000; Kenner, 2000), as illustrated in quality bilingual maintenance programs. For schools in which English is the primary or sole means of communication and learning, educators can emphasize the value of children’s home languages and literacies. To do this, educators should also learn about bilingual students’ background knowledge, cultural repertoires, and daily home practices through surveys, home visits, and regular communication with family members and children (Tabor, 2008; Olvando & Collier, 2003). Teachers can engage children in multiculturally-themed units, touching on history, travel, or ships from diverse cultures to
connect the content knowledge to the home culture and language of their bilingual students (Cheatham, Santos, & Ro, 2007; Ro & Cheatham, 2009).

Teachers can also group children who share the same linguistic or cultural background and support them as they communicate in their home language before bringing the children together again to speak English in a large group. Developing KWL tables (Tompkins, 2006), both in their home language and in English, can be helpful for children to refer to their own background knowledge and home language in relation to academic content. Thus, in these environments where limited or no home language use occurs, educators can model practices to illustrate the essential belief that children’s cultures, home languages, and associated literacies are valuable.

Similarly, families can engage in practices to facilitate home language and literacy development. The family’s consistent use of the home language can demonstrate their value of their home language and foster their children’s receptive oral competency even if children choose to respond in English (Saville-Troike, 1988, 2003). Given the importance of motivation and purposeful communication to language learning, families can provide their children with authentic situations for home language use, such as interactions with grandparents who do not know English, pen pals, and visits to the parents’ home country. When possible, families may be able to arrange for their children to stay for an extended visit (over summer vacation, for example) in the home country, where the value and purpose of the home culture and language are transparent.

**Implications for Future Research.** As described above, many research studies suggest that educators need to utilize students’ socio-cultural backgrounds, including family literacy histories and practices, in order to maximize the idea of “success for all”
in one classroom. However, there are four implications to this study that can provide direction for future family literacy research, to explore how to better serve diverse students in their homes, classrooms, and in between, as follows.

First, scholars and researchers need to investigate effective family literacy education, by looking at (a) other ethnic and socio-cultural minority groups, and (b) American-born second-generation children of immigrant and refugee homes. There are many studies on African-American and Central-American (Hispanic) communities, but my review of the literature on this topic revealed a dearth of research on other socio-cultural and ethnic minority groups (Auerbach, 1989), such as Native Americans, Europeans, Middle Easterners, and Central and East Asians. Diverse socio-cultural and ethnic groups maintain different perspectives and practices in home literacy usage; furthermore, texts are customized to fit the various contexts of the family situation and needs (Heath, 1993; Wasik et al. 2004). Therefore, scholars and practitioners emphasize connecting home linguistic-cultural backgrounds to pedagogy in order to constitute one learning community, which originates from students’ linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Several researchers have looked at young ESL or bilingual’s home literacy practices (Chall & Snow, 1982; Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Valdez, 1998; McCarthey, 1997; Li, 2002). Rather than documenting unequal relationships between homes and schools, however, practitioners and scholars need to implement practical information for culturally responsive instruction (Au, 1993) to fit into the currents needs of multi-social and -cultural learning environment (Gonzalez, 2005).
Second, bilingual researchers need to investigate family reading and writing practices and their correlation to teaching and learning in schools. Some ethnographers include detailed categorizations of different purposeful reading practices (Teale, 1986; Taylor & Dorsey-Gains, 1988); however, writing practices in the homes are rarely investigated. Most home literacy ethnographers have focused more on reading than writing, although they have been successful at painting detailed pictures of the lives of young biliterates. Detailed dynamic writing practices in the various socio-cultural homes and communities should also be carefully examined to allow educators to acknowledge and develop the best literacy practices in homes and schools (Teale, 1986).

Third, practical ways to connect homes and schools should be investigated, such as how teachers, parents, and students transfer the background knowledge they have gained from their family literacy experiences to their school education. The home-school connection is one of the most important concerns in this area, and researchers have examined the importance of the relationships and mismatches between home and school literacy practices, expectations, and beliefs about academic responsibility (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; McCarthey, 1997, 1999, 2000; Hammer and Miccio, 2004; Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995; Valdez, 1998). However, through both experimental and naturalistic studies, additional practical instruction and implications are urgently needed. Shockey et al. (1998) conducted one longitudinal ethnographic study that emphasized the combined partnership of homes and schools, based on parallel practices in the extended literacy community. Home-school journals were presented as one of the best vehicles to establish networks between families and teachers to extend the literacy knowledge of young learners. With respectful cooperation based on strong trust, teachers, parents, and
children work together to improve young learners’ literacy construction through working literacy projects (Shockley et al.). As the result of collaborative projects between homes and public education, young learners can become competent readers and writers in any socio-cultural context.

