

Feature Article

Out-of-School English Language Use by Newcomer English Learners from Korea

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Abstract

This study reports the major findings of an in-depth survey and interview with a group of students and parents who recently immigrated to the U.S. from Korea. The study was conducted to identify how they engage in out-of-school English language use and to what extent parents and teachers are involved and supportive in the process. All the participating students and parents were newcomers and had lived in the U.S. or other English-speaking countries for fewer than three years. The interview questions centered on the following aspects of English language use: amount and frequency, types of engagement, and degree of support from teachers, schools and parents in practicing English outside of the school setting. Findings of the study shed light on unique challenges that these newcomers face in developing second-language proficiency in an English-dominant society, and on how parents and teachers might be oblivious to these challenges. The findings also suggest that out-of-school English language practice could be guided and supported more effectively by teachers and parents.

Key Words: *Newcomers, English learners, Korean, immigrant*

Introduction

In the field of education, Asian-American students have often been viewed as a “model minority,” whose primary goal is success in education. Students with Korean heritage, both newcomers and second- or third-generation Korean students, are part of this group. Along with other Asian-American students, they are often considered high achievers striving to excel in academic endeavors. This stereotypical “model minority” image of Korean-American students, while not entirely misleading, often results in a lack of discussion on the educational and psychological needs of this group of

students (Yoon, 2010; Park, 2010; Choi & Lim, 2014; Yeh & Inose, 2002).

The same phenomenon is observed in the discussion of English language learners (ELLs)¹ in American public schools. When compared to the number of research studies on ELLs from other language backgrounds such as Spanish, Vietnamese or Chinese², there is a

¹ The term, English language learners (ELLs), is used frequently to refer to those students whose mother tongue is not English and who do not possess a grade-level of English language proficiency as compared to their native English-speaking peers.

² According to the OELA (Office of English Language Acquisition) in the U.S. Department of

relatively smaller number of studies conducted on ELLs from Korean language backgrounds. Although the percentage of ELLs from this language background is not as high in K-12 schools³, the needs of these learners should still be properly acknowledged and accommodated. It is particularly imperative to look into newcomer students' second-language learning processes both in and outside the school setting from upper elementary to secondary levels, as they have reached a grade level that would require a more advanced level of academic language proficiency. Indeed, the language proficiency in English at these grade levels is considered to be one of the most critical factors in determining their academic success (Short & Boyson, 2012).

One of the ways to identify how ELLs develop their second-language proficiency is to examine their patterns of English language use. In recent years, the importance of home language environment in developing language proficiency has been noted in a few research studies (e.g., Joo, 2005; Saunders & O'Brien, 2006). These studies have claimed that out-of-school language practice could exert a significant influence on the learners' language learning process. Because second-language learning is not limited to classroom instruction during school hours, it is important to look into what

ELLs do to practice and develop their language proficiency beyond the classroom.

Korean Newcomers in US Schools

Who are newcomers in K-12 education? Francis et al. (2006) defined them as newly arrived immigrant students who have attended an English-speaking school for fewer than two years. They are generally considered a subset of ELLs who are particularly vulnerable, as many of these students often fail to reach a grade level proficiency in English. According to the recent data reported by the Office of English Language Acquisition in the U.S. Department of Education (OELA Fast Facts, 2015), over 4.4 million students were identified as ELLs in the 2011-2012 school year. This means that ELLs comprise over 9% of the entire student population in the U.S. The percentage of ELLs is continuously increasing. ELLs are in fact the fastest growing population of K-12 students in the U.S.

There are many challenges that ELLs face in an academic setting; upper elementary to secondary school newcomers particularly are at a greater risk as the subject area content becomes increasingly more challenging, and it becomes much more difficult for them to catch up with their English-speaking peers in content-area learning.

Newcomer students' unique challenges and needs are well documented in Francis et al.'s (2006) and Short and Boyson's (2012) reports on academic language instruction for adolescent newcomers. Compared to younger English-language learners, the older newcomers have a much shorter

Education, Spanish is the most commonly spoken home language by ELs, followed by Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Hmong in the 2011-2012 school year.

³ In the U.S., Korean is among the ten most commonly spoken home languages by English learners (Migration Policy Institute's ELL Information Center, 2015).

time to develop oral and written academic language skills. Many studies have also shown that English-language learners need 4-7 years to reach the average academic performance level of their English-speaking peers (Cummins, 1981; Collier, 1987; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Thomas and Collier, 2002).

