Different Literacies in Different Contexts of Use:
Case Studies of Transitional Korean Adolescents’
Literacy Practices

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

As new technology has changed adolescents’ literate life pathways outside school in remarkable ways, new uses of terminology, such as “mutiliteracies” (The New London Group, 1996), are necessary to capture the multi-dimensional nature of current encounters with what was long called “literacy,” a term that reflects a more limited presence in a print-mediated environment. However, there has been relatively little interest in the multiliteracies experiences of Korean adolescents in the U.S., especially in the framing of them as transitional youth. This study asserts that the term “transitional youth” best captures the nature of their movement from the native language and culture they are moving from to a very new language and culture. This study examined the literacy practices of transitional Korean adolescents across three contexts—school, home, and community—from a sociocultural perspective. I conducted multiple case studies of three transitional Korean adolescents in a Midwestern city in the U.S. Over a six month period, I used multiple approaches to data collection: participant observation, non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, field notes, informal conversations, documents, and artifact collection. I used inductive analysis of the data by focusing on the transitional students’ literacy experiences in three contexts (school, home, and a community center) in
terms of ways of engaging in both school and out of school literacies, the accomplishments associated with out of school literacy practices, the movement of literacy practices across contexts, literate identities in multiliteracies experiences, and the relationship between academic literacy and multiliteracies.

Findings revealed that the out of school literacy practices of the participants were intricately involved in transitional and multiliteracies features of literacy activities. Their out of school literacy practices served as a means of constructing identities (a group identity and multiple individual identities), coping with the realities and the emotions they experienced, shifting their positioning and enhancing their circumstances, creating ties between the old and new worlds, retaining ties with their Korean heritage and identity, and improving their English. Furthermore, the literacy practices of these transitional students moved among languages, practices and locations. However, literacy practices on the move encountered social and cultural contingencies and were redefined by the social contexts in which they occurred. Therefore, the findings of the study suggest that literacies on the move have the potential to simultaneously empower and disempower writers.

Through the multimodal composition, the participants were able to express their literate identities as writers by actively drawing on their out of school lives (resources), such as their border crossing experiences of life in America, everyday cultural practices, multimodal resources, and the inquiry process itself. They also developed academic knowledge and English proficiency as they reflected on and recreated their transitional lives and identities. The study suggests that through the different literacies in the three contexts of use studied, we need to consider ways to acknowledge and use such practices.
in pedagogy and curricula and support students as multilingual and multiliterate to construct and retain literate identities and to become powerful readers and writers while they are in school and beyond.
I dedicate my dissertation to God
Acknowledgments

I am really depressed... The class is boring... The teacher is saying cultural difference between American culture and other cultures... All of the students seem to be carefully listening to what the teacher says... They seem to be newcomers in the U.S.... I am fed up with American culture, especially, certain superficial cultural things... I can't understand why I should be in this classroom.

A long time ago, when I started my doctoral work, I had an opportunity to write an autobiography of literacy in a contrastive rhetoric class. Titling it “My journey through writing across cultures,” I recounted my encounters of several genres of writing through a five paragraph essay, expository writing and persuasive essay, and academic writing while reflecting on my four year writing journey in American institutions of higher learning. The quote above, from one of my papers, demonstrates how miserable I felt when I was placed in an ESL academic writing class again while starting my doctoral coursework at The Ohio State University. In spite of several years of study in another American university, I still did not meet the imposed requirements of an essay writing test in the new school. I lamented my Korean identity as a hindrance to my writing ability in English, and I asked myself about how I would reconcile my Korean identity and American identity through writing. Since then, many years have passed by, and now I realize my issues were the same as those of my research participants. Jessica, Inhee, and John were looking for ways to reconcile their Korean identity and American identity through various literacies. As an author and researcher, I needed to make their voices heard. I would be especially well
positioned to do so because I had the same cultural backgrounds and understood them more than others. Unfortunately, this was not as easy as I thought, and to be honest, it was such a long, bitter process; while struggling with the dissertation, I wrote, re-wrote, re-re-wrote and needed to fight myself against an invisible future. Without my advisor, Dr. Hirvela, I would not have been able to find my direction and to tell their life stories through the dissertation. Indeed, my last encounter with dissertation writing in an American institution was the toughest, but I would say, “It was worthwhile” and “Now, I am likely to get a sense of how to reconcile my Korean identity and American identity.” It was a long, bitter journey through which I needed to look for my own way of juggling two cultures for myself with a strong academic voice.

No amount of words could describe how much I owe it to Dr. Alan Hirvela. Giving me harsh comments, he taught me how to analyze data and construct an authorial voice, which enabled me to slowly grow up in the academic world. I also appreciate Dr. Youngjoo Yi, who supported me emotionally during the whole doctoral experience. I was lucky to meet her because I was able to share my L1 language and culture and talk about the same interests. I am grateful for Dr. Francis Troyan, who served as my committee member when I had a difficult time finding one. In addition, I should express special thanks to Dr. George Newell, who introduced me to multiltieracies during one of his courses and supported me in various ways.

Studying for a long time would not occur without sacrifices. My husband has supported me through such a hard process without any complaint even though he also struggled with his adaptation to the U.S. as a first generation immigrant. My daughter, Jennifer, has grown
up to be an independent college student. Arriving in a new world by simply following her mom, she said, “Now I know what my mommy is doing.” She was not likely to know exactly what I was doing back then. I confess I was a selfish wife and mother, putting a priority on school work, but my husband and daughter loved me despite my faults. My parents, my siblings, and my aunt would smile at my accomplishment-Thank you for helping me to become what I am in various ways. Pastor Keunsang Lee, whose sermons played an important role in teaching me how to persevere and strengthening me, is another person I am grateful for.

Finally, I devote my gratitude to God, who worked on me through all these people and molded me beautifully through this hardship.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

I’ve tried to limit the hours on the computer but I can’t control it... We compromised on 2 hours on the weekends... This year he complained that 2 hours were not enough since he had to download music for his i-Pod... he was the only one among his friends that couldn’t play computer games and... he at least needed to know what kinds of games they were... he grumbled about not being able to type when he was writing and kept trying to touch the computer. Sometimes, he needed the computer to look up images and information for drawings. After satisfying all of his computer needs, the hours on the computer increased dramatically. He started to use it during the weekdays and he goes on every websites he knows... Facebook a lot and reads a lot of webtoons, Korean news and scandals, and their comments. (Interview, 06/04/10).

Background to the Study

The quotation above from the mother of one of the participants in this study provides an entry point into the study by drawing attention to the multitude of literacy options available to adolescent “transitional” youth like John, who operate regularly in more than one linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural domain with respect to literacy. The ongoing evolution of electronically mediated means of communication that instantaneously cross
cultures and languages constitutes a new and dynamic, but potentially unstable, world of literacy (reading, writing, visual, and aural modalities) that individuals like John encounter and navigate daily. Compared to the much more stable world of print literacy that was long dominant, today’s literacy environment is crammed with options, so that young people like John must learn how to move successfully across various spaces of literate practice as they make choices about where and how they want to invest themselves as literate beings who operate in two different cultural realms. In this new and ever-changing environment, there is a need to learn more about how someone like John, who is bilingual and bicultural, makes such choices and performs within these different spaces.

John frequently clashed with his mother, who nagged him to study when he was at home. He refused to follow his mother’s strict academic plan and instead spent most of his time on the computer in his room engaging in the non-academic activities he preferred. John would say, “Mom, why do you always tell me to study, don’t you have anything else to talk about?” After a screaming, earsplitting, chaotic, very public showdown, John’s mother finally admitted defeat. The interview comments above reflect her apprehension and despair over her son’s teenage rebellion. However, behind this sort of emotional battle, there is something else of importance: the implication that adolescents like John are growing up in a culturally different way in this fast changing global and technology era and that their lives are intensely intertwined with the computer through the ever-present activities of downloading, socializing, writing, drawing, and locating information, as John said.
As John’s case demonstrates, new technology has changed adolescents’ literate life pathways outside school in remarkable ways; adolescents nowadays are deeply engaged in various on-line activities such as social networking, instant messaging, playing games, and exploring virtual worlds. In the case of transitional youths, such activity may be taking place in more than one language and involve different identities calibrated to the different worlds they move between. This marks them as an especially important population to understand with respect to literacy.

Such online activities provide adolescents with ample opportunities to immerse themselves in a globalized world, create transnational and transcultural spaces within and across societies, and use diverse communicative practices for meaning making. These new uses have shaped new types of social interactions, with interesting and important implications for the pedagogy of writing (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2011; New London Group, 1996). These new types of literacy activities have also strongly challenged longstanding traditional notions of print-based literacy and beliefs about centering learning within school-based academic activities. These were the notions that John’s mother grew up with, embraced, and attempted to pass along to her son, who had grown up in a very different world dominated by screen-based literacy and who was suddenly transitioning to yet another world in which he had to acquire an identity and learn to act with respect to literacy.

