

Helping our Children with Homework: Homework as an Activity of Anxiety for First Generation Bilingual Korean American Mothers

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This study aimed to understand communicative and socialization practices of immigrant bilingual families in everyday learning situations by examining interactions between parents and children in the United States. Drawn on language socialization theory and socio-cultural factors influencing immigrants, this study explored how three Korean American mothers struggled as they helped their children with homework by interviewing the mothers and observing mother-child interaction during homework time. The study paid attention to the emotional values of immigrant parents that they tried to teach their children who are members in two distinctive communities, such as Korean American and mainstream American. The findings showed that parental socialization practices had effects on children's emotional and social competence and at the same time the socialization process was bidirectional. Mothers started with Korean values, but they faced challenges with the English language, different demands for American homework, and children's rejection of their attempts. Mothers needed to change their strategy and borrow American ways of keeping emotional distance from their children by acknowledging their independence. Their struggles are discussed with attention to their language choice and culture.

Keywords: activity, bilingualism, homework, immigrant family, parenting, qualitative research, sociocultural learning

Korean American immigrant families face a complex challenge in socializing their children in two cultures using two languages. Drawing on language socialization and socio-cultural theories, this study examined how Korean American mothers struggled in helping their children with homework. In-depth interviews were conducted with three mothers and mother-child communicative interactions were observed during homework activities. Their language choice and culture were given particular consideration.

In every culture, parenting practices reflect

specific cultural values and belief systems. As a result, the experiences and development of children vary from culture to culture (Harkness & Super, 1995). Such integrative conceptualizations (Mistry, Chaudhury, & Diez, 2005) drawn from a socio-cultural perspective provide us with an opportunity to observe culture specific parenting goals and practices. It also provides us with an understanding of coherent patterns of parenting in a particular community.

Numerous ethnographic studies have documented culture specific parenting styles and children's development in different cultures. Fung (1999) explored how young children were socialized into knowing shame as a cultural norm through interactions with parents. In

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Fung's study, Taiwanese parents in Taipei situated the lesson in the child's experience, which was called "opportunity education." It was also implemented through the child's active participation during play. This study was based on a critical premise that "shame is a meaning system that cannot be understood apart from its social and cultural contexts" (p.246). The anthropological study by Lutz (1983) showed how children in Micronesia acquired a culturally constituted emotional meaning system. The author found out that in order to keep the least violent society in the world, children were raised to follow emotionally peaceful values. The emphasis on a peaceful mind was demonstrated and practiced through language use around the cultural concept known as 'metagu.' These studies have shown that linguistic and cultural settings play an important role in socializing children into specific cultural values that are tied to parenting goals.

Cultural settings and activities need special attention to understand culture specific parenting practice. According to Leontiev (1981), "activity is not a reaction or aggregate of reactions, but a system with its own structure, its own internal transformations, and its own development" (p.396). Goals of the activity, the actors, accessible artifacts and the context of the practice should be counted in analyzing the activity as a guided practice. The activity of parents and children such as doing homework reveals how parental socialization 'goals' for their children are unfolded through language as the 'artifacts'. The theory of language socialization by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) is an excellent framework for explaining how children are socialized into a specific cultural system in an activity. Numerous studies have shown that children are socialized in an activity such as home storytelling at dinnertime (Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph, & Smith, 1992), rule making at school (Howard, 2004), and teasing as a survival means (Miller, 1986).

Studies have shown that immigrant parents' attitudes toward educational goals, proper native language use and practices influence children's educational outcome. Scholars (Dopke, 1992;

Garcia, 2005; Portes & Hao, 1998) have shown the strong relation between parents' attitudes and language practices. Across different societies, children learn the language that immigrant parents emphasize, such as Spanish in the U.S. (Portes & Hao, 1998), Guarani language in Paraguay (Garcia, 2005), or German in Australia (Dopke, 1992). They found that families' use of native language results in its' maintenance in children. Parents' attitude was found to be directly related with the use of language at home.

Although research supporting native language maintenance for strong intelligence development and quicker English acquisition is prevalent (Gibson, 1988; Fishman, 1991; Portes & Hao, 1998; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008), there are findings that indicate the influence of complex factors. Individual choices, such as parenting strategies, cannot be explained without considering the complex influences of society and culture. Language choice influences emotional and familial relationships. For example, an important socio-cultural factor of the inferior status of native language and its culture leads language minority students to stop seeking help from their parents (Cummins, 1981). Language development is more than a linguistic or cognitive process in an individual. It is important to understand language not only as a subject matter to master, but also as a factor which affects a student's social situation.

In the same line of discussion, it is important to examine the rationale behind parents' choice of a particular educational path for their children. The studies of Krashen and Cho (1998) and Wong Fillmore (1991) report that due to a disconnection in communication between parents and children, parents become frustrated at not being able to teach their children responsibility, the meaning of life, and moral and cultural values, beliefs and practices. Wong Fillmore states that a breakdown in communication leads to a loss of cultural ties and relationships with family members. The author found that patterns of language use among immigrant children changed significantly at home as they learned English: With an increase in English language use children used less of

native language. This pattern emerged faster with young children (Guiberson et al., 2006).