Newcomer students from Korea, like many newcomers in American schools, also face many other types of difficulties and challenges. They need to quickly acclimate to the mainstream culture and school environment while trying to catch up with their English-speaking peers in secondary academic learning. According to Yeh and Inose's (2002) study, Korean immigrant students tend to turn to religious practices to cope with various social, cultural and emotional difficulties that they face. As with other newcomers, Korean immigrant students also face difficulty in their schoolwork largely resulting from their limited proficiency in academic English (Yeh & Inose, 2002; Park, 2010).

In addition to these difficulties, they often struggle to find their true "identity" in American schools. Palmer (2007) investigated the identity negotiations and tensions among Korean-American high school students and found that they manifest inner struggles and conflicts in negotiating their identity. In his research of Korean-born Korean American (KBKA) and American-born Korean American (ABKA) high school students, he observed that ABKAs often separate

themselves from KBKAs in fear of being labeled as "foreign" or "Asian" students. Some of them even attempt to teach the newly arrived Korean students how to conform to the ways of life in American culture. Although the KBKAs do attempt to assimilate to the mainstream culture as a way to find acceptance with American peers, many KBKAs resist the idea of giving up their Korean identities completely to accept an American identity. Instead, they wish to be recognized as those who successfully maintain their ethnic and cultural

[Q]uality after-school time spent on practicing language in a less stressful and restrictive environment than the school classroom does appear to contribute to language development.

identity while also attempting to adapt to the mainstream culture. Their efforts and struggles in maintaining their identity are also closely intertwined with their language proficiency in both

English and Korean, as language proficiency is believed to be one of the most significant indicators of one's identity. This was discussed in many studies on Korean-American students (Lee, 2002; Kim, 2006; Lee and Kim, 2012; Shin and Lee, 2013; Yi, 2005).

Out-of-School Language Practice

Research has indicated that ELLs' out-of-school English language use may have significant impact on their language proficiency development (Saunders & O'Brien, 2006) and in-school performance (Valdés, 1998). Given the fact that language learning does occur in many different forms beyond the usual school setting, it is plausible that ELLs' language practice outside the school setting contributes to promoting proficiency in English.

After-school program participation also appears to be positively associated with ELLs' language development. In a study reported by London, Gurantz, and Norman (2011), the ELLs who participated in the after-school program were more likely to reach the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives required by the No Child Left Behind Act. Similarly, English proficiency gains were one of the benefits of participation in out-of-school programs discussed by Maxwell-Jolly (2011). That is, quality after-school time spent on practicing language in a less stressful and restrictive environment than the school classroom does appear to contribute to language development.

School-home connection and parental involvement are also identified as key factors contributing to ELLs' success in education. Frequent teacher-to-home communications are known to be important in ELL students' academic achievement (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). It is also well known that a high level of parental involvement has a significant impact on children's success in education. In the case of ELLs' families, however, the parents often engage their children in home literacy activities that are not necessarily aligned with school-based literacy practices due to their lack of knowledge and familiarity with the American school system. According to Schulz and Kantor's (2005) study, parents who are from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds from the mainstream culture may not have accurate or adequate information about how schoolwork could be effectively guided at home. They also may lack enough social support and networking with other parents from the mainstream culture.

This makes it challenging for them to help their school-aged children with language and literacy learning at home.

Thus, ELL's language learning is a complex process and cannot be fully understood by their school experiences alone. Undoubtedly, it is important to look into how they engage in language practices for both their first and second languages in their home environments. However, few studies have closely observed or interviewed ELL students and their parents about how they use the English language at home in an attempt to improve their language proficiency for their schoolwork. It is also unclear whether they receive enough, if any, support and guidance from their schools and teachers about how they can effectively practice their second language at home. While a majority of the research studies focus on classroom-based teaching and learning that could lead to successful language and literacy development by ELLs, studies on ELLs' language use in their home environments are limited. As discussed in McKay (1993), a classroom is only "one of several forces affecting individual literacy" (p.xiii).