The changing world of literate activity has necessitated new uses of terminology, such as “mutiliteracies” (The New London Group, 1996), to capture the multi-dimensional nature of current encounters with what was long called “literacy” to reflect its more limited
presence in a print-mediated environment. Literacy is now viewed as the ability to construct and understand the different possibilities of meanings made available by multimodal forms and in multiple languages (including multiple Englishes) and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries (New London Group, 1996). This shift to use of the more inclusive and wide-ranging term multiliteracies has provided scholars and teachers with a much more flexible tool for examining the rich and diverse multiple dimensions of literate life outside of school as well as in school (Luke, 2003) as well as new notions of culture and learning moving beyond static or bounded notions of culture to multiple kinds of intercultural transactions (Lamb, 2006).

Despite the strong recognition of new literacy opportunities outside of school, there seems to be no clear understanding of how students nowadays align themselves with different literacies in different sites (at home, at school, and beyond home and school). In particular, the issue of various literacies in different sites is compelling for English Language Learner (ELL) students in the U.S., who are a diverse group in terms of educational backgrounds, native language (L1) literacy skills, second language (L2) skills, and personal and social/cultural knowledge derived from the L1 and L2 environments they traverse. Their literacies outside of school are connected to diverse worlds, different languages, and various modalities and serve as tools for transforming their thoughts and experiences and shaping their identities as marginalized youth in a new world. Meanwhile, their literacies inside school may be connected in some ways to their out of school literacy activities.
ELLs are students born and raised in other cultures and using other languages and then transplanted to a new educational as well as linguistic and cultural environment in the United States. Some may already have developed strong academic skills in their native country and are skilled readers and writers in their L1; in addition, they may already possess a well-formed and comfortable identity within their L1 framework. Meanwhile, others may have transitioned to life in the United States with far less academic and literacy experience in their home culture and language, and may also have a native culture identity that is less well formed. In either case, these are the backgrounds they bring to the new opportunities for multiliterate activity that arise as they develop their lives in the United States.

In considering their stories as transitional youth who shift from one world to another and engage in a complex process of identity formation and re-formation, it is also important to bear in mind the world of literacy as it so often practiced in American schools. Literacy there often consists of decontextualized skills and is assessed through such limited measures as multiple choice exams and short answer exercises. In this context, engaging in different literacies in different contexts of use, in and outside school and involving more than one language, means to understand differences between literacy in education and in everyday practices. Attempting to understand the students’ literacy experiences in such different settings draws attention to what Street has claimed: that literacy is more complex than current curricula and assessment approaches allow (Street, 2005). Then, too, interpreting transitional youths’ engagement in personally selected multiliteracies outside school is a challenging yet necessary task in the effort to generate a full and meaningful portrait of their lives as multiliterate beings. Because the circumstances they face are so
new, little is known at present about how they navigate across different sites of literate activity and use different languages in the process. This study sought to create such portraits of three transitional youth.

**Statement of the problem**

Recently, as notions of literacy itself have changed, literacy scholars have become interested in how young people experience literacy outside school. They have recognized that students have literate lives beyond what school requires, especially as new opportunities for engagements with literacy have expanded, such as creating and maintaining a Facebook site and using the Internet to search for information that relates to personal needs. Some literacy scholars look only at these activities which occur outside school, while others look across school and out of school activities to explore the nature and effects of such involvement. The roots of the latter kind of research go back to the 1960s and 1970s, when some researchers became interested in how academic achievement in school was affected by students’ literacy activity away from school (Cushman, Barbier, Mazak, & Petrone, 2006). They asserted that the poor academic achievement of some children stemmed from incompatibility between their family and community’s cultural practices and the expectations of school-based learning. Since the early 1980s, there have been various studies of home literacy practices, such as mainstream family literacy practices (Taylor, 1983), urban lower economic status families (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988), and comparable studies exploring mainstream and minority home literacy practices (Heath, 1983). While these studies have explored the differences between literacy as
practiced in school and within the family, they could not provide a comprehensive understanding of the students because they focused on the students’ families.

As the “social turn” in literacy research emerged in the 1980s, literacy scholars extended their interest to the broader world outside of the school context. Such research gained considerable momentum in the late 1990s and has continued to the present, with a particular interest in such areas as: adolescents' unsanctioned or voluntary (i.e., out of school) literacy activities such as writing diaries, poems, notes (Camita, 1993; Finders, 1997; Shumann, 1993), graffiti (Moje, 2000), instant messaging (Lewis & Fabos, 2005), online journaling (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005), and writing in online affinity spaces (Curwoold, Magnifico, & Lammers, 2013); adolescents’ literacy activities in and out of school (Noll, 1998; Shultz, 2002); and multimodal literacy in community centers or schools (Chisholm & Trent, 2013; Curwood & Cowell, 2011; Hagood, Skinner, Venters, & Yelm. 2009; Hull & Katz, 2006; Jocson, 2006; Matthewman, Blight, & Davies, 2004; Mahiri, 2006; Nelson, 2006; Ranker, 2008; Skinner & Hagood. 2008; Vasudevan, Schultz, and Bateman, 2010; Ware and Warschauer, 2005). The studies just cited focused on native English speaking students.

There has also been interest in the L2 area, where the view of literacy beyond school settings sheds light on multilingual literacies in cross-cultural contexts. Some of the studies have highlighted different language and literacy practices embedded in cross-cultural practices and specific views of the world (Gregory 1993, 1994; Gregory, Long & Volk, 2004; Gregory & Williams, 2000a, 200b; Ran 2000; Skilton-Sylvester 2002; Li 2000, 2001, 2002; Valdes, 1996; Wan 2000). Other researchers have noted adolescents’ voluntary literacy practices such as writing diaries, poems, and notes (Haneda & Monobe, 2009; Yi,
participation in online activities (Black, 2009; Lamb, 2000, 2004, 2009; McGinnis, Goodstein-Stolzenberg, & Saliani, 2007; Yi 2008. 2009), and off-line and online diaries (Yi & Hirvela, 2010); multimodal literacy in community centers or school (Ajayi, 2008, 2009; Danzak, 2011; Hepple, Sockhill, Tan, & Alford, 2014; McGinnis, 2007; Shin & Cimasko, 2008; Wilson, Chavez, & Anders, 2012); and connections of literacy practices across school and home (Yi, 2010). Further, others have investigated the movement of immigrants’ literacy practices across two locations and multiple languages (Garcia & Gaddes, 2012; Leonard, 2013; Sanchez, 2007; Skerrett, 2012).

Although the research on out of school contexts in the L1 and L2 domains provides rich understandings of students’ literacy practices, few studies have attempted to look at them across three contexts (school, home, and community) in a comprehensive way, especially by including the multiliteracies present in the community context. This framework aligns with a sociocultural view of literacy as a constellation of multiliteracies situated within multiple social contexts and activities (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000) and allows for a comparison of literacy across domains (Cruickshank, 2006). Further, the studies of the out of school context might have put too much emphasis on local contexts and resulted in a misleading dichotomy between school and out of school contexts, as if there could be no interaction across the two settings (Hull & Shultz, 2002). It may be wiser for researchers to account for movement from one context to the other, especially with multimodal literacy becoming more common in school settings and students possessing a high degree of electronic literacy competence in their private lives, in which case it may be easier for them to meld writing across the two settings. This is in line with ideas about
how multimedia technologies have produced a shift in what counts as texts and what it means to be literate (Jewitt, 2005; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011), which has led to the current multiliteracies emphasis. However, there has been relatively little interest in the multiliteracies experiences of transitional youth. Little is known about how they utilize various forms of electronically mediated literacy technology, especially in relationship to the different languages and cultures resonating in their lives and the possible impact of their engagement with multiliteracies on their ongoing identity construction as they transition between those languages and cultures. Even less is known about their multiliteracies as experienced across three contexts mentioned earlier: home, school, and community center.

In response to the gaps in the literature just noted, this study explored Korean adolescents in the U.S. within the framework of seeing them as transitional youths moving between the Korean and American cultures. There have been few studies of these Korean-born adolescents in spite of them being the fastest growing group in U.S. secondary education (Faltis, 1999; Lucas, 1997). Although several studies have investigated them, those studies focused on differences between their L1 and L2 writing in terms of text and discourse features, composing and editing processes, and the role of the L1 (Harklau & Pinnow, 2009). Very little is known about them from a multiliteracies perspective, and yet it is reasonable to assume that they participate actively and significantly in various forms of literacy, especially given Korea’s well-known status as one of the most highly ‘wired’ countries in the world. Given their increasingly strong presence in American schools and
their grounding in electronically mediated literacy, these Korean transitional youth represent a population much in need of research attention.

