

# Literacy practices in a Korean immigrant family

New Life Style Brings new literacy practices For a Korean immigrant family in Canada

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore changes in a Korean immigrant family's literacy practices due to their life changes after immigration. In particular, languages, media, domains, and purposes of literacy in Canada and in Korea were focused upon and compared. This study was conducted using a case study method. Data were collected by semi-structured interviews, home visit observations, a questionnaire for demographic information and a collection of literacy artifacts. The results showed that Su-Young's literacy practices in Canada are primarily centered around family contexts, and her literacy practices have changed in terms of languages, media, domains, and purposes of literacy after immigration. Even though the number of immigrants is increasing in Canada, these immigrant families' literacy practices have not been studied sufficiently (Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner & Meza, 2003; Wason-Ellam, 2001). Thus, this study will lead to an increased understanding of immigrant families' literacy practices after immigration. These insights will also inform educators about immigrant students' outside-of-school literacy practice so that bridges can be built between home and school literacy for immigrants.

This case study was conducted to examine a recent Korean immigrant family's literacy practices. The family came to Canada so that their children could learn English and have an education within a more student-centered school curriculum. Su-Young, came to Canada with her two young sons but without her husband. Her husband remained in Korea because the source of his income is located there. He visits the family about two to three times a year.

In the last five years, many families in Korea have gone abroad for their children's education, especially to learn English and to be exposed to a student-centered curriculum. Because those families' sources of income often are in Korea, the fathers mostly remain in Korea while the rest of the family members go to English-language-based countries such as the USA, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand and so on. As the number of those families has increased, it is considered a social phenomenon of some importance in Korea. Thus, those families are called, 'Gee-Ru-Gi' (goose) families, because the fathers can visit and meet their wives and children only once or twice a year, which is similar to a goose's annual migration. The mothers of those families often face a new life style due to immigration and the absence of their husbands.

### Theoretical Frame

#### *Literacy as a social practice*

In the past, literacy was considered as a set of skills to learn and a kind of technology that affects people's scientific thoughts (Gee, 1996). In this stance, literacy was viewed as objective, and detached from its context. Thus, literacy was considered as explicit and decontextualized, which related to scientific thought, while oral language

was considered as contextualized and subjective (Street, 1984). Within this dichotomy, literacy was considered more advanced than oral language. This model of literacy has been termed the autonomous model by Street (1984).

However, according to Street's ideological model (1984), literacy is always tied to practice within contexts and is socioculturally embedded. Thus, Street (1999) asserts that "literacy is social practice" (p. 36). For instance, when people who live in western cultures, and are familiar with and use a lot of well known brand names, read *Nike™*, they may consider it as a name of a line of expensive products and as a well known brand and global company name. However, for other people who live in rural areas where they do not have Nike products, and so do not know about the brand name, *Nike™* may not be meaningful and may just seem to be a random and meaningless name. For those familiar with Nike, the brand name is tied to social values and beliefs that see Nike as a famous brand belonging to high quality and expensive products. However, for those unfamiliar with 'Nike', since those people do not have experience or knowledge with the brand name, its values and beliefs differ from those in the former case, and possibly the name has no deep meaning. Thus, the meaning of the brand name, *Nike™* would differ depending on readers' sociocultural backgrounds. According to this frame, literacy, itself, is not autonomous but closely tied to social-cultural practices.

Barton (1994) also considered literacy as social practice. According to Barton (1994), two terms are important in order to explain and analyze literacy as social practice. The first term is *literacy event*" which he defined as "the particular activities where literacy has a role" (p. 37). The other is *literacy practices* (see also Street, 1984) which he understands as referring to "the general cultural ways of utilizing literacy which people

draw upon in literacy events” (p. 37). In daily life, people engage in various literacy events, such as reading newspapers, writing letters and filling out forms. Literacy practices, however, involve those things that cannot be seen such as valued, beliefs, and attitudes that contextualize individual literacy events.