According to a cross-cultural study on differences of homework practices and attitudes in China, America, and Japan (Chen & Stevenson, 1989) and a study on Korean American mothers' involvement in their children's homework (Cho, 2007), homework activities have been locations for socialization and the transmission of cultural belief and attitudes. Different styles of homework activity in Korea and America have been studied and compared reflecting cultural values in each culture (Hong, 1995; Hong & Milgram, 1999). These studies show that cultural differences are prevalent in homework activity style and that matching homework environment with homework style is important in students' achievement.

Bilingual immigrant families in the U.S. go through a more complex socialization process at home. In these families, two languages are used and hence there are more than two kinds of values that children are socialized into. The use of different native languages used for specific cultural and familial purposes and for imparting specific values has been documented among multilingual South Asian Muslim families who have children with autism (Jegatheesan, 2011; Jegatheesan, Miller & Fowler, 2010) and in other studies of Latino families in the U.S (Baquedano-Lopez, 1998; Bhimji, 2002). Immigrant parents in Jegatheesan (2011) held specific rationales for each language used with their children.

Studies of immigrant children's socialization using English and L1, especially in the early stage of immigration of multilingual families have shed light on their language adjustment. The socialization goals and values of the U.S. society and their first language cultural community are not always congruent. When language learners are situated in between Korean and American culture, they are socialized into another culture. Lo (2009) pointed out that respect was the most distinctive cultural value in Korean American heritage language school in California. Byon (2006) studied that Korean

language learners were socialized into hierarchism, which is one of the major values of Korean culture. However, we do not know much about how this social factor and Korean culture influences an immigrant family's strategy for socialization and language choices in the home context. In this study, the authors explored how Korean American parents in the U. S. socialize their children using two languages surrounded by two distinctive sets of cultural values during homework time.

The following research questions guided this study; 1) How do Korean immigrant mothers socialize their children into their cultural ways of life during mother-child joint homework activities, 2) How do two language (Korean and English) practices influence mother-child communication, and 3) How does the process of the first language loss or maintenance in children affect maternal anxiety during homework activity.

Method

The study used a qualitative research design because of its ability to give mothers a forum for their perspectives to be heard. Data collection was done through the completion of a family information survey, in-depth interviews with mothers and observations of mother-child communicative interactions during homework.

Participants

Three first generation bilingual Korean American mothers and their young sons from a large city in the Pacific Northwest of the United States participated in this study (see Table 1 for a summary of the families' background and Table 2, for a summary of the children's background).

Maternal profiles. Mrs. Park is a first generation Korean American. While she emphasized adherence to the Korean culture for her children, she was nonetheless critical of her culture because of its emphasis on "cramming" education in children which denied children the

opportunity to be creative and experiencing different ways of understanding the world around them. Mrs. Park compared the Korean

and American culture in terms of preparing their children for their education and their future life in America. Placed in-between two cultures

Table 1
Family Information

Family Name	Cho	Park	Kim
Ethnicity	Korean American	Korean American	Korean American
Place of birth	F: Korea M: Korea	F: Korea M: Korea	F: Korea M: Korea
Length of stay in the U.S.	F: 13 years M: 22 years	F: 22 years M: 15 years	F: 4 years M: 4 years
Generation status	1.5 st	1 st	1 st
Native language	Korean	Korean	Korean
Religion	Protestant	Protestant	Protestant
Education	F: BA M: BA	F: MA M: MA	F: BA M: Community college (both from Korea)
Occupation	F: Pastor M: Homemaker	F: Small business owner M: Librarian	F: Insurance broker M: Homemaker
Age	F: 35 M: 35	F: 40 M: 39	F: 40 M: 38
Primary caregiver	M	M	M
No. of children	2	2	3
Language spoken at home	English	Parents: Korean Children: English	Korean
SES	Middle	Middle	Lower middle

Note. F = Father, M = Mother

Table 2
Child Information

Family Name	Cho	Park	Kim
Target child & age	Daniel (7)	Mark (8)	Joseph (6)
Place of birth	The U. S.	The U. S.	Korea
Siblings & age	John (8)	Trevor (8)	Tom (8), Liam (13)
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Language spoken to child	English	English	Korean
Public/private school	Public	Public	Public
Heritage school	No	No	Once a week

(Korean and American), Mrs. Park was confused about her role as a parent in educating her sons.

Mrs. Kim, who is also a first generation Korean American mother, had tensions with her mother-in-law about raising her son. In the traditional extended Korean family culture, the opinion of the in-laws is placed above that of the daughter-in-law. From her experience with her mother-in-law, Mrs. Kim perceives Korean parenting style as strict and parents' role as being disciplinarians:

We lived with my mother-in-law. She is very strict. She would judge right and wrong all the time. Joseph freezes up and gets anxious when scolded. He got really stressed out. So we moved out. He got eased up now. I tried to be generous and warm. At some point, I realized it's time to discipline. But I don't know when and how.

Mrs. Kim reported that she currently "speaks up against" her mother-in-law. She stated that she has the courage to do so since she lives in America. She added that she also does not teach her child using harsh disciplinary ways and does not emphasize academic excellence for her son. However, recently, she found out that he son was having difficulties keeping up with his school work, and she felt that he needed some level of discipline. She believed that it was now time to incorporate some aspects of Korean traditional parenting in her children's lives.