Another factor that motivated this study was the issue of how best to characterize or label such youth (including young people from other countries and backgrounds). Earlier research in this area relied on the term immigrant 1.5 generation students (e.g., Yi, 2005), but that label has come under some criticism and is now seldom used. More recent terms have included transnational students (e.g., Lamb 2009; Yi 2009), and sojourners (e.g., Haneda & Monobe, 2009; Kanno, 2003). While still operative and useful, those terms may not be sensitive to the transitory nature of the lives of such youth, especially those who have only been in the United States for a relatively short period of time. This study works on the belief that the term transitional youth best captures the nature of their movement from the language and culture they are moving to a very new language and culture, as this is likely to be a complex and uneven experience. Caught between new and old, these individuals are likely to feel a strong allegiance to their home or L1 culture and language while also recognizing a need to succeed in the new one. This can result in considerable movement between the L1 and L2 worlds, including the multiliteracies available in them. Thus, a purpose of this study was to see whether the term transitional youth is a beneficial one in studying their multiliteracies experiences.

In the current study, the research participants fall within this category of transitional youth and thus mark a new opportunity to explore the multiliteracies experiences of this growing population within the United States. Within this context, they displayed some degree of variation. One participant, Jessica, came to the U.S. via foreign visa status due
to her father’s exchange visits, so that she was not expected to stay a long time. Another, John, came to the U.S. through a foreign visa during his father’s doctoral study. The third participant, Inhee, came to the U.S. as an immigrant whose future was thus likely to be based in the U.S. Jessica and John were initially supposed to stay while their fathers were in the U.S. (2-3 years), but they were torn between staying in the U.S. and going back to Korea during my research. By the end of my research, they decided to continue studying in the U.S. through high school. Looking beyond that, John planned to go to college in the U.S., and Jessica planned to go to college in the U.S. or Korea. More specifically, if she decided to attend a Korean college as an undergraduate, her intention was to return to the U.S. for her graduate study. Regarding Inhee, the only true immigrant among the three participants, she intended to stay in the U.S. after high school, even though her mother could return to Korea at that point.

The three research participants in this study were intensely affiliated with the two countries, Korea and the U.S., and were continually balancing their lives in the two countries; they preserved attachments to their home country in economic, political, religious, or familial terms while also acting as members of the host country, the U.S. Furthermore, they were able to use the resources specific to the two countries according to their purposes. For example, they liked returning to Korea to attend SAT preparation courses during their summer vacations, or studied math outside of school using Korean online courses and preferring Korean tutors because they felt that Korea was better than the U.S. for test preparation and math education in terms of efficiency, strategy, and drill practices. They volunteered as a math teacher aide at church in the U.S. because they were
proud of their math skills acquired in Korea, which were of a higher level than what was learned in American schools. In these regards they were quite similar to the transnational student in Yi’s (2009) study, who lived dual Korea-U.S. lives. However, it was their first experience with the U.S., while the transnational students in Yi’s (2009) study tended to move back and forth between their home country and their host country. This was why the term transitional youth was seen as more appropriate for this study than transnational youth, as the participants more actively involved in a relatively new process of shifting from one domain to another.

To elaborate on the notion of transitional youth, as relative newcomers who had arrived in the U.S. between 10 months to 1.5 years prior to this study, the participants still had strong and deep roots in Korean culture but also faced social and academic pressures to adapt to the U.S. as soon as possible. Thus, they were frequently caught between the pressures to assimilate into American society and to preserve their own cultural origins. This cultural transition became especially complicated when they had to negotiate and transform their identities through their experiences in school, at home, in the community, and among their peers. This was not a “one size fits all” identity situation; a different identity was required for involvement in different settings and involving different people. At school, for example, there was a desire to be accepted by their American peers, and this necessitated acting in more ‘American ways.’ In other settings, such as at home, at church, and in community settings, where they were surrounded by Korean peers, a different identity was necessary. Literacy played an important role in these identity transitions, as it afforded them various opportunities for interaction and personal expression. All in all, they
were mired in a process of upheaval and transition due to unfamiliar circumstances, cultural differences, and linguistic barriers.

To date, literature has not yet captured the unique circumstances faced by these transitional individuals, including their involvement in the multiliteracies available to them in two languages and two cultures. It was this gap in the literature that motivated the current study.

**Objectives of the Study**

In response to the gap in the literature just cited, the purpose of this study was to examine the literacy practices of transitional Korean adolescents in school, at home, and in a community setting from a sociocultural perspective. By focusing on their use of literacy practices in these three contexts, this study attempted to understand how their multiliteracies interwined with their everyday lives as well as their ways of aligning themselves through various literacies. In line with these objectives, the following questions were formulated to design the study, guide data collection and analysis, interpret data, and present the study’s findings.

**Research Questions**

The overarching research question of this study was: “What happens to transitional Korean adolescents as they engage different literacies in different contexts of use?” More specific questions were as follows:

1. What do their out of school literacy practices accomplish for them?
2. How do their literacy practices permeate the boundaries between settings?
3. How do they cultivate their literate identities through their multiliteracies experiences?

4. How do they develop academic knowledge and English proficiency through multiliteracies processes and engagement?

**Significance of the Study**

First, since this study addresses transitional Korean adolescents’ multiliteracies in and out of school contexts, it offers an opportunity to reframe notions of literacy learning and engagement. As the contemporary societies feature the increasing salience of linguistic and cultural diversity and significant changes across the communicational landscape (New London Group, 1996), adolescents’ social words and their literacy practices are changing in various ways. In particular, the out of school context is where we can look at their new and various literacy practices as important sites of how they express themselves and engage in meaning making processes. Their social worlds are often multilingual and multimodal, moving from a local context to a global context by means of the internet. New technology enables them to adopt rich and complex literacy practices and to have access to and create new forms of multimodal texts. This has produced a shift in what counts as texts and what it means to be literate (Jewitt, 2005; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). However, schools tend to maintain more traditional purposes and views of literacy, so that students’ learning at school often has no bearing on their real world involvement with literacy. This may be particularly true in the case of transitional youth like the participants in study, who pose interesting and perhaps significant challenges for schools. The result is that learning is sometimes based on a cultural deficit model in such a way that
“difference is construed as an aberration of mainstream norms, and the explanatory logic of low achievement is that of negation, whereby the cultural patterns of non-dominant groups are viewed as lacking in the social and cognitive resources deemed necessary for moral living and economic mobility” (Lamb, 2006, p. 215). In other words, schools may set the bar low in terms of academic expectations for these students, thus restricting their opportunity for more substantial and significant learning. This may lead to heightened attempts to learn outside school on the part of these transitional youth.

Within the recognition of a gap between school and out of school contexts, as citizenship is increasing conceptualized on a global scale, I have attempted to look into or across walls that often get erected between spaces such as school, home, and community, where literacy may well play important roles. Through this attempt, we can learn more about how transitional students accumulate experiences over a wide range of interactions in various contexts. This provides us with an understanding of the multiple ways in which the practices, values, beliefs, and norms of different settings may overlap, align, complement, or collide with each other. Also, it leads us to pinpoint how the students experience both continuities and disjunctions in their experiences and how their interpretations in part shape the contexts for their own development. By addressing this issue, this study illustrates the interplay between different two contexts as one way to recognize the strengths and success of transitional students, and as a result enable schools to re-conceptualize the students’ literacy learning and cultural background and affiliations. This aligns with the idea of metaphorically treating contexts as “sieves through which social, cultural, economic, and political discourses animate one other” (Alvermann &
Moore, 2011) rather than a structured, impermeable container. For example, in this study the three participants were involved, outside their ‘regular’ school setting, in an important multimodal composing project in a community center class, a project that, had it been recognized by their mainstream teachers, might have provided valuable ideas and insights concerning how best to work with these individuals. That leads to a related area of significance for the study.

Second, this study may provide valuable ‘food for thought’ regarding English as a Second Language (ESL) pedagogy. ELL students are usually placed in both ESL and mainstream classes. ESL classes provide them with opportunities to expand their linguistic competence and to develop appropriate spoken and written skills. However, there are stigmas attached to ESL classes. The ELL students often characterize them as remedial in nature and thus easy. This leads to a sense of valuable school time being lost and resentment about that lost time. Domestic students may likewise see them as remedial in nature, leading to a marginalized view of ELLs as the “ESL kids” who don’t belong in mainstream courses with them. This, in turn, creates an “Us versus Them” mentality that results in unseen barriers being erected between the ELLs and the mainstream students. This, too, generates resentment on the part of the ELLs, who have no voice in whether they will be assigned to ESL classes, a fact that exacerbates their already deeply frustration about being in ESL classes. Harklau (1994) has pointed out that there are no truly appropriate educational environments for ELLs in American schools. She argued for the need to develop various approaches that integrate language and content-area instruction for ELL students. In this regard, this study’s exploration of a multimodal project based on a
multiliteracies pedagogy conducted in a community center can help to draw attention to new ways of working with ELLs.