### *Multiple literacies*

According to Street (1999), in each social context there is a unique form of literacy as socioculturally specific. Thus, there are various literacies according to different social contexts. He referred to them as “multiple literacies that vary with time and place and are embedded in specific cultural practices (Street, 1999, p. 37)”. Barton (1994) also argued that different institutions privilege different literacies, and in each institution there is a dominant power that controls the use of literacy. Thus, literacy is closely related to sociocultural contexts in its use, and different literacies exist according to these sociocultural contexts. For instance, Barton & Hamilton’s study (1998) showed that people engage in various types of literacies in their daily lives in different social contexts, such as paying bills at a bank. Moreover, people use various literacy materials in ways suitable to their social contexts.

Heath’s study (1983) showed that young children have different literacy practices at home and at school in working class communities, while children from mainstream cultures have consistent literacy practices at home and at school. Thus, her study showed there are different literacy practices among different sociocultural groups. Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, and Degener’s study (2004) demonstrated how different literacy practices of adult education students varied by the different social activities in their daily lives. In particular, the study documented how people’s life changes, such as employment,

schooling, relationships, geographical changes, and so on, influenced their literacy activities. In this study, when different social activities occur, different literacy materials (different genre of texts) appear and are used. Thus, literacy practices are closely related to people's lives and contexts.

Within this frame, literacy is also thought of as *ideological*. According to Street (2003),

Literacy, in this sense, is always contested, both its meanings and its practices, hence particular versions of it are always *ideological*, they are always rooted in a particular world-view and in a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalize others (p.2).

### *Multiliteracies*

The notion of multiple literacies has been widened in terms describing the diverse modes of literacy practices. The New London Group used the term *multiliteracies* to reflect(a) “the multiplicity of communications channels and media; and (b) the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p.5). According to the New London Group, those two considerations influence the multiplicity of literacy practices.

Even though the New London Group considered multiliteracies in terms of those two arguments, in this study the term *multiliteracies* will be considered in terms of *multiple modes of communication*. Diverse channels and media involve various people's meaning making within them. For instance, multimodal literacy texts, such as those that encompass visual, audio, and spatial elements, are widely used as a part of mass media, multimedia and electronic hypermedia in western-cultured countries. As those

multimodal literacy texts convey the meaning in various modalities, people's meaning making with them becomes more diverse than it was with just monomodal print text.

Lankshear and Knobel (2003) also indicated that there are new types of literacies and literacy practices due to technological development that has led to the creation of multimodal literacy texts. For instance, there are different types of e-literature for children depending on the degree and types of modality which influence children's interpretation of stories (Unsworth, 2006). Thus, there are many different literacies in literacy uses and forms (mutiliteracies) due to a multiplicity of literacy modes.

In sum, this study is framed by the theory that literacy is multiple, situated, and reflects the socio-cultural lives of readers/writers. In particular, in this study, literacy is considered to be multiple in accordance with various social activities and their mediums, generating different kinds of literacy.

### Literature Review

Many studies have examined how children's literacy practices occur outside the school environment (e.g., Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Some previous studies have shown the importance of home and community literacy practices in relation to young children's literacy development and school literacy achievement (e.g., Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995). For instance, Heath's study (1983) showed that ways of literacy practice differ at home and school in white and black working class communities. As an example, children from white working class community focus primarily on the actual content of stories in storybooks, as people in that community value facts and not fictionalized stories. However, in the school, elaborations and inferences from stories are asked for as a part of literacy practice. Because the children are only exposed to factual

aspects while reading books at home with their parents, those children could not answer appropriately as seen by the teachers. Thus, due to a difference in literacy practice at home and school, children from those communities were disadvantaged in literacy learning at school.

Similarly, in the Purcell-Gates' study (1995), Jenny (a mother of a child in her study) could not learn to read and write at school because her language use at home, such as pronunciation and accent, was not consistent with that of the school school. At school, Jenny was marginalized in literacy practices due to her language use that she brought from home. She could not use her own words in school literacy practices. However, when she had literacy lessons that encouraged her to use her own words and for her own purposes, she could learn to read and write. Thus, instruction that connected with learners outside of school experiences provide learners with meaningful literacy learning which encourage their literacy learning at school.