The third mother, Mrs. Cho, is a 1.5 generation Korean American mother. Mrs. Cho came to the U.S as a junior high school student and struggled with her mother's traditional Korean parenting styles. She recognized the differences in her mother's parenting style to her American peers' upbringing. Mrs. Cho now raises her children in the traditional Korean cultural way even though she disliked it as an adolescent and preferred the American parenting style. She now believes that the Korean parenting style has its unique positive elements. She explained how it all came together for her when she became a parent:

I understand where she came from. I think respecting older people. That's one thing that I reinforce to my children. That is something that one in American culture needs to learn! There are more than skills and abilities in each person. Because American culture is more individualized and focused on the development, Americans tend to focus on a person's ability. If you are smart, well-off, better than someone, that's all. I think that needs some kind of balance. Even though you don't agree with the person above you, you respect that person. You must put yourself in that person's position.

Procedure

Mothers completed a family demographic survey that included information such as length of stay in the United States, occupation, and level of English language proficiency. In-depth interviews and observations of the dyads were conducted in a sequential manner so that observations and interviews continually informed one another.

Interviews with mothers. Two audio-recorded in-depth interviews totaling approximately four hours per mother were conducted in their homes. Interviews were conducted in Korean by the first author who is a native Korean speaker. The interview protocol consisted of questions on the following domains: Language use during homework time, the relationship between language use and emotional expression, and mothers' attitude toward two languages.

Observations. Three audio-recorded observations of mother-child communicative interactions during homework time (approximately three hours) were conducted. Mothers, during the preliminary meetings, reported that homework was a regular activity that they did with their children and one which required the use of Korean and English. Homework was reported as the activity that dictated choice of language because the contents

and material are in English, which is hard to translate in Korean. Mothers selected the observation sites. Two families were observed at home and the third family was observed in a quiet room at a local library. The third mother stated that library or home setting had no influence on language choice. The purpose of the observations was to examine the contexts in which mothers and children chose to use specific language (s). For example, was Korean or English used by the mother when she explained the objective of the homework and content, or when she disciplined her child? In addition, emotional expression and related communication were also a focus of observation (e.g., unfolding of emotion by mother and child in the process of communication).

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed on a continual and ongoing manner. The two authors reviewed the data independently several times to get a broad understanding of the issues that emerged and then conducted a line by line coding. They met frequently to discuss their interpretations. If new perspectives emerged during discussions, then original themes were modified, removed or combined accordingly. In this manner, any discrepancies in their discussions were addressed. The strength in this joint analysis process was that both authors are Asians. While the first author is an 'insider' to the Korean community, the second author is an 'outsider' to the community. Thus the two authors brought unique lenses to the process of analysis. As observations and interviews were conducted, changes in coding categories occurred and the reasons for these changes were recorded accordingly. After the data was reviewed and coded, the two authors engaged in discussions of their interpretations to attain a final interpretation.

Credibility was addressed through triangulation (use of different kinds of data as checks against one another - such as interview data against observation data, with a backdrop of researchers' reflexive field notes). The authors collaborated with the three mothers in the study

and one external Korean American mother who was a member of the Korean American community by providing copies of the transcripts to get their interpretations and perspectives.

Findings

At first the three Korean American mothers began parenting their children in the traditional Korean manner. In time they faced challenges in dealing with their children's school work and the less familiar mainstream social and cultural pressures. Mothers soon began to adapt and modify their parenting to one that reflected a more bicultural parenting style.

Maternal Childhood Experiences of Being Raised by Traditional Parents

Each of the three mothers had distinctive personal experiences that influenced their perspectives on parenting their children in the U.S. Their individual experiences influenced their expectations for their children's schooling and related socialization. In order to understand maternal socialization practices, the authors provide a short description of the three mothers' background in the following section.

The three mothers in this study believed in upholding traditional Korean communicative practices in their children. Mothers expected their children to speak to their teachers and other professionals in school in accordance with their cultural ways. Since all three mothers were raised traditionally by their parents, their upbringing played an important role in their expectations for their children's communicative style at school. Maternal parenting strategies were informed and guided by their own childhood experiences.

Dyadic Struggles

Parenting for traditional communicative practices. Mothers were especially concerned about their children's communicative style, particularly in conversation with school

professionals and elders. They strongly believed that it was their responsibility to inculcate proper mannerisms. Mother-child interactions frequently consisted of maternal instructions for developing proper conversational skills and repeated attempts from mothers to modify their children's speech patterns. Their children were unhappy with these corrections and often resented their mother's request to modify their speech. Mother-child interactions ended with mothers feeling frustrated and helpless at their inability to achieve her parenting goal. For example, Mrs. Park believed that her son should learn how to talk properly with his teachers. She paid particular attention to greetings and introductions by her child to his teacher, and by addressing the teacher by his family name (e.g., Mr. Wickham). She also believed that it was important for her son to greet his teachers formally whenever he met them or passed them in the school premises. Her son, Mark, however, failed to adhere to his mothers' instructions and often conversed informally in English. Often this resulted in mother-child collisions. Example 1 illustrates such a problem.

Example 1

Mrs. Park and her son Mark could not agree on the instructions for his reading homework. Mrs. Park suggested that Mark call his teacher and clarify the assignment. Prior to talking to his teacher (Mr. Wickham) Mrs. Park repeatedly instructed Mark to greet his teacher properly first and then introduce himself. She emphasized that Mark should not call his teacher by his first name. Despite repeated reminders, Mark failed to comply with his mother's instructions

Mrs. Park: You wanna talk? You wanna talk to John?