Third, this study contributes to a long-time debate concerning U.S. Asian American students’ academic achievement which has been addressed in a variety of ways (e.g. cultural explanation, relative functionalism, and cultural ecology). Although a number of scholars have investigated the reasons for the Asian American students' academic success, their accounts were not comprehensive. For example, they treated Asian Americans as a monolithic group with a shared achievement levels and shared attitudes toward schooling. Similarly, Lee (1994) pointed out that cultural ecologist Ogbu's well-known framework, which provided an insightful understanding of Asian Americans, portrayed them as model minorities whose diverse and complex experiences remain hidden. This ‘model minority’ view has been problematic in a number of ways since it appeared. Gibson (1997) has actually demonstrated great variability in the school performance of immigrant students. As a new and rapidly growing school age population, Korean transitional youth need to be accounted for in these explorations of the success of Asian groups, since they present characteristics that separate them in some ways from true immigrant students. Thus, this study is significant in the way it expands the boundaries of understanding related to different types or groups within the larger category of Asian students in American schools.

**Definitions of Key Terms**

**Literacy activity:** an action involving reading and writing.

**Literacy events/Literacy practices:** literacy events and literacy practices are essential terms for understanding literacy as a set of social practices. Literacy events are observed
events where literacy plays a role. Literacy practices are the general cultural ways of utilizing literacy that people draw upon in their lives. This notion offers a powerful way of conceptualizing the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape (Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

Multiliteracies (multiple literacies): literacy using multimodality, multilingual, and hybrid forms for social purposes, taking account of linguistic and cultural diversity and the multiplicity of communications channels and media.

Mode: a set of socially and culturally shaped resources for meaning-making, including image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech and sound-effect.

Multimodality: a way of conveying meaning through multiple modes of representation.

Out of school literacy practices: this term refers to not only literacy activities outside of the school context (e.g., online activities or reading books for pleasure at home) but also ideologically contrasting notions to academic literacy (school based literacy).

Transitional students: This term is defined in terms of the students’ transitional features of enculturation, including language (L1 and L2) and academics. Their enculturation is a transition process from the Korean reality that shaped their lives for many years to a new academic, cultural, and linguistic reality in a new world they did not choose to enter. Under these circumstances, and amidst pressures to retain a deep affiliation with their Korean roots and identity and to socialize into their new lives as students in an American school setting, these individuals are inevitably moving back and forth between the home and new settings. They are truly individuals in transition, and this process of transition is likely to
be reflected in their use of different forms of literacy, which may help them cope with the process of transition.

Assumptions of the Study

Several assumptions guided this study:

1. This study assumed that literacy is a practice embedded within a socially situated local context; thus, every day literacy practices of adolescents situated in local contexts were assumed to be different to some extent. Also, multiliteracies are viewed as “part of students’ tool kits for understanding, critiquing, and engaging with the global flows of images and texts that they confront daily” (Luke, 2003, p.20).

2. The participants were assumed to be able to engage in various literacy activities in school, at home, and within the community to some extent. By engaging in them, the participants were assumed to create their own meanings relative to their own needs and purposes. In particular, their meanings were made, distributed, received, interpreted and remade in interpretation through many representational and communicative modes, not just through language.

3. During the research process, the participants were assumed to be able to reflect on their daily lives and literacy activities and identify and talk about them.

4. The educational process can be enhanced when teachers learn about the everyday lived context of their students’ lives in school, at home, and in the community.
Chapter 2

The review of the literature

Introduction

To capture literacy practices of transitional Korean adolescents in school, at home, and in a community setting, in this chapter, I present theoretical perspectives, reviewing theoretical concepts and a range of research undertaken to date. This informs my understanding of transitional students’ literacy practices across contexts and provides my conceptual framework of reference for research practice. To this end, in the first section, I begin to articulate literacy as social practices in three ways: (a) literacy in a context, (b) literacy as identities, and (c) literacy as communications. In the second section, I discuss literacy scholars’ empirical studies about immigrant students’ various literacy experiences in and out of school. In the third section, I address the studies on multimodal composition. Finally, I summarize the conceptual tools that guide this study.

Literacy as social practices

Literacy has often been defined as the ability to read and write and is considered a set of neutral and objective skills independent of social context. Historically this view has existed for a long time and resonates with a view that there are fundamental cognitive differences between literate and non-literate societies and individuals (e.g., Great Divide theories of literacy). However, the cognitive consequences of literacy were challenged for being too simplistic and causing false dichotomies between types of societies, modes of
thought, and uses of language. In particular, Scribner and Cole’s (1981) study on the Vai of Liberia found that West African people used three kinds of literacy (Qur’an, indigenous Vai, and English), which there were no intellectual differences that could uniquely and categorically be attributed to. Moreover, the remarkable finding is that their study introduced a concept of literacy practices, that is, that people are engaged in a set of socially organized practices with various literacies. This conception of literacy as a social practice has significantly affected the literacy education field, especially the New Literacy Studies.

**Literacy in Contexts**

The move toward considering literacy as social practices is based on three key principles: literacy in contexts, literacy as identities, and literacy as non-distinction between oral and written communications. In particular, Street’s (1984) empirical study on the three different kinds of literacies plays an essential role in establishing a new theoretical conceptualization of the New Literacy. Based on his study, he develops the concepts of autonomous and ideological models of literacy. He identifies the autonomous model of literacy with the view of literacy as neutral skills related to individual cognitive processes. It is based on an assumption that literacy in itself has effects on other social and cognitive practices such as improved economics, higher cognitive skills, and greater equality. On the other hand, Street articulates the ideological model of literacy as a conception of literacy tied to social and political; it is a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices, which is different from one context to another. It is always constructed and enacted within social and political contexts and contingent on the implications of differing power relationships.
Furthermore, Street (2005) argued that “the autonomous model disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it and that can be presented as though they are neutral and universal” (p. 417). Street’s view on ideological nature of literacy reflects the fact that there are multiple literacies ideologically bound rather than one literacy and the neutrality of literacy disguises its significance for the distribution of power in a society and for authority relations. In other words, it leads us to question what literacy is, thereby expanding the notion of literacy. In particular, Street's conception of literacy questions the legitimacy of literacy at school, that is, schooled literacy, and the possibility of many kinds of literacies- literacy practices beyond a school context. The schooled literacy is usually considered universal and natural and a path to the successful life. However, its ideological nature is that schools normalize the values of white middle class, making other ways of being literate appear less efficacious, and creating status differentials within the school culture. This critical view inspires research studies’ elaboration on the theory and exploration of its ramifications. As a result, various ethnographic studies on people’s everyday practices of literacy in daily life (e.g. Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000) were spotlighted. Similarly, adolescent students’ various out of school literacy events and practices (e.g., Camitta, 1993; Finders, 1997; Knobel, 1999; Moje, 2000; Shuman, 1993; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002) were focused on. Furthermore, the highlighted out of school literacy pedagogy defines local literacies including out of school literacy practices as not “anti-school or interested only in small scale or “local” literacies of resistance but the understandings of students’ emerging experiences with literacy in their own cultural milieus to address broader educational questions and learning of literacy and
of switching between the literacy practices required in different contexts” (Street, 2003). This comprehensive way of out of school view returns the gaze back to the relations between in and out of school, and literacy scholars have attempted to propose conceptual constructs of the transfer for understanding the two (e.g., Hull & Shultz, 2001; Shultz, 2002) and introduce pedagogical models (e.g., Lee’s cultural modeling, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2007; Dyson’s re-contextualization, 2003) to bridge out of school literacies and classroom practices.

**Literacy as Multiple Identities**

In align with the notion of literacy in a context, Gee (1996) conceptualizes literacy more broadly, that is, as Discourses as follows:

“Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes. A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize” (p. 127).

Gee’s conception of literacy as identity kits provides an essential understanding that literacy is intricately involved in identity. He explains further that people use Discourses to affiliate and display their membership in particular social groups. For example, an identity kit to play the role of a certain adolescent would involve certain clothes, certain ways of using language (oral and print), certain attitudes and beliefs, allegiance to a certain life-style, and certain ways of interacting with others. We can call all these factors together, as they are integrated around the identity of a certain adolescent. Also, within this context, identity is socially constructed; in other words, identity construction is highly contextualized and takes multiple forms in any given context. His ground breaking
argument of Discourses provides a tool for examining the connections among literacy, culture, identity, and power (Shultz, 2002). From this perspective, school discourses and out of school discourses are not merely reading and writing activities but various ways of reading and writing practices linked to culture, identity, and power.