The last implication for future family literacy research is to conduct longitudinal ethnographic studies to document the continuous interchange between a child’s literacy practices at home and in school. Home literacy development and practices are as dynamic as family life itself—not only parents’ beliefs, values, practices and surrounding factors, but also young learners’ construction of literacy concepts and behaviors are always changing. Taylor’s (1983), Heath’s (1983), and Taylor & Dorsey-Gains’s (1988) longitudinal studies about twenty years ago successfully presented the interchange in the home literate lives of young children. Since then, however, researchers’ eagerness for quick results as well as the practical realities of scholars’ lives have resulted in mostly short-term studies.

In order to search for the variety of influences on children’s literacy development, longitudinal research should address: (a) all circumstances of literacy usage, focusing on changing verbal and written interactions and practices in the homes, schools, and communities, especially on how different cultures and communities present literacy usage; (b) the characteristics of different teachers’ implementations of literacy practices and collaboration with homes for students’ literacy development; and (c) how low SES families reflect on linguistic practices with their circumstances and respond to educational equality and equity in daily classroom, and how these are different from other SES groups. Various qualitative studies to more fully understand family literacy practices
with regard to socio-cultural support and diversity are important for the future of family literacy research and education (Wasik, 2004; Darling, 2004). In addition to the above four research implications, appropriate family literacy programs for both adults and children, political support from federal and state agencies, staff development through pre- and in-service education collaborating with universities, and experimental study findings from family literacy programs or institutional interventions for the policy-defined lines of inquiry are also necessary (Gadsden, 2000; Wasik, et. al., 2001).

In sum, my suggestions for further research include (a) continuing investigations of family literacy practices in diverse homes and communities; (b) investigating more current issues about home-school reading and writing practices; (c) implementing practical implications for building networks between homes and schools, by creating supportive learning communities that extend students’ written background knowledge; and (d) conducting naturalistic longitudinal home literacy research in diverse socio-cultural homes and communities. Further research can contribute to the combined endeavors of both scholars and practitioners.

Implications for Practitioners and Families. Language and literacy events have three characteristics: collaborative activities, socio-cultural practices, and complex construction. Literacy events are socio-cultural processes, often in collaboration with other people. Researchers find specific patterns of what the participants do, say, and believe; therefore, they specify beginning and ending turns in literacy events. In socio-cultural contexts, literacy events are always embedded within the involved communities, with people influential to the children, reflecting Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice. The enriched surroundings of young children help them acquire language and
literacy skills, which leads to later academic success. This supports Vygotsky’s (1976, 1981) view on the role of social interaction and scaffolding.

Scaffolding literacy practices at home and at school helps students develop literacy skills in a kind of continuum rather than in contrasts. Therefore, the teacher’s role is to teach students to become aware of the knowledge and skills that they already have (i.e., funds of knowledge, as defined by Moll) and to compare and contrast the different languages and literacy practices. My own experiences and longitudinal exposure to the focal family members influenced me to believe the following: Identity is crucial for young children from diverse linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds to maintain a positive attitude about their heritage language and literacy retention and development. In order to provide appropriate scaffolding in bilingual and biliteracy practices and education, finding each young learner’s favorite pieces of popular culture, guiding and expanding on such opportunities and participation, and maintaining and developing students’ interest in using/practicing heritage language, literacy, and culture is a major key to bilingual/biliteracy and multicultural education.
References


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Appendix A

Sample Interview Questions for Parents in the United States

A. Educational Perception (goals and beliefs)

1. What are your ideas about bilingual education? In your opinion, to what degree are you currently pursuing bilingual education for your child?

2. What educational and career goals do you have for your child? What is your goal of bilingual education?

3. What are you currently doing in order to reach these goals?

4. Why do you think it is worth her/his time to become bilingual/biliterate?

B. Linguistic Practices

5. Which language does your child feel more comfortable with? Why?

6. (Applicable only to Dina) What language do you feel most comfortable using when communicating with her? What language did you speak when you were pregnant? How has your language usage changed since your child was born? What was her first language? What language(s) do you speak at home? If you use a particular language only at a specific time, what time is that?

7. When did your child start preferring to speak English rather than Korean? What do you think are the reasons for this preference?

8. Have you ever noticed if your child has an interest in comparing the two languages?

9. To what degree do you code-mix or switch? When? What about your child?

10. What is your child’s history of linguistic development in the two languages?

11. When did your child recognize that there are two different language systems? Which language developed faster, Korean or English?

C. Socio-Cultural Information

12. Tell me the history of Korean and English education for your child up to now. What are your future plans for your child to improve his/her linguistic proficiency?

13. Tell me the schedule of the typical day. Describe linguistic activities in detail.
14. (Ask if possible) What is your SES? What educational effects/results come from your SES?