In line with these studies, some studies have examined the literacy practices of minority (e.g., Heath, 1983; Volk & de Acosta, 2001) and low -socioeconomic status (SES) (e.g., Hicks, 2002; Vernon-Feagans, Hammer, Miccio & Manlove, 2001) families outside school. Moreover, many studies (e.g., Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995) consistently argue that school literacy should reflect children's home literacy practices in the literacy curriculum in order to make school literacy practices more meaningful.

However, as Orellana et al. (2003) points out, there have not been many studies about immigrant families' literacy practices. According to Orellana et al. (2003),

The key variable for examination has been either culture or social class- not immigration status or the contexts engendered through immigration. Attention has

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focused on differences between mainstream and non-mainstream community practices or between the cultural practices of particular groups and practices at school (p. 18).

Literacy practices in immigrants' families may differ from literacy practices in native speaker families because parents in immigrants' families often lack proficiency in English and their homes constitute a biliteracy environment. Even though immigrant families' literacy practices may differ from native-speaker families' literacy practices, there have not been many studies focusing on this. Thus, studying immigrant families' literacy practices is necessary, as understanding the family literacy environment is important for providing those children with more meaningful literacy practices at school (Heath, 1983).

Further, as Wason-Ellam (2001) posited, even though there are some studies about immigrant families' literacy practices (e.g., Orellana et al., 2003; Scarsella, & Chin, 1994; Purcell-Gates, 2007), most of them are immigrant families in the US, and few studies have focused on immigrant families in Canada. As Scarsella and Chin's study (1994) showed, immigrant families' language and literacy environments are varied or limited due to their community environments. In Scarsella and Chin's study (1994), American-Korean's language and literacy use differ in two different communities because the requirements of English outside the home environment are different. Scarsella and Chin's study (1994) showed the importance of community environment in immigrants' literacy practices, which is consistent with Street's notion (1984) that literacy practices are closely situated within a sociocultural environment. Therefore it is necessary to study immigrant families' literacy practices in Canada. Moreover, there have

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not been many studies about Korean immigrants, even though the number of Korean immigrants is increasing in Canada. Thus, since there is a lack of understanding about Korean immigrant families' literacy practices, research is needed in order to understand their outside school literacy practice and begin to provide more meaningful literacy practices at school.

Finally, immigrant families often experience a great deal of change in their lives as a result of their immigration. As Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) documented, life changes influence literacy practice. It is assumed that immigrant families have experiences with changes in literacy practices due to their status as newcomers. Barton (1994) also posited that demands of life change influence people's literacy practices. As people's lives and literacy practices are tied closely together, it is believed that examining changes in their literacy practices due to immigration will help to obtain a deeper understanding of a Korean immigrant family's literacy practices. This understanding will contribute to the development of more meaningful school literacy practices for immigrant students (both adults and children).

### Research Questions

1. What are the literacy practices of a Korean immigrant family outside school?

What does their literacy environment look like?

2. What changes in their literacy practices are due to their life changes after immigration? Are there any changes in their literacy practices in terms of mode, domain, language and purpose?

## Method

### *Design*

A case study method was employed in order to examine and explore the family's literacy practices closely. The case study research methodology is defined as "the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p.436). Moreover, according to Yin (2003), case study enables the detailed examination of a phenomenon within its context. Thus, as the purpose of this study is to examine a Korean immigrant family's literacy practices at home and within community, the case study methodology was used.

### *Participants*

*The family.* One Korean immigrant family in Western Canada was involved in this study. The family has a father (Han-Su), a mother (Su-Young), a nine-year-old child (Jung-woo) and a five-year-old child (Sung-Woo) (all names are pseudonyms). The family came to Canada one and half years ago. Before they came, they lived in Seoul, Korea. Both Han-Su and Su-Young have undergraduate degrees. The father majored in electronic engineering, and Su-Young majored in English. Han-Su worked in an electronic company for a year after graduating, and then ran a small restaurant for four years. Now, he works as an insurance agent. Su-Young worked at a small shop for a short time after graduating. However, after she married, she became a stay-at-home mother.