Research questions

This study was intended to examine out-of-school language and literacy practice patterns by newcomer students from Korea in grades 4-12. This age group of ELLs was chosen primarily because in these grades the content-area learning becomes increasingly more challenging; thus, these students may be at a greater risk academically. In this study, out-of-school language use was operationally defined as all of the language use that the participants

engaged in outside of school beyond any school-related homework or assignments. This study specifically addressed the following four research questions:

1. How do newcomer students from Korea view their development in English language proficiency?
2. How do newcomer students from Korea engage in out-of-school English language use?
3. How do parents of Korean newcomer students get involved in newcomer students' English language development and use?
4. How do newcomer students from Korea view the support from their schools and teachers in developing their English language proficiency?

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were recruited from a school district located in the Northwest region of the United States. At the time of the study, all of the participants were ELLs enrolled in Grades 4-12 in a school in the district and had lived in the U.S. for less than three years, ranging from two months to three years. They were recruited through flyers and word of mouth, and voluntarily participated in the survey and follow-up interview after signing a written informed consent provided to them as part of the formal procedure for human subject research.

All of the participants were children of newly immigrated Korean parents who recently moved to the US. A total of twenty-two students (12 female and 10 male students) participated in the initial survey (four upper elementary,

nine middle school and nine high school students). Ten of the twenty-two also participated in a follow-up interview with the researcher. After the survey and interview, the students' parents were also invited to participate in a follow-up interview. Three parents (all mothers) agreed to participate in this follow-up interview. The ESL teachers of the participants' schools were also invited to a follow-up interview to obtain more details about school support for language practice at home. One ESL teacher agreed to participate in the interview.

Most of the participants, except two students, declared that they had never lived in an English-speaking country or attended any English-speaking school prior to moving to the US. The two students who had attended an English-speaking school said that their attendance was for less than two years and their total length of residence in any English-speaking countries did not exceed three years. Therefore, all of the participants fit into the category of newcomer ELLs as typically defined in the U.S. school system. Newcomer English learners are usually defined as those who are newly arrived immigrant students who receive English-language services in the school in addition to their usual grade-level academic schoolwork (Short & Boyson, 2012).

When asked to identify the language in which they are more proficient, all of the newcomer students (N= 22) and their parents declared that they are more proficient in Korean. Also, when asked to identify their preferred language, all of the parents and seventeen students responded that they prefer to use Korean. Five students responded that they prefer to use English.

Initial Survey and Follow-up Interviews

The participants were surveyed and interviewed in their preferred language. The researcher, who is bilingual in English and Korean, translated when necessary, conducted all of the interviews, and took interview notes for later analysis.

An initial language survey was conducted to gather the participants' general language background information, their home language use, and the types and amount of their English language practice outside of school.⁴ There were a total of twenty questions in the survey: Six questions were about their general language backgrounds and language preferences, and the remaining fourteen questions were about their overall reflection on challenging aspects of academic English language, how they used and practiced the English language beyond school hours, the degree of parental involvement, and support from teachers and schools. The survey questions were provided to the participants in both Korean and English so that they could choose to complete the survey in their preferred language. Seventeen participants completed the survey in Korean, and five completed it in English.

After the initial survey, the participants were also invited to participate in a follow-up interview. The interview was a one-on-one semi-structured session intended to gather more detailed information about the survey responses. The follow-up interview was also conducted in the

participants' preferred language. A total of ten participants agreed to participate in this follow-up interview. Each interview lasted about fifteen minutes.

Next, the parents of the participants were invited to participate in a follow-up, one-on-one interview with the researcher to gather more in-depth information about their children's language practice at home, and three mothers chose to participate. Each interview was conducted entirely in Korean, as all of them stated that it was their preferred language. Each interview lasted about fifteen to twenty minutes and notes were taken for later analysis. One of the interviewed parents' children also participated in a follow-up interview, while two of the interviewed parents' children did not. All of the interviewed mothers had received post-secondary education in Korea, but none of them declared that they had lived in any English-speaking countries before moving to the US. Also, none of them had had any experience in working in the US.

Finally, an ESL teacher at one of the participants' schools agreed to participate in a follow-up interview to provide more details about school support for newcomer students from Korea. Both the survey and the interviews were conducted following the proper IRB procedure for human subject research.