15. What percentage of your income do you spend on your child’s bilingual education per month?

16. How pressured do you feel to send your child to an after-school program?

17. Have you traveled or lived abroad in order to encourage your child’s language education? What are your future plans?

18. How often and when do you use computers for language education?

19. How often do you allow your child to play games, use educational programs email, and MSN?

20. How does computer usage affect your child’s Korean and English language development?

21. How often does your child have contact with friends or relatives in Korea? How (phone, MSN, email, Cyworld, and letters)?

22. When teaching Korean and English, what materials do you prefer to use (books, computer programs, and after-school programs)

23. How does schooling affect your child’s bilingual/biliteracy proficiency? Are there any opportunities to use Korean in the classroom? What has the teacher said about your child’s linguistic development?

D. Identity Construction and Transformation

24. To what degree do you feel that your child’s identity is changing? Are they becoming more Korean or American?

25. How does your child perceive him/herself (Korean, American, or mixed)?

26. How does your child talk about his/her ethnicity, national background, and minority status?

27. What are your concerns about his/her identity construction/transformation?
Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions for Children in the United States

1. Are you bilingual and/or biliterate (linguistic perception & identity formation)?

2. Do you feel proud of using two languages?

3. Are you a Korean or American? Why?

4. Do you like to be a Korean or American (depending on the previous answer)?

5. How often do you travel to Korea? How do you feel when you are there? Are you different from other Korean children and/or classmates?

6. How do you contact your friends or relatives in Korea? (e.g., letter in Korean or email in English) How often?

7. What language do you feel most comfortable using? Why? Has your preference changed?

8. Which language do you like the best? English or Korean?

9. Is Korean more difficult than English? Why?

10. When do you speak English, and when do you speak Korean?

11. Do you code-mix or switch between the two languages? When? Why? How often?


13. Are you interested in Korean websites, games, dramas, movies, emails, or MSN?

14. How does computer usage affect your oral and written Korean language development?

15. When learning Korean, do you prefer books or computer programs?

16. How has your knowledge of the two languages developed so far?

17. How does attending a US school affect your bilingual/biliteracy development? Did you have any opportunities to speak, listen, read, write in Korean while in the US classroom? How often did your teacher talk about Korea, Korean culture, and Korean society?
Appendix C

Sample Interview Questions for Korean-Speaking Teachers in the United States

A. General Information

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. How long have you been teaching at this school?

3. How long have you lived in Korea? Which part? How do you self-evaluate your Korean proficiency? How useful is your Korean proficiency when interacting with Korean students?

4. How often do you talk to students about Korean culture or language?

5. Tell me about your experiences with Korean students. To what degree do they like to interact with you in Korean? Are they ever reluctant to speak Korean with you? How about Dina/Huber?

B. Bilingual/Biliteracy Education

6. How many students in your classroom come from a different linguistic background? What languages do these students speak at home?

7. What opportunities do students have to practice Korean in your classroom? Do you encourage students to speak, read, and write in two languages inside or outside of the classroom?

8. How often do students share their writing (possibly including words/phrases written in Korean) with other students?

9. How do you describe Dina/Huber’s bilingual/biliteracy development and practices?

10. Have you seen whether he/she mixes the two languages in artifacts or written pieces? If yes, what are your response to these?

11. Do you have any other comments about his/her bilingual/biliteracy practices and environment?
Appendix D

Sample Interview Questions for Classroom Teachers

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. How long have you been teaching at this school? In Korea?

3. What degree/degrees do you hold?

4. How many courses/seminars related to multi-lingual/cultural education have you taken?

5. Tell me the schedule of the typical class. Describe linguistic activities in detail.

6. Tell me about your language arts curriculum. To what degree do you have to follow your school’s curriculum?

7. What are your goals for bilingual/biliteracy education?

8. How many students in your classroom come from a different linguistic background? What languages do these students speak at home?

9. What opportunities do students have to share their socio-cultural backgrounds?

10. What opportunities do students in your classroom have to speak, read, and write in their native language (Korean)?

11. How will you challenge his/her linguistic development in the two languages?

12. How often does he/she talk in Korean with other peers or volunteers who come from the same ethnic background?

13. To what degree does your students mix the two languages in artifacts and/or written pieces?

14. How often do his/her parents visit the classroom and/or talk to you? Have they expressed any concerns for their child’s bilingual/biliteracy development?

15. How do you use computer for students’ bilingual/biliteracy education? To what degree?

16. When teaching Korean and English, what materials do you prefer to use (books, computer programs, and after-school programs)?

17. How do you mention about Korean culture/society/language in your classroom?
18. How do you describe Dina/Huber’s bilingual/biliteracy development and practices?

