

# Out-of-School Academic English Practices by Korean Immigrant Students



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# Immigrant students and English language development



- Language skills they need in order to be educated in the language
- **BICS** (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills)- Achievable within about two years
- **CALP** (cognitive academic language proficiency)- Requiring at least **five** years of practice (Collier, 1987; Klesmer, 1994; Cummins, 1981a).
- Failure to take account of the BICS/CALP (conversational/academic) distinction will result in improper ESL placement or intervention.

# What does research say about academic language proficiency in L2?

- Cummins (1981) examined the length of time needed to reach native-speaker norms → It took LEP students 5 to 7 years to reach the norms at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or 50<sup>th</sup> normal curve equivalent.
- Collier (1987) and Collier and Thomas (1988) → With *at least 2 years* of prior schooling in the first language before arriving in the U.S., they reach the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or 50<sup>th</sup> NCE on the reading, language arts, science, and social studies.

# What does research say about academic language proficiency in L2? -cont.

- Hakuta (2001): It takes between 4 to 7 years regardless of relative amount of exposure to English, following natural rate of development.
- Simplistic "time on task" does not accurately predict English language development.
- Would the intensity of English instruction (or suppression of the native language use) cause the rate of L2 acquisition to become much faster? → No.

# Why should we consider out-of-school English language practices?

- A classroom is "only one of several forces affecting individual literacy" (McKay, 1993, p. xiii). Out-of-school literacy practices in English constitutes an important part of ELL's language and literacy development.
- Given the fact the adolescent ELLs have much to catch up in CALP, if academic and out-of-school English (i.e., literacy) practices establish a complementary relationship by bridging the two literacy practices, we may be able to have "a respectful division of labor" (Hull & Schluts, 2002, p. 3)

## Why should we consider out-of-school English language practices?- cont.

- By looking into ELL's out-of-school English practices, we may find the ways in which parents and/or teachers are involved in encouraging English practices.

# Recent immigrant students from Korea: General characteristics

- Immigration is almost always voluntary (for education and better life).
- Strong motivation for academic achievement
- Most of the MS/HS students have prior experience learning English and do possess proficiency (both oral and written) in English even before immigration.

# Demographic information about the informants (Korean immigrant students N=22)

Age of Immigration	Length of U.S. Stay	Current schools	Previous Attendance at English-Speaking School?	Previously possessing English proficiency?
12.3 years (Range: 8– 18 years of age)	2 years (Range: 2 months – 4 years) No one has been living in the U.S. over 4 years	Upper elementary–4 MS/HS – 18	No . 20 Yes– 2 (less than 2 years)	No . 8 Yes – 14

# Demographic information about the informants (Korean immigrant students N=22)

Gender distribution of the informants	Preferred language
12 female students 10 male students	5 – English 17 – Korean

# General background information related to English-language development (N= 22)

How difficult it was to learn English	What aspect of the language was most difficult	What aspect of the language they are most confident in now
A majority of them felt it was <i>quite</i> difficult (17)	grammar, vocabulary and writing (16) – Mostly the language skills related to CALP	listening and speaking (17) – Mostly oral language skills related to BICS

# Home English-language Use (N=22)

Speaking English at Home	Who they speak English with at home	Parents encouraging them to use English at home?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Never or rarely (17)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Siblings (10)</li><li>• Nobody (9)</li><li>• Parents (3)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes (15)</li><li>• No (7)</li></ul>

# Types and amounts of academic English practices outside school

How much English practice per week?	Listening and Speaking practice?	Reading?	Writing?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 0–2 hrs (10)</li><li>• 3–5 hrs (9)</li><li>• 6–8 hrs (3)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes (18)</li><li>• No (4)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes (18)</li><li>• No (4)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes (13)</li><li>• No (9)</li></ul>

# Out-of-School academic English practices:

## Types of practices

### ■ Oral language practice? (18/22):

- >> Talking with friends or siblings (6)
- >> Watching movies or TV (6)
- >> Talking with tutors (5)
- >> Shopping and calling for information (1)

### ■ Reading? (18/22)

- >> Reading without guidance (13)
- >> Guided reading (5)

### ■ Writing? (13/22)

- >> Daily journals/Essays (10)
- >> Spelling or worksheet (3)

# Parental involvement and support for academic English practices (N=22)

- Encourage to read English books – 15
- Tutors/English language center – 10
- Letting them watch TV programs – 10
- Encourage to write in English – 8
- Arrange extra-curricular activities – 6
- Use English and not to use their native language–5
- Checking with the teachers – 4
- Encourage to use on-line materials – 2

# Support from schools and teachers

- Effectiveness of ESL classes viewed from students' perspectives- Generally negative (14 out of 22 students responded that the ESL classes at their schools have not met their needs precisely (either too easy or taught something that they already know))
- Special provisions or extra assignments from the classroom teachers - Almost all of the students (19 out of 22) stated that they are NOT receiving any extra support, assignments or provisions from any of their teachers.

# Discussion on the findings (I): English language practices outside school setting

- Time on the academic language skill practice - less than 1 hour a day and no student claimed that they use any on-line materials beyond traditional books and reading materials.
- Most of these practices is **not guided**. They are mostly on their own.
- Almost over a half of these students rely on tutorial services to improve their language skills.
- Their literacy practices are limited to merely reading books without any further practice on comprehension or extension activities (e.g., book reflection).
- A few students reported that they regularly write daily journals or essays but all of these are done with **tutors**.

## Discussion on the findings (II): The role of parents

- Korean parents are found be rather passive in helping with their children's English language practices.
- Only a few of them regularly check with their children's teachers on their language development (cultural difference; language barriers)

# How can teachers help?: The role of classroom teachers in immigrant students' language development

- At least from the students' and the parents' perspectives, there are not many teachers who provide any extra help or support on these ELL students' language development.
- As a majority of students have difficulty in vocabulary and writing, extra help in this aspect (e.g., vocabulary list containing key content vocabulary, special writing projects modified for ELLs) will be helpful.
- Teachers can reach out to these immigrant parents who are not fluent in English and shy about asking questions to the teachers. Providing a list of recommended books, various ways to check reading comprehension, and how parents can be involved in promoting writing practices at home will be very helpful.