Findings

In this section, the results of the initial survey are discussed, followed by the additional findings from the follow-up interviews with the participants, the parents, and the ESL teacher. The findings are organized to discuss the

⁴ The survey used in this study is shown in the Appendix.

participants' language backgrounds, how they use English and Korean at home, how much their parents are involved in supporting their language development, and whether they receive support from their schools and teachers. All the names used in the interview excerpts are pseudonyms.

General Language Backgrounds

The findings of the initial survey showed that all of the participants were the children of newly immigrated parents from Korea and mainly spoke Korean as their home language. At the time of the initial survey, all of the participants were enrolled in public schools in the same school district, where Korean was the fourth most commonly spoken home language. They were also identified as ELLs by the district and were enrolled in beginning to intermediate levels of English-language proficiency as identified by the district. They resided in middle class neighborhoods where the Korean-speaking population is approximately 4% of the entire population.

All of the participants had had prior exposure to English before moving to the US through multimedia, various reading materials, and classroom English language instruction.⁵ Fourteen participants responded that they had some proficiency in English before moving to the US, while eight responded that they had no prior proficiency. All of the participants declared that they were more proficient in Korean than in English and had attended schools in Korea before moving to the US.

The participants were then asked to rate the overall difficulty that they have had in learning academic English on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "not at all difficult (1)" to "extremely difficult (5)." Two participants responded "extremely difficult (5)." Seven participants responded "quite difficult (4)." Eight participants responded "somewhat difficult (3)." Four participants responded "a little bit difficult (2)." Only one participant responded "not at all difficult (1)."

Next, the participants specified the areas of difficulty in learning academic English. A majority of the participants (n = 16) identified vocabulary, writing and grammar as the most challenging aspects of academic English learning. They found it quite challenging to keep up with learning vocabulary, as there were *many* new words that they needed to learn in school. Writing was particularly demanding when they were required to produce essays with well-organized paragraphs and grammatical accuracy.

The follow-up interview with the participants largely confirmed the results of the initial survey. They felt particularly overwhelmed by the number of new academic vocabulary words that they needed to learn for daily schoolwork. For example, *Hannah*, who was a sophomore in high school at the time of the interview, said: "There are many new words that I am supposed to learn each day. Oftentimes, it feels overwhelming. It is even more difficult when I am required to write up an essay using the new words that I barely know the meaning of."

As in the findings from the initial survey, most of the other participants who were interviewed shared their

⁵ In Korea, English is taught as part of the regular school curriculum from Grade 1.

concerns about the amount of vocabulary, reading and writing on which they needed to catch up for schoolwork. *Jeremy*, for example, said: “It is extremely difficult to catch up to my peers in school, especially in reading and writing, and yet, the ESL lessons are not helping me much because they are not connected to what I learn in school or repeat the grammar points that I already know.”

Home English-Language Use Patterns

The participants were asked to describe their use of English at home in the initial survey. On a five-point Likert

scale ranging from “never (1)” to “always (5),” a majority of the participants (n = 16) declared that they never or rarely spoke English at home. When they spoke English at home, it was mostly with their siblings rather than with their parents or other family members. Their parents tended to encourage them to use English at home, although the participants rarely used English to speak to their parents and were not discouraged from using Korean at home. Table 1 summarizes the participants’ home English-language use.

Table 1. Home English-Language Use

Survey questions	Participants’ responses (N = 22)
How often do you speak English at home?	Never (n = 6) Rarely (n = 10) Sometimes (n = 3) Frequently (n = 3)
Who do you speak English with at home?	Siblings (n = 10) Parents (n = 3) Korean friends (n = 2) Cousin (n = 1) Nobody (n = 6)
Do your parents encourage you to practice English at home?	Yes (n = 15) No (n = 7)

Next, the participants responded to questions about their English language practice patterns at home. A majority of the participants (n = 19) spent fewer than five hours a week using English, excluding the time spent on doing homework from school. They tended to

use English in all four language skill areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing), although not all of the participants regularly engaged in language practice for all the skill areas. Table 2 summarizes the responses.

Table 2. Home English-Language Use

Survey questions	Participants' responses (N = 22)
How many hours per week do you spend on using English excluding time spent on homework from school?	0-2 hours (n = 10) 3-5 hours (n = 9) 6-8 hours (n = 3)
Do you practice listening and speaking in English besides homework from school?	Yes (n = 18) No (n = 4)
Do you practice reading in English besides homework from school?	Yes (n = 18) No (n = 4)
Do you practice writing in English besides homework from school?	Yes (n = 13) No (n = 9)

When asked to describe how they used each language skill, a majority of the participants responded that they engage in conversations with their siblings, watch movies or television, read books, and write daily journals in English. Table 3 lists the activities that the participants said they regularly engage in using English.