Mark: Umm, umm, umm (ignoring the mother and running over piano notes)

Mrs. Park: Ok. Why don't you talk to him? I don't think he meant to just get a book. That's very, uh (contemplating a proper word), not right. Why don't you call? Introduce yourself. Say, 'Hello,' and tell why you are calling him.

Mark: (Mark ignored his mom and played with his mom's cell phone.) I love it. (getting interested with the cell phone, still ignoring the mom.)

Mrs. Park: What? Ok. Here. (She handed over the cell phone.) You have to press that one. The number. Say "hello" and tell who you are.

Mark: "John, hi..."

Mrs. Park: Tell who you are.

According to Mrs. Park, "Children have more opportunity to practice being polite to older people when speaking in Korean because they have to use a special form of the Korean language (e.g., formal particles and vocabulary) during communication with an older person. However, in America, children address their teachers by their name. It is also not required to formally greet teachers all the time."

In the Korean language, the grammar and vocabulary for elders are significantly different from that found in casual conversation. Mrs. Park explained that she would not have to teach her son lessons on the importance of respecting elders if he spoke in Korean. This is because, her son would have learned this "important cultural value" while using the respectful form of the Korean language when speaking to elders. In using the Korean language, children naturally learn that they should respect age differences by using the appropriate respectful form of the language. In example 1, Mark began his conversation with his teacher the way he was accustomed to when using English to converse, which is not different when conversing with friends.

Children are passive actors in doing homework. In all three families, emotional tension was high during homework time. Children's silence throughout the dyad's interaction was interpreted by mothers as being passively resistant to their involvement. Mothers took charge of the entire homework process including checking on what homework was to be completed, ensuring that children followed a timeline for completing their homework,

expecting 100% concentration and so forth. Emotional tension was the highest when mothers attempted to get their children to begin their homework because their children disliked doing homework. When mothers eventually got them started on their homework, the children barely engaged with their mother to complete it. Mothers would call out their names repeatedly to draw their attention to their homework, make repeated requests and eventually shift to using threats, bargaining, pleading or making deals. Despite their myriad efforts, their children would remain unresponsive or respond minimally. When homework problems were solved orally (e.g., math problems), tensions reduced momentarily. However, tensions would escalate within minutes because mothers expected perfection in their children's written answers.

The following example of Mrs. Park and her son doing homework was common in the remaining two families.

Example 2

Mrs. Park: Mark, can you do homework now? Huh?

Mark: (No response, looking down at some books.)

Mrs. Park: Huh?

Mark: (No response)

Mrs. Park: Five minutes before dinner. I don't think you're hungry yet, are you?

Mark: (No response)

Mrs. Park: You are not hungry, are you? No?

Mark: (No response)

Mrs. Park: (After some pause) Mark, can we do homework now?

Mark: Ok (with a big sigh. Whines deeply)

Mark was frequently found to be an emotionally distant and angry child during homework time. He expressed his annoyance by refusing to pay attention to his mother's explanations on math problems. When Mrs. Park would explain math concepts that Mark had difficulty in understanding, Mark doodled continuously and refused to make eye contact

with his mother. Mrs. Park's explanations were accurate but Mark would repeatedly point out that she was wrong. He also mocked his mother because of her difficulties in using English to explaining math terminologies. For example, when his mother asked him numerous times, "what is 'squared?'" Mark refused to respond and after repeatedly being asked, he mumbled and corrected her without looking at her.

Despite Mark's attitude, Mrs. Park remained patient. Mrs. Park knew that her explanations of the math concepts were accurate. However, she kept telling him, "I don't know. This is too hard." "How can I explain this?" "I don't know whether I explain to you right." "You know I'm not good at math. Let's leave it to daddy. Is it OK? Let's ask his opinion." According to Mrs. Park these were her attempts to get sympathy from her son to change his behavior to work harmoniously with her. But Mark remained aloof, emotionless, and continued to interrupt his mother by saying, "I don't know," or "I forgot." He remained indifferent even though he knew his mother was experiencing difficulty in using English and that she felt embarrassed by her lack of proficiency.

Mrs. Park explained that Mark's attitude towards her English language proficiency currently was milder than when he was younger:

Now they do not care about my English. In the past, when they were learning English, they got mad when I spoke Korean. They felt ashamed about me speaking in Korean. When I talked to their teachers, they were alerted. They felt that because I spoke poor English I would embarrass them. I came to understand this when they brought their American friends home one day. When I gave them pizza and talked with them, they got much more critical about my English mistakes in front of friends.

According to the mothers, passive attitudes adopted by children is a culturally expected behavior, implying that the child is "helpless" and is "dependent" on his mother to take care of his problems. Thus when the child takes a

passive role with his homework such as insisting "Homework is not mine," or "I'm not good at homework," he focuses entirely on his mother's emotions instead of his homework. Mothers explained that children try to evoke maternal sympathy and emotional reactions in such a manner. Mrs. Cho explained, "My first son is very rational, whereas my second son whines all the time to earn and confirm my affection. Strange thing is I don't like my first son's cold reasoning. I am more familiar and comfortable with my second son's babyish whining. It feels warm. I think that is the way most of Korean kids are raised." Whining was permitted by all mothers as a childish strategy because it did not challenge the elder's authority verbally or directly. Daniel utilized this strategy frequently, as seen in example 3 below.