When the first child was 7-years-old and started public school education, the family decided to migrate to Canada so the children could learn English and be exposed to a student-centered curriculum. Since then, the family has lived separately; the father

lives in Korea, earns money and sends it to his wife for the family's living expenses while Su-Young and the children live in Canada.

*The family's home and community.* While in Korea, the family lived in a middle-class community located in an urban area. Their home was in a high-rise condo which is a preferred place to live and is considered expensive in Seoul. It was located in a mixed commercial and residential area, Nearby there was a large department store, hospital and broadcasting company. At the time of this research in Canada, Su-Young and the children lived in a small house in a middle class community in an urban area of Western Canada. They rented this house instead of an apartment because Su-Young wanted to provide the children with more space to play, as they lacked adequate space while they were in Korea. Their home was located in a residential area and next to a school and a park, so they usually needed to use a car to go shopping, to doctors' offices or to other stores.

The family lived in a community where white middle-class people were dominant. However, near their home there was a state university, so recently, the numbers of people from diverse ethnic groups such as Chinese and Koreans were increasing.,

Even though the family's physical environment was located in a white middle-class community, the family's psychological community seemed to be with Korean people who live in the area. Since Su-Young is a Buddhist, she wanted to go to a Buddhist temple located outside of the town limits, but it was too far for her to drive. Thus, she did not attend any religious services in Canada. Su-Young also knew some other mothers whose children attended the same school as her children. According to her, she only socialized with those Korean mothers. Even though Su-Young attended English

as a Second Language (ESL) class, she did not spend time with her ESL classmates. She only socialized with one Korean family, whose child was in the same class at school as one of her children, on the weekend. seemed to be only made up of the Korean people in the area.

*History of Su-Young's literacy practice.* According to Su-Young, she remembered only some of the literacy activities she engaged in when she was young. Her favorite literacy activity had been reading comic books. She borrowed comic books from a store (in Korea, stores lend comics for a fee) and either read it by herself or shared it with her friends. She remembered literacy activities outside her home when she was young as well: (1) people reading price tags at a store or on signs, (2) bus numbers and subway routes on the street, (3) reading the sutras at a Buddhist temple (both monks and lay people read the sutras), (4) reading and searching for books at the library, (5) reading tickets, schedules, captions and information about movies at a theater, (6) having a ticket and reading an electronic scoreboard at a sporting event, and (7) writing application forms and reading prescriptions at a hospital. In terms of literacy activities at school, she reported doing dictation and reading textbooks to learn the Korean alphabet and how to read when she was in grades 1 to 3. After that, she mostly read textbooks, reference books and workbooks, and copied the text from those books so as to memorize their contents. Her favorite literacy activity at school was reading storybooks, as they provided enjoyable stories. However, she hated writing in a diary as homework. She said "It had to be done on a daily basis, but I hated to do it everyday. And when I skipped it for several days, it became a lot of work." Moreover, she felt it was difficult to study history because for her the content was hard to understand.

After graduating from university, she did not continue her studies, and worked as a clerk at a store for a short time. Then she got married and became a stay-at-home mother. After coming to Canada, Su-Young found that she had difficulties with her English, so she hired a tutor to help her with English conversation for over half a year. However, she found tutoring not very helpful. At the time of the study, she was attending an ESL class for improving listening skills.

In her daily life, she had to deal with many things, such as going shopping, paying bills, reading maps, filling out forms and so on, by herself and in English. Thus, her literacy practices involved a lot of English-based literacy materials, which she was not exposed to when she lived in Korea. Young children's literacy materials also included various kinds of English-based literacy materials, such as homework, and worksheets. However, both Su-Young and the children still had a lot of psychological connection with people and things in Korea. Thus, Su-Young regularly read Korean news and the children learned and practiced Korean literacy. Consequently, in this family, English and Korean are both involved in their daily life and literacy practices.