**Literacy as Communications; Multiliteracies and Multimodality**

The dichotomous view of oral and literate traditions has been challenged in a theoretical framework of the New Literacy Studies. In particular, Heath (2001) argues that the notion of literacy event is “a conceptual tool useful in examining within particular communities of modern society the actual forms and functions of oral and literate traditions and co-existing relationships between spoken and written language” (p. 445). Looking into our life, speech events (oral mode) and writing (written materials) accompany in many occasions (e.g. in case of interviewing, oral performance and written). Similarly, Heath’s study (1983) in *Ways with words* demonstrates that the Trackton community, which consists of a working class all black community, uses interchangeably the two modes (written materials and spoken uses of language) to supplement and reinforce each other in a unique pattern in daily life.

In a related way, as nowadays communication channels are multiple and cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today increases, the New London Group (1996) recognizes that one literacy, that is, academic literacy, cannot meet all of the communicative needs for various social groups; it argues a new approach, multiliteracies. Literacy is now viewed as the ability to construct and understand the different possibilities of meanings made available by multimodal forms and in multiple languages (including multiple Englishes)
and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries (New London Group, 1996). Furthermore, multimodal literacies are part of the representational resources of a multiliteracies framework (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; New London Group, 1996). These resources, such as modes, affordances, and design, enable us to understand the connection between students’ multimodal choices and their identity. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) noted that multimodality allows participants to attend to meaning as it is made through situated configuration across modes, including images, gestures, gaze, body posture, sound, writing, music, speech, and so on. Additionally, each distinct mode imparts certain types of meaning more easily and naturally than others, a phenomenon referred to as modal affordance. Different modes may be better for certain tasks, and not every mode is equally useful for a particular task (Jewitt & Kress, 2003). The use of different modes by different learners is what the proponents of New Literacy Studies call design (New London Group, 1996; Kress, 2000). More specifically, Design refers to how communicators exploit the resources that are available at a given moment in a specific communicational environment to accomplish their objectives as sign makers (Jewitt, 2008). In particular, in terms of multimodal pedagogy perspective, a multimodal understanding of composing practices widens the lens of composing to include the modal affordances, identities, participation structures, and social interactions and relationships that shape and are shaped through the engagement of multiple modalities for the production of meaning (Jewitt and Kress, 2003; Kress, 2003).
Immigrant Students’ Literacy Practices In and Out of School

The previous section illustrated three ways of conceptualizing literacy as social practices. In this section, from a social perspective, immigrant students’ literacy practices in and out of school will be explored in three ways. First, many studies on immigrant children’s literacy experiences have been explored in multilingual setting, providing a rich picture of how languages and literacies are embedded in different cultural practices and in specific view of the world. Gregory's (1993) study and Ran’s (2000) study investigated the Chinese children’s reading difficulties through a lens of a mismatch between British and Chinese school literacy practices. In school, Tony in Gregory’s (1993) study was rejecting his teacher’s efforts to help him. He focused on individual words and was more interested in labeling the people and things in the illustration than in trying to predict what would come next. Tony's Chinese reading practices at home and Chinese school emphasized repetition, memorization, and accuracy while his teacher put value on the developmental approach to reading (e.g. practicing whole sentences rather than words in the early stage), prediction, and meaning construction through the interaction between the teacher and the student. Likewise, in Ran’s (2000) study, the mothers of Chinese children, educated in mainland China, played a formal teacher-like role, making extensive use of questions, giving explicit instruction, and providing explanations cast as statements or visual demonstrations, particularly when discussing written Chinese characters with the children. The children studied reading by paying attention to form and structure throughout their Chinese school textbooks. For them, reading was a sort of serious work rather than a pleasure activity.
More comprehensively, Li (2002) studied four Chinese children's home literacy practices in Canada and suggested that the families' literacy experiences and heritage in China, their experiences in Canada, and the social context of the families' lives were interwoven in their daily literacy and living. In order for children to learn more and to have a better chance for success, the parents created a Chinese curriculum at home and assigned homework for their children to copy textbooks, do dictations and math exercises, and learn Chinese characters. Their teaching style was not congruent with the school approach in Canada, which emphasized a transactional curriculum with more emphasis on socio-constructivistic ways of learning (e.g., learning through play, little or no homework for younger children, and a less standard curriculum). Also, the parents, coming from a more traditional Chinese school model which emphasized rote-learning, homework, standardized material, and a transmission approach to learning, questioned the coherence, planning, and depth of the curriculum, textbooks, homework, and examinations used by their children's Canadian school. Li pointed out that the children's literacy traditions, embedded in Confucianism and the socio-cultural context of modern China, differed from the values of mainstream Canadian schools, and therefore contributed to the mismatch between their home and school literacy practices.

Like Chinese children, the Bangladesh British children in Gregory's (1994) study and Gregory and Williams's (2000) study used the same recitation and memorization at home. Also, their home literacy practices were mainly involved in their religious life as well as in Bengali learning. Learning to read the Qu'ran is necessary for membership to the Muslim religion. In both Bengali and Mosque classes, literacy learning is an essential part of
belonging to a group. Learning to read and write in Bengali is seen as belonging to a culture and language which fought for during a battle for independence from Pakistan in 1971. Gregory and Williams (2000ab) investigated early story reading experiences of the Bangladeshi British children at home in East London by examining a unique activity, siblings' 'book sharing activity'. The Bangladeshi children showed that in this activity, they viewed book sharing as work rather than play. They focused on print rather than on illustrations, and did serious reading such as accuracy in reading individual words. Also, this practice was unique in that siblings tended to blend strategies learned in both school and Bengali and Arabic classes. Gregory and Williams found that in their interaction patterns in siblings' book sharings the children used repetition, a fast flowing pace similar to that heard in the Qur'anic class, grafted onto echoing, chunking or expressions and gradual predictions from the English school.

While many studies focused on reading differences between school and home, Skilton-Sylvester (2002) examined the writing and reading practices of a Cambodian girl, Nan, in Philadelphia, who experienced a notable separation between school literacy and home literacy. Nan had her strengths as a speaker, an artist, and a storyteller at home, but her school performance was poor. Her ESL teacher felt she was lacking in a lot of basic reading and writing skills. She participated in significantly different literacy practices at home and school. At home, for Nan, writing was meant to be read orally in front of an audience. Performing diverse genre writing, she often composed complicated stories as she read during the performance, which stemmed from a tradition in Cambodia where performance is an essential aspect of reading. She used pictures and oral explanations to supplement the
written word. She easily made new texts, not worrying about spelling. These home literacy practices did not fit with the requirements placed on her by academic literacy in school. In her academic writing, form and accuracy were important, and visual and oral tools could not be used to supplement or embellish the text. Although she engaged in rich and meaningful literacy activities at home, she failed in academic literacy. In other words, there was no link between her strengths at home and the demands academic literacy made of her.

Second, while the studies on cross-cultural differences of literacy practices focused on immigrant children, more recent several scholars have explored immigrant adolescents’ various literacy experiences outside of school. A great portion of the studies is about L2 adolescents’ out of school literacy practices, especially focusing on online literacy practices and identity construction. Lam (2000) studied a Chinese immigrant youth’s online literacy practices through online chatting, emailing, creating and maintaining his homepage. English spoken in the classroom made him feel a sense of marginalization while the English he acquired through the internet was a global English of adolescent popular culture and contributed to a sense of belonging. The textual and semiotic tools of the internet contributed to development of literacy practices that could be transferred to school tasks while affording him new identities. Similarly, Black (2009) explored ELL students’ literate and social activities through online fan fictions. ELL students use multiple modes of representation to convey meaning and take on meaningful social roles through online fan fiction. Their use of multimodality is integral components of how they design their webpages to convey their identities and affiliations with certain social and cultural groups. Through the fan fictions, they were legitimate participants, their knowledge was
appreciated, and the sense of acceptance and belonging in the online community enabled them as authors to develop identities as accomplished creators and users of English text.

From a transnational perspective, Lamb (2009) investigated how two Chinese immigrant adolescents’ transnational affiliation and frame of reference affect their literacy development and knowledge making online communities across national borders. More specifically, defining her two Korean adolescent students as transnational youth who went back and forth for a certain time crossing borders, Yi (2009) demonstrated how their transnational lived experiences influence their literacy learning and identity construction through instant messaging and web postings. From the similar perspective, McGinnis et al (2007) showed that through blogs and personal webpages, transnational youth presented socially situated multiple identities (e.g., immigrant identity affiliated with two nations, ethnic identity, pan-ethnic identity, and a member of a bilingual community).

More locally focusing on a local public online community (Welcome to Buckeye City), Yi (2008) investigated Korean adolescents’ collective relay writing practices. By engaging in an internet community in a Midwestern area, they were invested in their writing with their Korean linguistic and cultural knowledge. This enhanced their sense of writers through collaborative, ongoing interactions among readers, writers, and texts. Similarly, Lamb’s (2004) study on a bilingual HK chat room showed that two Chinese ESL students constructed group identity as immigrants through mixed-code variety language practices and a sense of fluency and confidence in English.