19. Do you have any other comments about his/her bilingual/biliteracy practices and environment?
Appendix E

Interview Questions for Parents (Translated from Korean)

1. What are the educational goals or career goals you have for your children?

2. Why do you think it is worth their time to become bilingual/biliterate?

3. Which language do they feel more comfortable with? Why?

4. What language do you feel most comfortable with when communicating with your children? Where were your children born? When? What language did you use to your unborn child? During the first year? or 3 years? 5 years? (What is their first language?). What language(s) do you speak at home? If you use a particular language only at a specific time, what time is that?

5. What is K & D’s history of Korean language development? What was the first word the child spoke? Read? Wrote? How did the child babble? Was it similar to Korean sounds? When did your child begin to put two words together in Korean? What were the first two-words? When did they recognize that there are two different language systems around them?

6. How typical was their language development? Which language developed faster, Korean or English?

7. In terms of literacy, did the child develop literacy in two languages at the same time?

8. Have you ever seen that they have an interest in comparing the two languages?

9. Exactly when did K start to prefer speaking English rather than Korean? Can you speculate on the causes?

10. Do you also code-mix or switch? When?
Appendix F

Interview Questions for Child

1. Are you bilingual and biliterate?
2. Do you feel proud of using two languages?
3. Are you a Korean or American?
4. In what language do you feel more comfortable? Why? From when?
5. Which words do you like the most? English or in Korean?
6. If Korean is more difficult, why?
7. In what kinds of situations do you speak in English or Korean?
8. How do you contact your friends or relatives in Korea? (e.g. letter in Korean or email in English)
10. Do you like to play with language such as rhyming, words puzzle, or phonemes?
Appendix G

Observation Protocol

This study aims to examine how second generation Korean bilingual children and English language learners develop two languages in diverse situated settings. It also investigates the kinds of bilingual/biliteracy events that occur in their daily lives; the environmental, social, and cultural factors on the focal children’s identity formation and language learning. In order to investigate these issues, regular (mostly once a week for an hour) participant observations will be conducted in homes, classrooms, after-school institutions, playgrounds, and community places (e.g., churches and Korean language schools).

Here is a list of target activities and events that I focused on:

- Verbal and written interactions in any language;
- Literacy events and practices (e.g., reading at home, scribbling, writing a note);
- Bilingual instruction/education (English and Korean language/literacy education);
- The focal child’s conversations, interactions, questions, or emotions during bilingual/biliterate activities;
- The participant’s verbal/written products; and
- Experiences related to the decision-making process for the child’s bilingual education (to find out how SES and identity transformation play a role in their Bilingual/biliteracy education which is embedded in each participant’s daily life).
Appendix H

K-2 Reading/Writing Scale: Development of Children’s Strategies for Making Sense of Print

0—N/A

1—Early Emergent
Displays an awareness of some conventions of writing, such as front/back of books, distinctions between print and pictures. See the construction of meaning from text as “magical” or exterior to the print. Though the child may be interested in the contents of books, there is as yet little apparent attention to turning written marks into language. Is beginning to notice environmental print

2—Advanced Emergent
Engages in pretend reading and writing. Uses reading-like ways that clearly approximate book language. Demonstrates a sense of story being “read,” using picture clues and recall of story line. May draw on predictable language patterns in anticipating (and recalling) the story. Attempts to use letters in writing, sometimes in random or scribble fashion.

3—Early Beginning Reader (K’s stage of pre-assessment)
Attempts to “really read.” Indicates beginning sense of one to one correspondence and concept of word. Predicts actively in new material, using syntax and story line. Small, stable sight vocabulary is becoming established. Evidence of initial awareness of beginning and ending sounds especially in invented spelling.
4—Advanced Beginning Reader (K’s stage of post-assessment)

Starts to draw on major cue systems; self-corrects or identifies words through use of letter-sound patterns, sense of story or syntax. Reading may be laborious especially with new materials, requiring considerable effort and support. Writing and spelling reveal awareness of letter patterns and conventions of writing, such as capitalization and full stops.

5—Early Independent Reader

Handles familiar material on own but still needs some support with unfamiliar material. Figures out words and self-corrects by drawing on a combination of letter-sound relationships, word structure, story line, and syntax. Strategies of rereading or of guessing from larger chunks of texts are becoming well established. Has a large, stable sight vocabulary. Conventions of writing are understood.

6—Advanced Independent Reader

Reads independently, using multiple strategies flexibly. Monitors and self-corrects for meaning. Can read and understand most material when the content is appropriate. Conventions of writing and spelling are—for the most part—under control.
### Appendix I

**Table of Development Stage by Age and School Year**

#### Table I

*Developmental Stages by Age and School Year*

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