### *Procedures*

*Access.* The family in this study lives in the same community as I since this was expected to help me to understand the participant's community life and sociocultural environment. A friend of mine contacted the family to request Su-Young's participation. I had met with the family several times before conducting this study, and had developed a casual relationship with them.

### *Researcher Location:*

As a doctoral student in literacy education and an immigrant (international student), I am living in a middle-class residential area in Canada. I am originally from Korea. I was an ESL student when I first came to Canada. Thus, I experienced what it is like learning and living as an immigrant in Canada with a Korean cultural background. With this cultural and academic background, I have been conducting research about young Korean immigrant children's literacy practices in community and home environments, as such literacy practices are important for literacy learning at school. Thus, I think I possess a more emic perspective in this study, as I am a part of the Korean-Canadian cultural group and live in the same area as the participants.

*Data Collection.* This study was a part of the Cultural Practices of Literacy Study (CPLS) ([www.educ.ubc.ca/research/cpls](http://www.educ.ubc.ca/research/cpls)), and the instruments used in this study were CPLS instruments. Data collection was conducted by using a questionnaire for demographic information, semi-structured interviews, home visit observations and collection of literacy artifacts. The interview with Su-Young was conducted at the participant's home, according to her preference, and at a time of the participant's convenience. In total, two interviews were conducted in order to obtain more details about literacy practices. In the first interview, the participant's current and historical literacy practices were discussed in general. In the second interview, the participant's literacy practices in Korea and Canada were particularly focused on. The first interview took around 30 minutes, and the second interview took around 20 minutes. Both interviews were audio recorded. Moreover, two home visit observations were done to obtain information about what literacy materials were used at home and how and to what

purpose those were used. In addition, records on literacy material artifacts were collected by taking pictures of them during the home visit observations.

*Data management.* The data from interviews were transcribed so as to be analyzed. Literacy related activities and literacy materials appearing in the transcription as well as pictures of artifacts were given a number for coding and further reference.

*Data analysis.* Literacy practice data from the interviews and artifacts were coded according to the categories of social activity domains, text genres, and purposes. The categories for the coding are based on those that are established by the Cultural Practice of Literacy Study (CPLS) (Purcell-Gates, 2007). The coding for this study varied somewhat from the coding for other CPLS projects. After the coding, Su-Young's usual literacy activities were examined, and changes that took places between her literacy activities in Korea and in Canada were investigated.

## Results

### *Literacy outside school*

The data derived from the interviews with Su-Young and the artifacts revealed that her current literacy practices were situated within several social activity domains (Table 1).

Table 1.

### *Domains and examples of Su-Young's literacy practices outside school*

Domain	Examples	The number of reported literacy practices
Responding to civic rules and regulations	Writing visa application form in order to renew visa document	3
Cooking/eating	Reading a recipe in order to prepare	4

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	ingredients and cook dishes	
Entertaining oneself, having fun	Reading local news in order to spend time while waiting	15
Participating in family life	Reading children's worksheet in order to guide children's homework Reading report cards in order to know the children's achievement and improvement at school	<b>25</b>
Maintaining finances	Reading bills in order to pay the amount of money owed	8
Acquiring or disseminating information/news	Reading real estate newspapers in order to learn about the current real estate market Reading advertisement flyers in order to know about sale information	21
Relating interpersonally	Writing e-mail in order to stay in touch with friends in Korea	8
Maintenance of tools and home environment	Reading how-to-books in order to assemble and fix furniture	1
Participating in formal schooling	Reading English newspapers in order to learn English	3
Engaging in self-motivated education/personal improvement	Reading English workbook in order to learn conversation skills in English	1

Even though Su-Young used literacy within different social domains, her interviews and artifacts showed that her literacy use took place primarily in her home life, where she spent the majority of her time.