While these studies have focused on online literacy practices, Yi and Hirvela (2010) investigated both online and off line diary writings of a Korean 1.5 generation adolescents.
Crossing a traditional print based diary, a Cyworld online diary in Korean, and a Xanga weblog diary in English, the participant was an active writer in both different languages (L1 and L2) and multimodality for self-sponsored purposes.

Beyond online literacy practices, another trend has noted how transnational youth’s language and literacy practices were influenced by transnational life. Orellana and Reynolds (2008) and Martinez, Orellana, Pacheco, and Carbone (2008) investigated how language repertoires of Latina students shaped by transnational life were productively recruited for academic learning. They identified points of leverage from the translating experiences of the students, as one component of bilingual youth’s largely untapped repertoires of practice, to school literacy practices (paraphrasing, summarizing, and academic essay writing). Garcia and Gaddes (2012) and Sanchez (2007) drew on the transnational experiences of Latina students to compose literature. More comprehensively, in and out of school contexts, Skerrett (2012) investigated a Mexican adolescent’s shifts in her multiple language and literacy practices which she attributed to transnational life and the knowledge she acquired from transnational engagements with language and literacies.

**Multimodal Composition**

In the previous section, I discussed immigrant students’ literacy experiences in and out of school. As earlier mentioned, as the concept of multiliteracies has emerged in response to the theorization of the new conditions of contemporary societies (Jewitt, 2008), the ways of learning and teaching in the multimodal environment of the contemporary classroom have been investigated in various ways. In this section, I will review research on
multimodal composition in L1 and L2, highlighting some key themes that encompass the various studies.

**Identity exploration:** Several scholars pointed out that using multimodal composition can play an important role in shaping students’ multiple identities in the composition of multimodal texts. One area related to the influence of multimodal composition on identity issues is digital storytelling, where the author expresses self through personal narratives. Hull and Katz (2006) did case studies about digital storytelling of a young African American young adult Randy and a teen Dara. They articulated pivotal moments in students’ lives and reflected on life trajectories through multiple media and modes with supportive social relationships and opportunities for participation, thus forming and representing an agentive. Similarly, Ware and Warschauer (2005) examined two bilingual students’ digital storytelling projects. A nine year old Inma created a movie about a trip she took to the zoo, in which she layered visual and narrative details to amplify the overall effect of the movie and crafted each individual images as a powerful vehicle for creating an impact on her audience. The other student, a seventh grader Gabriela, who did not feel comfortable with her Spanish, showed that her positive experiences (a native Spanish speaker in a digital video on basic Spanish language instruction) as a native Spanish speaker at a community center enabled her to begin to embrace her bilingual identity as well as her bilingual resources for her literacy works.

In addition, Skinner and Hagood (2008) detailed how English language learners reflected their identities through their digital storytelling. They demonstrated how a male Mexican-American kindergartener, Diego, and a Chinese immigrant high school teenager,
Alli Feng, drew on their sociocultural identities (e.g., for Feng, multiple identities as a third culture kid across the U.S. and China), academic literacy and multimodal literacy to design and present digital stories. More importantly, Diego and Feng’s digital storytelling represents the possibilities for helping ESL students to acquire more than just English as a second language but also to use English to make sense of their lives. Wilson, Chavez, and Anders (2012) used digital stories through podcasts to explore how eighth grader ELLs used multiple forms of representation to express identities they valued in ways that made use of their communicative strengths. Through a five-month unit on identity using student generated podcasts and digital compilations of audio and visual files, the students were able to express identities using representations that combined their life histories, trajectories, and current interests as well as using their L1 and L2. Angay-Crowder, Choi, and Yi (2013) explored a digital storytelling of middle school ELLs in a summer program sponsored by a local non-profit organization. They reported that the powerful point of digital story telling permitted the students to reflect on and recreate their multilingual and multicultural lives and identities.

**Inquiry into social worlds:** Several studies have documented how the students created multimodal texts in an inquiry-driven fashion. These studies suggest that multimodal literacy with an inquiry based approach provided students with a rich opportunity to construct their social worlds, using various resources, exploring more in depth topics, and showing a wide range of academic inquiry skills. McGinnis (2007) studied the multimodal projects of immigrant students in grades 6-8 with an inquiry based approach for a summer migrant education program, which showed the multilingual and multimodal nature of their
literacy practices and the possibility of representing their social world through multimodal texts. They investigated a variety of topics such as the history of rap, the Dragonball Z, the favorite fruits of the Vietnamese, and X-men and displayed their multimodal projects combined with visual and linguistic design with a tri-fold poster. In particular, recent immigrant students, who had limited English proficiency, were able to describe their multiple experiences through multimodal texts, engaging in them with multiple language.

As another inquiry-based digital project, Mahiri (2006) examined the winners of the digital project competition, which was sponsored by their school and a nonprofit organization. The collective project of four eighth grade students investigated a poverty issue and its connections to homelessness. They used a problem-solution format and remixed images, animations, print, and sound through the several internet sites. By weaving a variety of texts through their presentation, they developed a consistent theme about the need for more human caring with respect to this problem. Ranker (2008) reported a case study of two fifth grade male students’ composing processes as they developed a documentary video about the Dominican Republic in an urban, public middle school Language Arts classroom. They chose topics of interest and moved across multiple media (the Web, digital video, books, and writing) in a nonlinear fashion, using a digital video editing program. These media entered into a dialogic relationship with one another, leading the students toward unique types of semiotic resources and means for combining them.

A way of perceiving and conceptualizing worlds: Ajayi (2008) examined how high school ESL learners used multimodal resources as a tool to convey their interpretations of the written text. Thirty three high school students read a newspaper article about political
situations of immigrants, using a variety of learning activities such as meaning guessing, campaign advertisement, cartoon strips, and group and whole class activities. They negotiated meanings of selected vocabulary items phrases in the text. They were required to recreate the text from written medium (the newspaper story about the sociopolitical situation of immigrants in the U.S.) to a visual medium (drawing), which opened up new possibilities for wider interpretations of the vocabularies in the newspaper; semiotics offer ELLs alternative ways of perceiving and conceptualizing their worlds. In particular, this recreation of the text enabled the students to critique and challenge social power relations between English language learners and the broader society. This study shed light on the potential for transformative learning afforded by the use of multimodality to complement critical ideological pedagogy.

Another study of Ajayi (2009) explored how Junior high school ELL students interpreted a cellular phone advertisement text and how their understanding of it was represented through semiotic practices. Through several activities such as pre-teaching activity, scaffolding activity, group practice session, eighteen ELL students were asked to create a big drawing to represent his or her understanding of the advertisement text and write approximately five sentences to explain the drawing. Multimodal literacy has the potential to help ELL learners create new worlds, take on different identities, and challenge the taken-for-granted views about their worlds.

More creatively, Hepple, Sockhill, Tan and Alford (2014) investigated how beginner ELLs created their worlds through the use of claymations. After reading and discussing the novel, three ELLs created the storyboard. They designed and photographed the clay modles,
composed and constructed the written element of the narrative, and designed the special effects accompanying each segment of their film animation. All of the process was involved in using a range of multimodality and English. Through the process of creating, arranging, and filming the models, ELLs promoted learner agency and student ownership of the work leading to engagement and sustained collaboration. Framing identity as narrative, Danzak (2011) documented how a multimodal, technology-based writing project, Graphic Journeys, influenced ELLs in their literacy and identity development. 32 ELL students involved in the project were offered the opportunity to research their families’ immigration narratives and to depict them as graphic stories. Immigration story became a source of defining, redefining, and understanding the self. The project was through writing a reflection journal on the book, composing stories about their families, collaboratively editing each other’s writing in an instructional context that highlighted various aspects of English syntax, spelling, and mechanics. Therefore, the multiliteracies project acted as a bridge to academic English language acquisition for ELLs, giving ELLs a voice in educational spaces that traditionally marginalize them.

**Integrating multimodal texts into an existing curriculum:** Another theme from the research deals with how the students learned the content of the academic unit and academic literacy skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing, critical thinking, comprehension of the content) through multimodal texts. Hagood, Skinner, Venters, and Yelm’s (2009) study is worthwhile noting because they explored a comprehensive use of multimodal texts across stages (pre-unit, as unit, post-unit) to facilitate learning the academic unit content about classic Roman civilization (the six grade world history standard). As pre-unit stage,
students constructed digital stories using Photo story (Microsoft 2008) that addressed classic Roman civilization in order to build a schema around this unfamiliar content. To meet the English Language Arts state standard including English language oral fluency and reading and writing competencies, the students were offered a variety of options for narrating their Photostories, including composing their own narration, reading their narration from their social studies text book, and providing background music in lieu of narration. They chose popular hip-hop and Latina music as their background music, which provided viewers with clues as to the cultural identities of the Photostory designers in relation to age, race, ethnicity and gender. After the digital stories lessons, the teacher facilitated direct whole group teaching of classical roman civilization content, presenting activities such as having students draw diagrams of Rome’s bridges and roads, reading a variety of short shared texts including comics and short stories, viewing parts of the Hollywood-produced movie, Julius Caesar, and completing worksheets on context. The teacher framed these activities with interactive PowerPoint lecturers and notes that purposefully included many of the images students had used in their photo stores so that they would recognize the images as part of their prior knowledge and be interested in learning more about the content.