In the follow-up interview, the participants confirmed that they indeed use English at home as declared in the initial survey. It was additionally confirmed that their main home language is Korean, although their parents did not necessarily discourage them from speaking English at home. When the participants spoke English at home, it was mostly with their siblings or English-speaking friends in their neighborhoods. They mostly used Korean to speak with their parents.

The participants also confirmed in the follow-up interview that their English-language use at home was largely “unsupervised.” Although a few participants mentioned that they get help from tutors to improve their English-language proficiency, they were mostly not guided as to how their English language practice could be effectively done. *Eric*, for example, said: “My parents buy me books in English or take me to the local library, but they have never recommended any specific books to read. Neither have my teachers. There is a reading list that I receive from my school, but some books are just too hard for me to read because of my level of vocabulary.” *Sohyun*, another student who participated in an interview, said: “I just read books at home or at the library, but I will be so lost if I don’t have my tutor to help me comprehend the books. My parents don’t speak English very well, so I can’t ask them to help me.”

Table 3. Types of English-Language Activities

Survey questions	Summary of the participants' narrative responses
Please explain how you practice listening and speaking in English while you are out of school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking with my friends and siblings (n = 6) • Watching movies or TV (n = 6) • Getting help from my English tutor (n = 5) • Shopping or calling for information (n = 1)
Please explain how you practice reading in English while you are out of school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading books (n = 13) • Solving reading comprehension questions using test preparation materials (n = 5)
Please explain how you practice writing in English while you are out of school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping daily journals or essays (n = 10) • Practicing spelling using worksheets or test preparation materials (n = 3)

Parental Involvement

An initial survey question also asked the participants whether and how their parents encourage them to use English at home. The responses revealed that a majority of the parents encourage them to read books and write in English. Some of them also attempted to send their children to English language centers to get extra help with English from language tutors. Only a few parents attempted to check in with their children's teachers about their children's progress in schoolwork. Five participants responded that their parents encourage them to practice English at home instead of their native language, Korean. Table 4 summarizes how the participants responded in regards to their parents' involvement.

The follow-up interviews with the three parents (all mothers) revealed more

details about their understanding of their children's English language development and about how they view their children's maintenance of first language (i.e., Korean) proficiency. *Sukhee*, one of the mothers who was interviewed, said: "At first, I thought the kids would just learn English with no problem. I just imagined that they would start talking in English from the second day of our arrival to the U.S., unlike us adults. My son came to the U.S. when he was in fourth grade (he is now in seventh grade), and I did not realize how difficult it was for him to acclimate to an English-speaking school environment until he told me about this recently."

Another parent, *Yunjeong*, confessed that she is just not confident about how she could help her child with English-language development when she herself does not speak English well. She said:

Table 4. Types of Parental Involvement

Survey question	Summary of the participants' narrative responses
What kinds of support do your parents provide to improve your English skills? Please describe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage me to read English books (n = 15) • Send me to a tutorial/English language center (n = 10) • Let me watch TV programs in English (n = 10) • Encourage me to write in English (n = 8) • Let me participate in various extra-curricular activities after school so that I can practice English while participating in those activities (n = 6) • Encourage me to practice English instead of Korean (n = 5) • Check with my school teacher (n = 4) • Encourage me to use online resource materials (n = 2)

“I just don’t know what to do. I just tell my daughter to read lots of books in English, and that is the only thing I do to encourage her to practice English. I have also been trying to get information from my neighborhood Korean friends, but often times they don’t want to share it with me.” She eventually decided to send her child to a tutorial center to get extra help with English.

The third parent who was interviewed, *Youngsun*, talked about her son’s Korean language maintenance. She did not think Korean language maintenance is their utmost priority, although she did think it is important to maintain their mother tongue, Korean. She said: “Right now, it is more important for my son to speak English better. I feel it is important for him to be able to keep up with his schoolwork and to converse with his teachers and friends at school. Well, Korean is important, too. But, since we speak Korean at home, I don’t believe he will forget Korean.”