Home observations also showed Su-Young's literacy practices were centered around family, particularly, parenting. In the home, there were many children's books such as storybooks, informational books, novels and comic books (Figure 1). In the living room, there were two small three-story bookcases filled with children's book in English. In the children's room, there were four small four-story bookcases and two big five-story bookcases filled with children's book, mostly in Korean. Su-Young said that she brought those Korean books from Korea for her children's Korean learning. In the dining area,

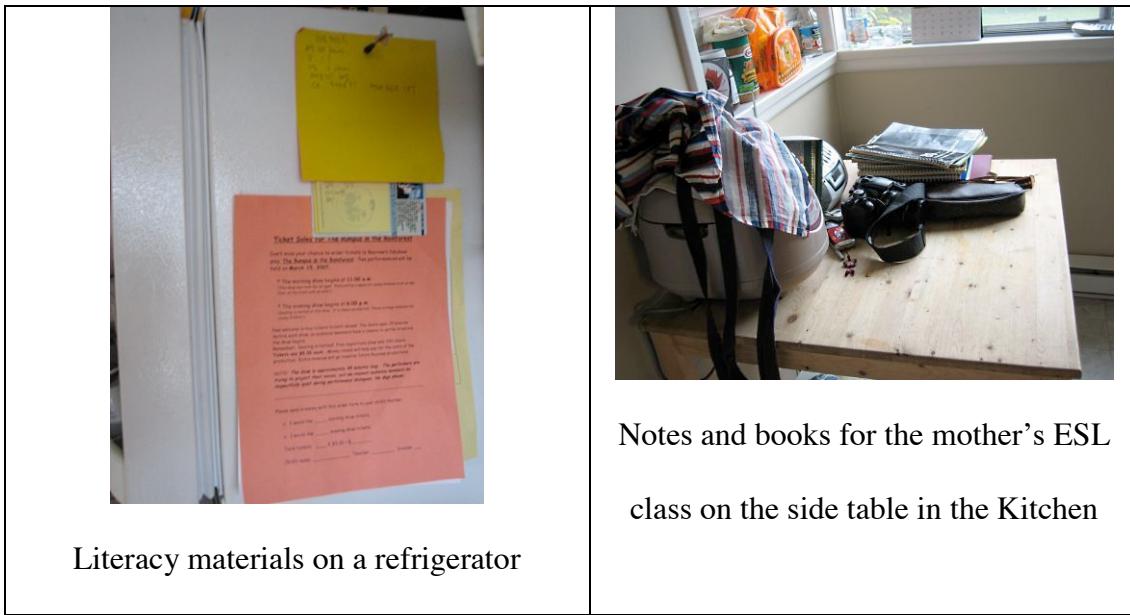
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there was a small bookcase containing various literacy materials, such as bills, letters, receipts, children's books, children's worksheets and homework. On the dining table, I saw a lot of worksheets in English from the children's school and Korean workbooks for children. On the wall were posted several phonic charts in English and in Korean. According to Su-Young, she put them there for her children's literacy learning. In the kitchen, on the refrigerator, there was a calendar to keep her children's school events, and on the side table, there was some workbooks for her ESL (English as a Second Language) studies. As these descriptions around the her home show, Su-Young's literacy events and practices heavily relied on her children's literacy education and family related activities.

*Figure 1. Literacy texts in the participant's home*



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In terms of language in literacy uses, Su-Young's choice of either Korean or English appeared to be related to the language required by the context. For instance, Su-Young reported using English only for literacy uses while engaging in activity within the following social activity domains: (a) responding to civic rules and regulations; (b) maintaining finances; (c) and participating in formal schooling. For instance, when filling out a visa application form, she does not have a choice in what language she uses, but has to use English. Paying bills and learning English at ESL class are similar in only allowing one language, English.. Thus, Su-Young used only English in literacy practices within those activity domains.