Another study is Shin and Cimasko’s (2008) study which examined how ESL writers in a freshman composition class used available modes in multimodal argumentative essays. This study focused on the students’ utilization of multimodality; the linguistic mode was the primary factor in selecting available modes and non-linguistic modes were primarily used to illustrate written essays, to project cultural national identities, and to express
emotional connections with their topics. The ways in which the students synthesized multiple meaning-making modes represented the social practices of learning multimodal genres in which they were engaged.

While the studies illustrated in this section are based on qualitative method (case studies), the next two studies are based on quantitative method of research and mixed methods of research respectively. Hobbs and Frost (2003) used quantitative research method to measure the impact of media literacy instruction, integrated within a yearlong course in high school English Language Arts on students’ message comprehension, writing, and critical thinking skills. Students who took part in a required yearlong grade 11 English media/communication course that incorporated extensive critical media analysis of print, audio, and visual texts were compared with students from a demographically matched group who received no instruction in critically analyzing media messages. Results suggest that media literacy instruction improves students’ ability to identify main ideas in written, audio, and visual media. Statistically significant differences were also found for writing quantity and quality. Specific text analysis also improved, including the ability to identify the purpose, target audience, point of view, construction techniques used in media messages, and the ability to identify omitted information from a new media broadcast in written, audio, or visual formats.

Yang and Wu’s (2012) study is based on mixed method of research. They explored the influence of digital storytelling on English achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation of high school senior students learning English as a foreign language in the context of Taiwan. This one year study adopted a pretest and posttest quasi-experimental
design involving 110 10th grade students in two English classes. The study reported that digital storytelling participants performed significantly better than lecture-type technology-integrated instruction participants in terms of English achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation. Interviews results highlight the important educational value of digital storytelling, as both the instructor and students reported that digital storytelling increased students’ understanding of course content, willingness to explore, and ability to think critically.

**Summary**

To investigate transitional adolescents’ literacy practices across contexts, this chapter has presented an overview of relevant theory, concepts, and research. Transitional adolescents’ engagements with different language and literacy practices across varied social contexts aligned with a social view of literacy as a constellation of multiliteracies situated within multiple social contexts and activities. From this perspective, what it means to be literate depends on contexts, purposes, tools, and skill sets available for making meaning. Various empirical studies concerning immigrant students’ literacy experiences in and out of school informed the cultural practices of transitional students as a particular group and the ways of using multiliteracies to construct meaning in their lives and understanding the mobility of literacy across boundaries. Furthermore, the studies on multimodal composing in L1 and L2 provided me with insights into L2 students’ multimodal composition, as well as ideas for designing the multimodal project for this study. The literature review in this chapter guides research practice in the next chapter. The
next chapter discusses methodology and research contexts that lay the ground work for this study.
Chapter 3

Methodology

To investigate transitional Korean adolescents’ literacy practices in different contexts of use, I adopted a multiple case study design. According to Duff (2008), a case study research design entails establishing clear, credible, coherent, and strong chains of evidence or audit trails; these chains or trails are used to connect research questions and data as part of a comprehensive research strategy. In this chapter, I begin with the rationale for the multiple case approach used in this study. I then describe the context of the study, that is, the various sites from which data was collected. Next, I address the data collection instruments and procedures as well as the approach taken for data analysis. This is followed by a discussion of efforts made to ensure trustworthiness, reflexivity, and ethics in data collection and analysis.

The Rationale for a Multiple Case Study Approach

This study was conceived as multiple case studies in order to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the literacy events that appeared to impact the participants’ lives as transitional youth. Most definitions of case study stress the bounded, singular nature of the case, the importance of context, the availability of multiple sources of information or perspectives on observations, and the in-depth nature of analysis (Duff, 2008). More
specifically, according to Merriam (1998), qualitative case studies can be characterized as being “particularistic, descriptive and heuristic” (p. 16). Particularistic means that a case study focuses on a particular situation, event, program, individual, institution or phenomenon. Descriptive means that a case study is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study. Heuristic means that case studies illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study. In particular, a qualitative case study emphasizes the importance of examining and interpreting observable phenomenon in context, thus focusing on holistic description and explanation. Similarly, according to Yin (2003), a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.13). Stake (1988) also defines the case study as “a bounded system, emphasizing the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the time” (p. 258). In my study, three cases of transitional Korean adolescents were studied in three contexts (school, home, and community center) within their transitional life contexts. Their different literacies in different contexts of use were investigated in a way of gaining in-depth and holistic understanding of the literacy events that appeared to influence the participants’ lives as transitional youth. Also, the philosophical underpinning of a case study approach is based on a constructivist paradigm, which claims that truth is relative and is dependent on one’s perspective (Stake, 1995; Yin 2003). It is built upon the premise of a social construction of reality. In particular, one of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, as this allows the researcher to
more accurately capture what actually occurs in the lives of the participants. Through their stories, the participants are able to describe their views of the reality they experience, and this enables the researcher to better understand the participants’ actions (Lather, 1992).

All of these characteristics of case studies explain the suitability of a case study methodology for this study, since the focus was on the experiences of transitional adolescents in settings where circumstances of potential relevance to their transitional lives would occur. The case study approach was also suitable because it allowed for meaningful comparison across the cases. Such comparisons of their experiences and responses to those experiences would then generate a larger picture of the issues faced by individuals encountering the transitional conditions they had. As Merriam (1998) explains, "The more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (p. 40). This was a key principle in the design and implementation of this research.

The Contexts of the Study

During the study, I observed the three participants in three contexts (school, home and MCS community center) in which literacy was expected to play some role in the mediation of their transitional adolescent lives. Two—home and MCS—were contexts where I was on-site as a researcher. I also gathered data related to key literacy activity the participants’ engaged in within their formal school setting, but since no data gathering took place in that setting, it was not considered a context for the study in the same ways as the two described here. Instead, I gathered data from that site while remaining outside it. As such, it can be considered an indirect site. In this section of the chapter I provide some background
information about each of these three sites. Analysis of the data focused on key literacy events within them.

**Formal School Setting**

I chose two schools in a Midwestern city: One was the middle school that John and Inhee (my research participants) attended and the other was the high school that Jessica (my research participant) attended. The school setting provided opportunities to know their school literacy practices, their ways of engagement with school literacy practices, and their transitional school life as well as to collect their school artifacts. As a social context, school was where ideology was inscribed and two cultures of transitional students were negotiated. In particular, I focused on their school literacy practices in ESL (Jessica and Inhee) and Language Arts classes (John).

**Home**

I visited the participants’ homes every week during the research period. The home setting provided opportunities to observe their personal literacy environments, their literacy practices at home, and their transitional life in the U.S. as well as to interview them. Considering that home was where their sociocultural practices were inscribed, it was valuable. In particular, home was where I provided tutoring for each student. This was an essential opportunity to observe their literacy, talk about their school literacies and their old and new school life, and develop closer rapport with them.

**Jessica’s Home**

Since Jessica’s family planned to stay in the U.S. for two years, they just brought essential things when coming to the U.S. and many household items were for temporary
use. However, Jessica’s room was well equipped for studying. On her desk, there were always materials scattered, such as SAT word cards, a TOEFL book, and a couple of English novels. In addition, there were several English learning books in Korean and English novels on the bookshelf. There was a computer in the living room for family use. Whenever I visited her home, her mother was studying English. Her father was busy giving rides for her brother’s baseball activity. Her home was always quiet.

**John’s Home**

On the first floor, there was a living room and a kitchen. Several posters of Korean and English alphabets hung on the wall, and English and Korean children books for John’s two sisters were scattered around the kitchen table. Whenever I visited his home, his mother taught his sisters school work and Korean workbooks. On the second floor, there was a big family room mainly used by his mother (a voice actress), his father (a doctoral student), and John. There were two desks and two computers. John used the computer, did his homework, and studied in this room. In the corner, there was a big book case where several genres of books, including fantasy novels, in Korean, English and Math workbooks, and his father’s books were displayed. Another room was John’s room. John’s room was occupied with a drum set and there was a pile of his drawings in the corner. On the wall, there was a picture of John in a Taekwondo (Korean martial arts) uniform when he was little.