Example 3

Daniel is watching TV. Mrs. Cho tries to get him to begin his spelling homework.

- Mrs. Cho: Come over here. Come on. You have to do your spelling.
Daniel: I don't want to do.
Mrs. Cho: Yes. Then I will not let you watch movie. Come over right now. One, two, three, four. (In Korean)
Daniel: (Whining and coming out when mother's voice gets strict in Korean.) I don't want to do that. (Whining)
Mrs. Cho: That's too bad. It's your homework.
Daniel: No, it's not. (Whining and sitting down at the table)
Mrs. Cho: Sit down, please. You finish quickly and go watch your movie. (In Korean using a soothing tone.) (Daniel starts homework.)

Mrs. Cho fails to impose harsh consequences in Korean as it would have typically be done in order to signal that completing the homework was Daniel's responsibility. Instead she responds to his whining by talking to him in a gentle tone. Daniel responds to her and begins his homework.

As shown in example 4 below, mothers also

reported that utilizing a non-communicative style of interaction with their children was effective in ensuring that the children did not engage in argumentative discourse with them.

Example 4

Joseph still cannot understand a math problem after his mother explained it once. The conversation below is in Korean.

- Joseph: (Frowns and looks away.)
Mrs. Kim: You cannot solve the problem if you don't listen to me. Here. I'm suffering too. I have to explain something hard for me to understand. (Stern and mad)
Joseph: (He looks at the paper again) Peanut butter and jelly!
Mrs. Kim: Dad promised he would get peanut butter and jelly if you listened to me.
Joseph: Dad doesn't know what it is.
Mrs. Kim: I explained to him on the phone. Listen to me. Ok? Look at this, Joseph.
Joseph: What did you say to Dad?
Mrs. Kim: Peanut butter and jelly. I told him to get what Joseph wants to have.
Joseph: Dad doesn't know what's yummy.
Mrs. Kim: I explained well enough.
Joseph: Without the crunch things.
Mrs. Kim: (Looks visibly displeased and keeps silent the rest of the time)
Joseph: Whew (Sighs heavily and goes back at the problem.)

Mrs. Kim uses only Korean because her son is good at communicating in Korean. He is very obedient and follows his mother's direction. When his mother threatens, he knows how to be non-reactive. It is a common and well understood notion in Korea, that when adults get mad, children are supposed to be non-responsive by avoiding eye contact. Verbal reaction was to be avoided at all costs because it would be considered to be disrespectful and rude. Mrs. Park frequently ignored her son whenever he whined to provoke her emotions.

Why Helping with Homework is a Challenge for Mothers

The cultural upbringing of the three mothers made it challenging for them when helping their children with their homework. Mothers explained that when they were growing up they did not get much help from their parents. Their parents' primary role was to make sure that they completed their homework. According to the mothers, even though parental involvement in Korea has increased in recent decades, the attitude towards homework is that it should be the effort of the student alone. Helping the child with his homework was not expected in Korea. Mrs. Park expressed her thoughts saying, "My mother never helped my homework. In Korea, parents just checked if kids had done or not. That's it. Here, in America, I have to take part in the contents of homework." According to these mothers, children's completion of their homework on their own was of primary importance because it was directly responsible for academic success. They found that, in contrast, American teachers expected parents to help their children in doing their homework. Mrs. Park said that teachers frequently sent notes home indicating which part of the assignment should be done without help, which implied that direct parental involvement with homework was expected. Mothers reported that an additional challenge was that some content in homework assignments were not fully covered during class lectures. When mothers were faced with having to be actively involved in their children's homework, they began to experience numerous challenges and frustrations and were confused about what their role was supposed to be in helping their children with their homework.

Even if the parental role in American schools was not familiar to these Korean mothers, they continued to hold school work of utmost importance. They were strict with their children when it came to the completion of their homework. Mrs. Cho said, "It seems that not all American parents considered homework to be as important as Korean parents. Homework and school work is important for all Korean mothers

I know. Isn't it obvious that students with good grades have a better chance in life?" All three mothers reported that they could not allow their children to "slack off" with their homework. They added that if they were in Korea, they would have made sure that their children finish their homework, even if it meant delivering harsh disciplinary measures such as punishments and threats. The example below illustrates the efforts of one mother to ensure that her son's homework was eventually completed.

Example 5

Joseph is working on his homework project with his mother. His work is in its final phase

Researcher: You did good. Did you do it? I can't believe it.

Joseph: (Hesitating to answer.)

Mrs. Kim: Don't believe it. How much we had to hassle over this project! Sit here.

Joseph: You have to show how good you are to this little sister. He was so sick when the due date was coming up. What else could I do? He said he can't do it anymore. So I had to do it for him.

Completing the homework was of utmost importance for Mrs. Kim. She believed that being sick was not an excuse for her son's work to remain incomplete. When her efforts to enforce her son to complete his homework failed, Mrs. Kim took over his project and completed it for him. She excused herself saying, "I didn't want to do for him, but I couldn't help it. I would've not done it if he was not too sick. I can't let him go to school without completing his homework, can I?" The emphasis on homework and academic excellence has its origin in the Korean culture of being competitive in a collective society. These Korean mothers were willing to take every measure to get their children's homework done well. Doing homework took precedence over being hungry or any other reasons.