In other domains of social activities, Su-Young used only Korean, such as relating interpersonally. For instance, she used Korean to write letters or e-mails to family and friends in Korea. In these cases, Su-Young had only one language choice, Korean, since her family and friends could sufficiently read and write only in Korean.

However, where she had choices in language for her literacy uses, she used either English or Korean. For instance, she used both English and Korean literacy in activities centered around cooking. Thus, Su-Young's language use for literacy purposes appeared to be closely related to the availability of language options, or their lack, within specific social activities.

*Changes in Literacy practices due to immigration*

The interview with Su-Young revealed that her literacy practices had changed after her immigration. This change was due to various transformations in her life, such as those related to geography, relationships and leisure activities.

*Geography Changes.* Geography changes in her life after immigration changed Su-Young's sociocultural environment which influenced her literacy practices. First of all, she started several literacy practices after immigration. For instance, as a newcomer, she did not know directions when she had the address to go someplace new. Each time, she needed to read a map to find her way. According to Su-Young, she did not read a map at all in Korea because she knew many places, so she could go to new places with others' verbal explanations. Moreover, because the road system in Korea is more complicated than that in Canada, a map is not really useful for finding places in Korea.

Another area impacted by geographical changes brought about by immigration was the use of cheques. Since only banks issue cheques in Korea, she had never had to write a cheque. However, after living in Canada, she started to write cheques, as it was necessary for paying rent and buying goods.

In addition, after coming to Canada, Su-Young started to attend ESL class to learn English. In Korea, she did not attend any school or learn English after college. However,

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Su-Young started to learn English because she felt that a lack of language ability in English made her life difficult in Canada. As a result, she had to do homework for her ESL class and to take notes about the class contents.

On the other hand, geographic change brought with it the cessation of certain literacy practices. Because there is no Buddhist temple near her home, Su-Young had to stop her practice of reading the sutras at the temple, and could not even attend religious events because of distance. Thus, even though Su-Young read the sutras at a Buddhist temple in Korea, she stopped doing so in Canada. As these examples show, some of Su-Young's literacy practices either started or stopped after immigration.

The modes of literacy practice also changed after immigration. Su-Young started to read Internet news in Korean, after coming to Canada. According to her, in Korea she watched TV news or read a Korean newspaper. However, since those are not available in Canada, she read Internet Korean news to know what was happening in Korea.

Finally, in some cases, the purposes for literacy practices changed. Reading a newspaper was only for learning information when Su-Young was in Korea. However, she reported now reading English newspapers in order to learn English in addition to finding out about recent events.

*Relationships.* After coming to Canada, Su-Young lived with her children and without her husband because he needed to work in Korea. Thus, there was a change in the relationship between Su-Young and her husband. Due to this change, she needed to do several things that were not necessary before or that were done by her husband. These new responsibilities included sending letters to families and friends in Korea, fixing and assembling furniture, and preparing visa applications. Since Su-Young was apart from

her husband, family and friends in Korea, she needed to write e-mail to stay in contact with them. According to her, now her children also write an e-mail to their father to maintain their relationship with him. In Korea, Su-Young's husband maintained tools and the home environment. However, due to his absence in Canada, Su-Young needed to fix and assemble furniture by herself which caused her to read how-to-books. In Korea, her husband wrote application forms for official business. However, in Canada Su-Young now wrote visa application forms by herself. Due to relationship changes with her husband, Su-Young's literacy practices had changed.

*Leisure activities.* Su-Young's leisure activities in Korea were mainly related to gatherings with friends or family. However, she did not have family or many friends in Canada, so she started going to movies for her and her children's leisure time. According to her, she obtained information about movies from schedules or advertisements on TV. Moreover, at the theater, she reported reading movie schedule charts and tickets. As Su-Young's leisure activity changed, those literacy events were newly encompassed into her literacy practices.