Support from Schools and Teachers

The last set of questions in the initial survey was intended to gather information about the support that the participants receive from their schools and teachers. The schools that they attended offered a mixture of push-in and pull-out ESL instruction. All but two participants responded that they are receiving ESL pull-out instruction at their schools. The daily ESL instructional time varied from school to school, ranging from 30 minutes to over two hours. Most of the participants (n = 19) reported that they are receiving no extra support from their schools and teachers beyond the ESL instruction. Table 5 summarizes the findings.

The follow-up interviews with the participants revealed that their experience with ESL pull-out instruction is mostly not positive. A majority of them felt that the ESL instruction that they have received did not adequately address their language needs. They mentioned that their schools’ ESL pull-out instruction often focuses on simple grammatical aspects of the language that

Table 5. Support from Schools and Teachers

Survey questions	The participants' responses (N = 22)
Do you receive any ESL language instruction at your school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (n = 20) • No (n = 2)
If you receive any ESL instruction at your school, please specify how long the instruction is each day/week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No separate ESL instruction at school (n = 2) • 30 minutes a day (n = 3) • 45 - 60 minutes a day (n = 4) • 60 - 90 minutes a day (n = 10) • Over two hours a day (n = 3)
Do you receive any extra language support from your school besides ESL instruction?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (n = 3) • No (n = 19)

they had already learned from their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in their home country before moving to the US. Although grammar was identified as one of the most challenging aspects in developing academic English-language development, the ESL curricula at the participants' schools reportedly was not always providing the grammar instruction necessary for the academic language use in their mainstream classrooms, nor did the participants feel that they were receiving any extra support to meet their specific language needs in vocabulary and writing.

The follow-up interview with the ESL teacher revealed that although she was aware that Korean students' needs could potentially be different from those from other language backgrounds, she had not looked into these needs in depth. With so many languages represented in her ESL classroom, she just did not know how she could possibly accommodate all of her students' needs. She said, "In our school district, over 90 different languages are represented as

the students' home languages. With this much diversity in language and culture, I don't feel I could do much about English learners from one language background. And, Korean speakers are not a majority of English learners I have. I don't have them every year, or on a regular basis. It's not that I don't want to help them. It's just I don't know how best I can approach this issue. One time, I asked for parent volunteers for Korean newcomer students, and checked around to find resources that could help this student to get a quick handle on English. It's hard to meet every student's needs, although I try to do as much as I can."

Discussion

A number of findings emerged from the initial survey and follow-up interviews with the participants, parents and teacher. First and foremost, with regard to the first research question about how the newcomers from Korea view their English language proficiency, it was evident that Korean adolescent newcomers are no exception among ELLs in having experienced difficulty with academic English-language

development. A majority of the participants felt their English language development is quite challenging. They shared their concerns about having to catch up with their English-speaking peers, particularly in the areas of vocabulary, writing and grammar. There were very few participants who identified no difficulty with academic English. They also felt overwhelmed with the amount of reading and writing involved in daily schoolwork. These findings confirmed what was documented in Francis et al.'s (2006) and Short and Boyson's (2012) research. That is, adolescent newcomers must catch up on subject area knowledge while developing academic literacy, and the level of academic work that is required for their grade levels is much higher than for students in lower grades. Worse yet, they have a much shorter time to master the English language than younger English learners. In this regard, Korean adolescent newcomers are no different from other newcomer ELLs in the US.

As for the second research question, the participants' patterns of out-of-school English-language use, the findings indicated that a majority of the participants indeed engage in various types of additional English-language use beyond homework assigned from their schools. In terms of oral language use, however, many of the participants responded that they never or rarely use English to speak with their parents at home even though parents did not discourage it. A majority of the participants declared that they exclusively speak Korean as their home language. If they did speak English at home, it was often with their siblings or English-speaking friends in their

neighborhoods. As summarized in Table 3, it did not appear that they engage in speaking English beyond everyday, conversational use of English. Several participants responded that they receive help from their tutors for practicing English. Also, the participants' written English-language practice mostly included book reading, keeping daily journals, and worksheet practice for spelling and reading comprehension.