Although mothers were eager to help their children do their homework, they had difficulties in adapting to the expected role of parents in the

American educational culture. A reason for why mothers considered their children's homework in a serious light lies in a cultural explanation of the mother-child relationship. In the Korean culture, the child is not perceived as an independent individual. Instead he is viewed as an extension of his parent. So, when the child fails, the parent fails. The experiences and feelings of Mrs. Cho in the example below provide such an insight:

A lot of times, when my son doesn't understand, I got really frustrated. I think it's harder for me to draw line between the emotions and teaching. Because sometimes, I get so mad and upset when he doesn't understand. "Don't you get it? I explained to you so many times." He's like, "No. I don't get it." I don't know why I get so upset, but one thing I realize is that I feel like when he doesn't understand, he is stupid and I made him that way. It's like that it's my fault his not understanding.

All three mothers said that they considered the supervision of their children's completion of homework as though it were their job. In order to get their children to begin the homework process, mothers said that they may "nag, threaten, or motivate their children in however many ways possible." They believed that if it weren't for them their children would probably not take the initiative to begin their homework.

A New Culture of Homework

Changes in parenting: Mother-child communicative interaction. The three mothers reported a change in their parenting style as they become acculturated with the mainstream culture. As they interacted with American parents and observed their interactions with their children, these Korean mothers came face-to-face with a different and a new parenting style. They were "forced" to reflect on their actions and the impact it had on their children. Mrs. Park stated, "Of course, I feel pressure. American parents are not like that. I was so surprised. Even teachers are not like that." Mothers analyzed their own

parenting behavior and realized that their parenting style was not going to help their children and themselves as parents. Soon they made a conscious effort to incorporate the best of European American parenting. Mothers constantly checked how their children responded to their parenting styles. They changed their behavior accordingly to produce the optimal outcomes for their children. These changes included reducing or eliminating specific aspects of Korean American parenting into their children's upbringing. For example, Mrs. Cho "eliminated" Korean parenting in many aspects of her family life. This is evident in the example below: Mrs. Kim the least acculturated of the three mothers had a moment of acute awareness when her son challenged her after which she changed her interaction style:

We were doing math problems about counting coins. He was not in the mood that day. I thought he could be spared stress in school once he understood perfectly. So I kept trying to explain. But he didn't focus. I got hurt. So I yelled at him and scolded him. He screamed "why do you yell at me?" "Why do you always mad at me during math problems?" At that moment, I thought, 'oh! It's possible that I made him lose interests in math by nagging him.' Since then, I try to say myself, 'I won't get mad. Be patient.' 'How can I be more positive and give my son more compliments?' That's how I've changed a little. He cried too. I thought he was right. I thought a while. I had said very strictly "why can't you get it?" Kids can sense that they upset their mother by their wrong answers although mother doesn't raise her voice. The kid got so sensitive thinking, 'mother got mad whenever I do math.' So he freezes up and comes to the conclusion that math is no fun. I realized that and felt so sorry. "Right? Isaac? I apologize that I yelled at you. I won't do that again." Since then, I try to change myself.

Mothers reported that an important change in

their parenting style was the “elimination” of raising their voices at their children. Mrs. Park said, “The frequency of yelling incidents at my children has reduced. I think I should have done this before. It took me 10 years to change.”

Mothers' strategy: Bicultural parenting. These mothers have developed various strategies to make their children do their homework. For example, they may say to their children in English, “Can you do your homework?” in an extremely soft and endearing tone, conveying the message “Could you please do the homework for your mother, who would do anything for you? Please?” Their request to the child is loaded with emotional obligation. When the mothers say in English “Can you do your homework?” (in a pleading tone) they infuse the Korean emotional ties between mother and child into the English language usage. In Korea, adults do not plead with children or do not *ask* their children to do their homework; instead they *tell* children to do their homework. Children are not considered independent enough to make their own choices.

The following conversation in example 6 between Mrs. Park and her son illustrates the difference of using English and Korean. When the mother, who is not good at English, is required to use English to help with school work, she is friendlier and less controlling to hide her feeling concerning her lack of English language proficiency.

Example 6

Mrs. Park: Can we do homework now?
(Mark, no response) Let's do this homework. (Mark, no response)
Mrs. Park: We can look it up then. (Taking an English dictionary)
Mark: I don't wanna. (With grumpy voice)
Mrs. Park: What? (With frustration)
Mark: I don't wanna look it up.
Mrs. Park: You don't wanna look it up? Ok. Then we don't have to now. Ok. Can you read the next one? Ok. (Mark does his homework.)
Mrs. Park: You know that? Why don't we

look it up dictionary, senator?
Mark: I don't wanna. (Frowning)
Mrs. Park: You don't want to? But I want to. So,
Mark: I don't.
Mrs. Park: You don't? (With disappointed tone) Ok. But can I look it up?
Mark: Ok. (Looks away showing his disinterest).
Mrs. Park: Mark, can you listen? Mark, you really don't wanna know?
Mark: No.
Mrs. Park: Can I read it to you?
Mark: Ok (with sigh)