### Discussion

In this case study, Su-Young's literacy practices were involved in several activity domains: responding to civic rules and regulations, cooking/eating, entertaining oneself, participating in family life, maintaining finances, acquiring or disseminating information/news, relating interpersonally, maintaining tools and home environment and participating in formal schooling. However, Su-Young was not involved in many different types of social activities, which caused the absence of her literacy practices in those social activities, in the following social domains, namely community life, social

organizations, politics, spiritual life and working. The limits in her social activities appeared to constrain literacy practices, so her literacy practices centered around family and maintaining the home environment. As young children often obtain literacy knowledge from their home (e.g. Purcell-Gates, 1995), those constraints in Su-Young's literacy practices may disadvantage her children's literacy experience outside school. Children who are from non-immigrant middle class families may have more opportunities for experience with literacy in the social activity domains of community life (e.g., minutes), social organizations (e.g., letter about membership meetings), politics (e.g., reading political speeches), spiritual life (e.g., reading the Bible) and working (e.g., writing business letters), as many middle-class parents are actively involved in these social activities.

Experience with literacy in those social domains may not only provide children from non-immigrant middle class families the opportunity to know about various text genres but also their purposes and the appropriate ways of using literacy texts within those social domains, since literacy practices are socioculturally specific (Street, 1984, Barton, 1994), and children's literacy socialization is provided, for the most part, by parents for their children (Schiefflin & Ochs, 1986).

However, the children in this particular immigrant family were not experiencing literacy as it appears with certain social domains. Moreover, this lack of experience, relative to their non-immigrant peers, may disadvantage them in school where background knowledge in literacy is often assumed of middle-class children.

The results in this study are consistent with the theoretical frame of multiple literacies (Street, 1984). First, in terms of language choices in the participant immigrant

family, Su-Young appeared to use language according to the requirements of a specific context. This finding is consistent with Scarella and Chin's study (1994). In Scarella and Chin's study (1994), language demands within community environment appeared to influence Korean immigrants' language uses. Furthermore, in this study, Su-Young's literacy practices changed due to changes in her life after immigration. According to her, changes in geography, relationship, and leisure activities led her either to start new literacy practices or to cease old ones. This is consistent with the participants' literacy experiences shown in Purcell-Gates et al.'s study (2004) in the United States. In that study, people's changes in employment, schooling, relationships, geography, and so on influenced their literacy activities. In both current studies and the Purcell-Gates et al.'s study (2004), different social activities provided people with different literacy texts and ways to use literacy within a certain context. Thus, the result in this study evidenced a close relationship between social contexts and literacy practices.

Finally, having an understanding of immigrants' literacy changes may be necessary for their ESL learning. ESL classes for adults often focus on skill-based learning (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). However, according to Purcell-Gates et al. (2004), just teaching literacy skills may not be meaningful for them, as they are not related to their outside school life. Su-Young in this study also pointed out that the ESL school where she studies English in Canada is only focused on learning listening skills, and that learning English at ESL school does not help her literacy or language use outside school. According to her, English at school tends to focus on more difficult vocabulary which is not usually used in daily life. Thus, as Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) concluded, providing literacy lessons in authentic ways (for real life purposes) may be helpful for adult ESL

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students' to achieve meaningful literacy learning at school. In order to provide students with more meaningful literacy lessons at ESL school, it may be necessary to increase ESL teachers' awareness of recent immigrants' current and past literacy practices, and the transformations they have gone through as they experience changes in their life due to different sociocultural environments that require different literacy practices.

### Conclusions & Comments

This study showed some characteristics of a Korean immigrant family's literacy practices in Canada. Most specifically, the mother's literacy practices were centered around family contexts, and not broader social contexts. In addition, her literacy practices changed due to immigration. It is assumed that those aspects may influence Su-Young's literacy learning in her ESL class, as well as her children's literacy experience outside school. Even though many immigrant families may have some distinctive characteristics in their literacy practices in their daily life, the subject has not been studied in depth. Most studies about family literacy practices focused on families in minority or different SES groups, as (Orellana et al., 2003) pointed out. Thus, as immigrants in Canadian society are continuously increasing, for improvement in literacy education for both immigrant adults and children, further studies about their literacy practices outside school are called for.

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