From the initial surveys and follow-up interviews with the participants, it became evident that much of the participants' out-of-school language use was not guided or supervised by their parents or teachers. It was mostly left up to the participants' own decision or preference. Many of the interviewed participants reiterated that they had never received a recommended list of books by their content-area or ESL teachers, nor was it recommended that they participate in any school- or district-based after-school or summer programs. They received a school-wide list of recommended books for their grade level, but those books were often above these students' reading level and there were no guided reading activities provided by their teachers to enhance the reading comprehension. The participants' parents appeared to make efforts to encourage their children's English language practice at home by encouraging them to practice English in various ways and activities. However, neither the participants nor the parents were supported or guided in their language practice by the teachers or schools.

One of the notable findings about the third research question, parents' involvement in English language

development, was that few parents reached out to their children's teachers to seek help in how to guide and support their children's English-language development. A follow-up interview with the parents revealed that a lack of English-language proficiency was identified as a prominent reason why the parents were not active in communicating with the teachers. The parents were also somewhat apprehensive about making frequent contact with their children's teachers and schools. In general, they felt that their children's English proficiency development was the primary responsibility of their own family, not that of schools and teachers. This was reflected in the participants' surveys as well. Some of the participants were getting help from tutorial centers for English-language practice instead of asking for help from their teachers.

The parents were also unaware of the importance of their home language maintenance in the development of second-language proficiency. None of the interviewed parents acknowledged that they were making any extra effort to continuously develop and maintain their home language, Korean. They did not appear to believe that Korean language maintenance had any potential influence on their children's second-language development. Although they did not appear to discourage their children from speaking Korean, they also did not necessarily encourage them. Although it is well known in the field of second-language education that the skills and metalinguistic knowledge acquired in the first language can also be transferred to the second language, frequently referred to as Common Underlying Proficiency (Cummins, 1991), the parents of these

newcomer students did not appear to realize the interconnected nature of their children's two languages.

It is documented in many studies that first-generation immigrant parents often hold misguided and misinformed beliefs about their children's second-language development and bilingualism (refer to King and Mackey (2007) for a comprehensive discussion). They are often told by teachers and other parents not to confuse children with using two languages in their household, as it would delay their cognitive and linguistic development, but this has no basis in research. In the present study, the parents of the Korean newcomer students did not appear to discourage their children from using Korean at home. However, they did not encourage them to continue to maintain Korean-language proficiency in any significant way, either. Rather, they appeared to assume that Korean-language proficiency would be maintained without making any extra effort, as the language was being used as the main language in their households. In the interviews with the parents, it was apparent that they had never been informed by anyone that L1 language and literacy maintenance could positively contribute to their children's second-language development.

The last research question, pertaining to support from schools and teachers for the newcomer students' language development, revealed the fact that the schools' and teachers' approaches to teaching the newcomer students from Korea may not adequately serve the students' needs. A majority of the participants responded that the ESL instruction that they were receiving at their schools do not prepare them

adequately for mainstream content instruction. They felt that they were learning language features that they had already learned in their previous English instruction in Korea, or that the language features they were learning in school were not helpful for understanding their mainstream content-area instruction. In addition, they were receiving no guidance for English-language practice at home beyond the ESL instruction provided at their schools. The follow-up interview with the ESL teacher elucidated that teachers and schools may indeed be oblivious to the specific needs of these newcomer students from Korea.

These findings shed light on the Korean newcomers' struggles in their efforts to develop their English language proficiency and how they should be guided and supported more effectively. It is apparent that these newcomer students' difficulties are no exception among ELLs, so their needs should be properly attended to. Further, the study also suggests that parents, teachers and schools should communicate more actively to help newcomer students achieve their English language development. In this regard, teachers and schools should be open to finding ways of accommodating these newcomer students' specific needs for language development and use. Since language development is an ongoing continual process, not just limited to school hours, these newcomer students' out-of-school English language use should be guided effectively by the parents and teachers.

Conclusion

This study examined how newcomer English learners (ELLs) from Korea engage in out-of-school English

language practice and their challenges in developing academic English language proficiency. It also investigated the extent to which parents and teachers are involved and supportive in the process of language use beyond school hours. The findings of the study indicated that Korean newcomer ELLs indeed experience difficulty with various aspects of academic English, particularly in the areas of vocabulary, writing, and grammar. Just like other newcomer ELLs from other language backgrounds, they feel challenged in catching up to their English-speaking peers in learning academic subjects.