When these mothers failed to have their children do their homework, they threatened their children in Korean. The act of switching to the Korean language to instill obedience in their children is prevalent among traditional Korean mothers. This is shown in the example of Mrs. Cho and her son. Mrs. Cho uses English with her son all the time. The only time she uses Korean with him is when she threatens him in order to get him to do something. She uses this as a final resort. In the following example, when Mrs. Cho's praises and rewards in English failed to make her son begin his homework, she immediately switched to Korean. She said in Korean, “Do it now. I'm going to be mad now. Sit up straight. Sit up. Mommy will bring ‘*Maemmae*.’ Erase and do it again.” ‘*Maemmae*’ in Korean refers to a traditional disciplinary stick which is used to hit children for correctional purpose. There are strict rules around using ‘*mammae*’ such as where to hit, how many times and particular positions for children and parents, which, in Korea, differentiates a disciplinary measure from an abuse. Daniel responded reluctantly by doing what was told and Mrs. Cho was satisfied with the effect of Korean ways of threatening. However, over the process of Mrs. Cho's transition, she has come to change her opinion about this strategy. She began to practice positive reinforcement that she learned through observations of American parenting styles. To encourage the child to do the work, Mrs. Cho uses two languages from time to time. Her use of

each language is not random. She uses English to compliment him describing his progress; she speaks in Korean to calm him down. However, she is persistent in correcting every detail of her son's homework, signaling to the child that she continues to place emphasis on doing his homework correctly. The example below demonstrates the use of dual languages by Mrs. Cho to remain in charge during the homework activity and ensure that her son Daniel complies with her expectations to do well.

Example 7

Daniel: So it's seventeen.
Mrs. Cho: Yeah! (With exaggerated tone.)
Pallihae ('Do it quickly' in Korean)
Daniel: Ten plus seven equals seventeen.
Mrs. Cho: Seventeen what? Presents or cards?
Daniel: Cards! Cards! C A R D S!!(Screaming)
Mrs. Cho: Sigguru!('Too loud' in Korean meaning 'shut up!')
Daniel: John...(continues to read the next question)
Mrs. Cho: Joe (interrupting and correcting)
Daniel: Joe bought nine blue fish, three had...
Mrs. Cho: Hamsters. (Correcting)
Daniel: How many fish did he buy? Umm. Fifteen! (He lies under the table.)
Mrs. Cho: Pallihae. ('Do it quickly' in Korean) Tokbaro Anjuseyo. (Sit up.)
Daniel: (Reluctantly sits again and writes the answer) Wow! This is so easy.
Mrs. Cho: Perfect. Good job. Maybe you're super smart.
Daniel: This is a piece in a cake.
Mrs. Cho: A piece in a cake? A piece of cake!
Daniel: Piece of a cake. (He screams.)
Mrs. Cho: Not piece in a cake.

Mrs. Cho compliments Daniel excessively but at the same time remains as a Korean mother criticizing his language use.

These three mothers maintain their traditional

role of being the 'lead person' during the entire process of doing homework. They do however, have a range of strategies such as switching languages, using English phrases mixed with the Korean cultural nuances, and traditional Korean disciplinary measures that they employ when they have to deal with children's challenging behavior or the content of their homework,

All three mothers reported that they make efforts to suppress their emotions after having struggled with their initial parenting strategy and the children's negative responses. They face stressful situations with their children because their children are raised in a Korean home culture but expected to adapt to the American school culture, both of which are in complete contrast to one another. Despite the numerous difficulties that these mothers face on a regular basis they actively engage in their children's school work and ensure that they complete their homework. They strive to develop the best formula for mixed parenting, that is using parenting strategies of both the Korean and American culture.

Discussion

This study aimed to find out 1) How Korean immigrant mothers socialized their children into their cultural ways of life during mother-child joint homework activities, 2) How the two language practices (Korean and English) influenced mother-child communication, and 3) How the process of first language loss or maintenance affected maternal anxiety during homework activity. Central issues and patterns that emerged from our data analysis are discussed below in depth.

Mothers' attitudes toward Korean language and culture and their decision regarding Korean language use influenced children's language practices and emotional closeness with their parents. Mothers tried to socialize several key Korean values during homework using Korean. Simultaneously, they were incorporating American culture and values during their interactions with their children through the use of

English. These findings confirm the theory of language socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) that members of a society socialize novices into particular values of the society during language practices. These mothers switched back and forth between two languages to teach corresponding socio-cultural values to their children.

Findings also confirm the works of Krashen and Cho (1998) and Wong Fillmore (1991), who highlighted the emotional obstacles facing immigrant families when L1 language in children is lost. Intergenerational tensions resulted from the fact that parents and children were unable to share the same cultural values because of their different language proficiency. For instance, Mark in this study had never been able to speak Korean and Mrs. Park's confidence in speaking English was the furthest from Mark's only language (English). Mrs. Kim who maintains only Korean at home and Mrs. Cho who has a good command of English could communicate with their children with few challenges. Thus, mother's confidence level in L1 or English whichever the child is confident in is an important factor that influences the extent of emotional barriers that is created between generations.

However, the findings also warn that the level of proficiency in L1 or English is not a conclusive factor in determining the difficulties. For example, actual English level of Mrs. Park was far beyond effective communication level. However, her desire for Mark's assimilation into the American society was very strong, leading her to believe that Korean culture and language were not critical elements in her son's life. Maternal desire was more closely related with the child's language practices than language proficiency level. Comparative findings from the three families suggests that the level of maternal and child proficiency and confidence in either languages (Korean, English) determines the extent to which the language is used in communications with one another. Socialization of cultural values is impacted in varying ways in such situations.

Socio-cultural factors play an important role in

the life of a bilingual family. Society and culture clearly influence individual choices, such as parenting strategies. As a way to deal with their children's doubts about their English language proficiency, mothers modified their goals and concepts for their children's education. Homework as an activity evolved constantly. At first, they began to parent their children using traditional Korean parenting ways (e.g., being strict, intolerance for misbehavior). When the children did not respond to this form of parenting, mothers turned to the use of dual languages during parenting (e.g., use of English for paying compliments and use of Korean for disciplinary issues). At the same time, mothers themselves embraced changes in their attitudes and parenting strategies during homework time with their children. For instance, they began to ignore minor disruptions during homework time which they would not have accepted previously. They also began to use two languages (Korean and English) and bicultural strategies to reach their ultimate goal (i.e., completion of homework). This confirms Leontiev's (1981) theory of activity, which states that the dynamic relationships between parental socialization goals, languages as accessible artifacts, and the contexts of two distinctive cultural values have transformed the homework activity into "a system of its own" (p. 23)

Mrs. Park decided to discard most of "Koreanness" in educating her children. Mrs. Cho acknowledged the strengths of Korean culture and the importance of maintaining Korean identity for her children. Mrs. Kim believed that her children cannot be "pure Americans." Their decisions influenced language and communication practices, as well as their attitude towards Korean and American values for their children. Maternal decisions were made taking into consideration their experiences in both cultures. Mrs. Park experienced negative emotions while growing up in Korea. Mrs. Cho suffered an identity crisis of her own in college. Mrs. Kim had no direct experience with English and the American society. Thus, when considering socio-cultural factors, it is necessary to have a complete picture of the families. These

findings provide good examples to support the studies of Wong Fillmore (1991) and Hakuta (1986), which point out that social and cultural contexts influence the languages children learn. Mothers' attitudes toward educational goals and proper language use influenced children's language practices and attitudes.

In addition to confirming previous research on the close relationship between parents' attitude and children's language use (Dopke, 1992; Garcia, 2005; Portes & Hao, 1998), this study also demonstrates how mothers arrive at their decisions and the factors that influence their decisions. Although the three mothers made different decisions about languages for their children, they were similar in their strong desire to sacrifice for their children's well being in America, as they lived their lives as Korean-Americans. For example, Mrs. Park was willing to set aside her own cultural values to encourage her sons' assimilation. Mrs. Cho was determined to prevent her children from going through identity crisis by emphasizing their Koreanness. She emphasized Korean values explicitly to her children, such as respect for elders. Mrs. Kim did her best to create homework in English for her children.

All three mothers also tried to change themselves (e.g., Mrs. Park controlled her emotions and tried to remain calm, Mrs. Cho and Mrs. Kim discarded an authoritarian attitude during homework) in order for their children to complete their daily homework. Their different strategies regarding homework have the same cultural value of sacrifices for their children. In the Korean cultural concept of parenting, parental sacrifice for children's benefits is regarded highly in their community. These mothers' strong emphasis and attitudes toward academic excellence is rooted in Korean cultural values. The experiences of these mothers illustrate the complexity in the lives of Asian Americans. The view that Asian Americans are a "model minority" that other ethnic groups should try to emulate is stereotypical and too generalized and simplistic. It conceals the differences related to class, languages, gender, immigration status and history (Lee, 1996, Lee

and Kumashiro, 2005) and the multitudes of challenges and hardships in the family's lives due to changes in parenting styles and family systems (Jegatheesan, 2003).

Findings about the bidirectional nature of the social and emotional socialization process in this study are supported by Eisenberg, Cumberland and Spinrad (1998). All three mothers started with Korean values, but they were faced with challenges with the English language, different demands for American homework, and children's rejection of their attempts. Mothers needed to change their strategy by borrowing American ways of keeping emotional distance from their children by acknowledging their independence. This finding can be interpreted that homework as an activity is defined as "a system with its own structure, its own internal transformations, and its own development" (Leontiev, 1981, p. 58). The changing nature of the homework activity provided insights on how actors and activities changed when the actors came face to face with two languages and cultures (Korean and English) and the impact it had on them. The complex situation contributed to the three mothers having to reexamine their own cultural background when parenting their children, comparing it to their experiences in the U.S. and altering and modifying their views and strategies accordingly for the benefit of their children's education and the overall family harmony and well-being.

Implications for practice

It is important for professionals to conduct parent workshops to provide immigrant parent with information about their school system, instructional methods used in classes, assessment procedures, parent-teacher collaboration and parent involvement opportunities and strategies to support their children's socio-emotional development and academic growth. It is necessary for schools to offer workshops on 'topics of interest to parents' which are valuable to parents. Information at all times should be provided to parents in their native languages when appropriate. Schools can further support

immigrant parents by having regular parent meetings and support groups and connecting novice parents with more experienced parents. It is important for educators to attend these immigrant parent meetings and listen to and respond to questions and concerns that parents may have. Such practices enhance parent-teacher relationships. It also makes parents feel that they are valued and that they are equally important players in their children's education.

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