Although they engage in various out-of-school English language use to improve their second language proficiency, this is generally done with little to no guidance or support from teachers and schools, according to the students' perspective. The parents are supportive of their children's language practice, but they are not aware of ways to effectively support them, nor are they active in seeking help from teachers or schools. It would be desirable if schools explore ways to provide guidance and assistance more effectively to these newcomer students and parents. Further, schools should review their ESL instructional approaches to examine how the instruction could be differentiated to meet the various needs of their ELL population.

This study also illuminated the importance of communication among all the stakeholders of ELL education: ELLs, parents, teachers, and schools should all communicate with one another closely to find the best ways to accommodate the needs of these ELLs. It was revealed in this study that the

newcomer ELLs and their parents might not be properly informed about how to effectively engage in first- and second-language use at home. Teachers of ELLs may not necessarily be aware of specific needs of these newcomer ELLs either. Undoubtedly, ELLs' language development and academic success are not solely in the hands of ELLs themselves but require teamwork among ELLs, parents and teachers. It is emphasized that all of the involved parties should keep an open line of communication.

Given the limitation that this study was conducted on Korean newcomer

ELLs enrolled in only one school district, the findings may not have captured all the complexities and range of language practice patterns and needs of this population of ELLs. Future research should look into whether there are any regional variations in these newcomer ELLs. Similarities and differences with ELLs from other cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds should also be examined. It is hoped that this study has at least established a context for future studies on these newcomer Korean ELLs, whose language needs have not been examined in depth in many research studies.

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APPENDIX

Survey and Interview: Out-of-School English Language Use*

* The survey and interview were translated in Korean when the participants preferred to be surveyed and interviewed in Korean.

Demographic Information

1. How long have you lived in the United States? _____ years _____ months
2. How old were you when you moved to the U.S.? _____ years old
3. Have you ever attended any English-speaking school before moving to the U.S.?
_____ yes _____ no
4. If yes, what type of school was it and how long did you attend the school? _____

Language backgrounds

5. Were you able to speak, read, or write English before moving to the U.S.? __yes __no

6. If the answer to 5 above is “yes,” which language skill were you most confident in before moving to the U.S.? _____

7. How difficult was it for you learn English? (Circle one)

Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Very much	Extremely
1	2	3	4	5

8. What is most difficult in learning English? (Rate the difficulty in order. 1- most difficult; 6- least difficult)

Pronunciation/Speaking

Listening

Spelling

Words

Grammar

Reading

Writing (stylistics)

9. Which language skill are you most proficient in now? (Circle one)

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

Home English language use

10. Do you use English at home? (Circle one)

never	rarely	sometimes	frequently	always
1	2	3	4	5

11. If you do use English at home, with whom do you use it? (Circle all that apply)

With my parents/guardians

With my brothers or sisters

Other (list) _____

12. Do your parents/guardians encourage you to use English at home? yes no

13. What support do your parents/guardians provide to improve your English skills? (Check **all** that apply.)

- They encourage me to speak English at home.
- They encourage me not to use Korean at home.
- They encourage me to watch TV programs in English.
- They encourage me to use on-line English materials.
- They encourage me to read books in English.
- They encourage me to write in English.
- They provide tutors and/or let me attend English language centers so that I can continue to practice English outside the school.
- They arrange extracurricular activities so that I can interact with English-speaking peers.
- They check with my school teachers for the progress of my English language skills.
- Other (please describe).

14. Please check how much you use English outside the school. Please don't include the regular school homework that you receive from your school.

- about 0 – 2 hours per week
- about 3-5 hours per week
- about 6-8 hours per week
- over 9-10 hours per week

15. Please explain briefly how you use English outside the school to improve the following language skills.

Listening and Speaking _____

Reading _____

Writing _____

16. Do you use any on-line tools (internet materials) to practice English? If yes, please explain what you use and how often you use them.

Support from School

17. Are you receiving any ESL language instruction at your school? yes no

18. If the answer to 17 is yes, how long is the ESL lesson per day? _____

19. Do you think the ESL instruction that you receive (or received in the past) at your school is (or was) helpful? Why or why not?

20. Does any of your school teachers provide extra support or homework to improve your English skills? If yes, what kind of special support do you receive from your school teacher(s)?