**Inhee’s Home**

Inhee’s home was cozy and well organized. One of her school drawing hung in the living room. There was a table in the kitchen, where she and her mother’s literacy activities
mainly occurred. This was shown by piles of books her mother used for English learning, as well as a computer. In particular, when Inhee wanted to use the computer, her mother made her use it at that table and always watched her use it. In her room, there were a bed and an English book on the night stand. The desk was very clean. The book case was noticeably full of new English books which her mother and she bought in the U.S.

**MCS (pseudonym) Community Center**

This study was conducted at MCS Community Center, a nonprofit organization in a Midwestern city. One of MCS’s main initiatives is an after-school program called SAY (pseudonym), which is designed to increase the academic, social and leadership skills of Asian immigrant children, who often struggle in the American education system because they lack a supportive home environment. As part of the SAY program, ESL youth programs are provided as the need arises and as funds allow. I joined the MCS in spring 2009 as an ESL teacher. Funds supporting ESL programs became available at the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year, and the center began offering ESL programs.

**ESL Curriculum at MCS**

From fall quarter, 2009 to winter quarter 2010, ESL programs were offered for three hours once a week and were divided into two periods: a technology class and an ESL class.

**The Technology class**: The class was offered because of MCS’s recognition of the importance of technology. It was an extension of the summer program and focused on the fundamentals of graphic design and the basic functions of photo shop (a graphics editing program). The teacher majored in computer design and taught technology-related classes at several institutes or educational organizations. I observed his technology class, through
which I could get a sense of what the students learned. Throughout the quarters (summer and fall), his class developed a meta-language for multimodality and design by making the students find various websites and asking them about the headings of language, images, layout, colors, and their interactive features. He attempted to generate the spirit of using available designs of meaning and raised the students’ awareness of visual and linguistic modes of expression. After learning these fundamentals of design, the students learned the photo shop function. As a final project, the students created the logos of the SAY program, gave feedback on them, and did a final presentation where they were asked to reflect on what they had produced. The technology class was relevant to this study because the participants learned skills in it that were applied in a project within the ESL class, the results of which are reported on in the findings chapters.

**ESL classes:** MCS provided the guidelines for both non-ESL and ESL adolescent students for the fall quarter, 2009, which aligned with the State Department of Education’s content standards: all students were required to deliver an oral presentation on a social issue using any text format. It added that the students should use data involving interviews or statistical figures, but they were not required to. Following these basic guidelines, I designed an integrated curriculum, that is, an inquiry-driven multimodal project, integrating the technology class and the multicultural literature class. My work was informed by the pedagogy of multiliteracies as a theoretical framework. The pioneering research of Knobel and Lanshear (2007), the New London Group (1996), and Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) suggests that the pedagogy of multiliteracies, including multimodality, can be used as a tool to facilitate transformative goals in meaning-making for learners because this
pedagogy conceptualizes literacy practices as multiple and diverse across cultures and contexts (Kress and Street, 2006). In particular, I adopted the multiliteracies framework of the New London Group (1996), especially for English language learners as follows:

**Situated Practice**: a student’s immersion into meaningful practices with a community of learners who are capable of playing multiple and different roles based on their backgrounds and experience. Situated practice must consider the sociocultural needs and identities of all learners.

**Overt Instruction**: a teacher’s intervention into the meaning-making process by scaffolding learning activities. Students gain explicit information to organize and guide their learning. The goal of overt instruction is to develop a student’s conscious awareness and control over what is being learned.

**Critical Framing**: a student frames his or her teaching and learning around such embodied understandings as culture, politics, ideologies, values, and beliefs. Teachers thereby denaturalize and ‘make strange’ what they have been taught and learned. Through critical framing, students can constructively critique what they have learned and account for its cultural, political, and socio-economic implications.

**Transformed practice**: a teacher can develop new ways in which students can demonstrate how they can design and carry out new practices embedded in goals and values. Transformed practice allows students to apply and revise what they have learned – and to do so critically and, as a result, more meaningfully.

**The multicultural literature class**: The ESL class provided a multicultural literature class. According to Bishop (1997), ethnically diverse students will benefit from the incorporation
of multicultural literature, which will empower them to have a positive self-image, pride in their cultural heritage, and opportunities to enhance their critical awareness (Bishop, 1997). Within the same context, I chose a book called *The Yankee girl; a Korean girl’s journey to find herself*, which was written by Kyusun Chung, a teenager, who had attended school in the same town that my MCS students lived in; she published this book in her senior year of high school. She was born in Korea and moved to the Midwest with her family in her early childhood. After spending ten years in the U.S., her father’s job required her family to move back to Korea. During her high school years, her family returned to the U.S. In a humorous and humanistic manner, her book portrays her search for an identity as she navigated two cultures and experienced multiple culture shocks in her encounters with American teen culture. Her immigration, school, and life experiences resembled those of my students, and so I deemed the book as highly relevant to the course’s goals. My students were asked to read several chapters each week. They took turns leading discussions in which they talked about the content and shared their immigration experiences, including their own issues, dilemmas, and concerns (e.g., learning English, cultural issues, family issues, their future, and their values and beliefs about school work). This was a valuable exercise in which their cultural awareness was appreciated, their bitterness was expressed, and their experiences were critically framed.

**The Design of the Multimodal Project**

The multimodal project was one all three participants in the study completed, and what they did for this task is reported in their respective case studies that follow this chapter.
The design of the multimodal project consisted of aims, objectives, two pre-lesson activities, and representation.

1. **Aims**: To let the students explore their multiple literacies and identities by using multimodality and social issues and to let them link academic literacy and multimodal literacy.

2. **Objectives**: Students will be able to:
   - (a) understand how to draw on their life experiences for their projects and how to use multimodality as a communicative repertoire through two pre-lesson activities
   - (b) construct knowledge and create the project on social realities through a critical inquiry
   - (c) develop cognitive engagement and identity investment
   - (d) employ a variety of technological tools to support their projects.

3. **Pre-lesson activities**
   - (a) The multimodality lesson
     Class instruction focused on the fundamentals of graphic design and the basic functions of Photoshop. The students' technology class was treated as a pre-lesson activity in which they developed a meta-language for multimodality and design by learning about topics like language, images, layout, colors, and interactive features through various websites as they designed logos for the SAY program. The multimodality lesson, through overt instruction, allowed students to experience multimodality as a tool for meaning making.
   - (b) The social issues lesson
Because “social issues” is a broad category and my students had insufficient knowledge of American society, I decided to integrate multicultural literature into the pre-lesson activities. This approach introduced them to various social issues and helped them make connections between the literature and their own experiences. Also, social issues were framed via situated practice and overt instruction.

4. Representation

After reading the book, my students began their multimodal projects. I asked each of them to choose one among four topics presented: uniqueness and conformity, identity issues, stereotypes, and making friends. All these topics had been discussed in class as central issues and were intimately related to their lives as transitional adolescents. Based on these options, they were expected to create inquiry-driven projects. They were allowed to select and use (a) text forms and media they felt familiar with, such as drawing, cartoons, PowerPoint, digital storytelling (using a Windows movie making program), etc. and (b) multimodal representation, including writing, music, and sound. As they created their multimodal projects, the students worked in the computer lab with the technology teacher and me. The students who chose digital storytelling needed to consult the technology teacher about how to use the program. Some students chose to conduct interviews and to present their research using PowerPoint; other students chose to create narratives through digital storytelling or PowerPoint. Through these presentations, they had the opportunity to share their work with their parents, teachers and the staff at MCS.
Selection of Participants

For this study, I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases through which the researchers can illuminate their research questions in depth by focusing on a small number of carefully selected participants (Patton, 1990). In particular, I sought maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990), which aimed at capturing the central themes related to the transitional life of the participants and the mediated nature of their literacy practices that cut across a great deal of participant variation. In order to maximize participant variation (Patton, 1990), I considered participants from a broad range of the following characteristics: English proficiency level, the kinds of ESL classes they were taking, academic experiences in Korea, gender, the length of stay in the U.S., and the reason for coming to the U.S. The ESL class at MCS was considered an ideal place to search for participants, as all of the students came to the U.S. recently. I purposefully selected four middle and high school students in my ESL class at MCS and asked for voluntary research participants. Patton (1990) also argues that “sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 184). Patton’s argument is that there are no rules for sample size and the sample size should be decided in context. Likewise, I chose initially four research participants, but one of them proved not to address the purposes of the study. Therefore, three research participants would be the appropriate minimum size for in-depth understanding and maximized variation of population. Table 3.1 below provides background information about the three research participants:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (pseudonym) /Gender</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Length of stay in the U.S.</th>
<th>The reason for coming to the U.S.</th>
<th>ESL classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jessica (F)</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (high school)</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Father’s visit as a visiting scholar</td>
<td>Intermediate 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John (M)</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (middle school)</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>Father’s doctoral study</td>
<td>Transition between ESL and Language Arts classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhee (F)</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (middle school)</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>Immigration for education</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Background Information about Participants

Jessica, John, and Inhee were transitional Korean students, who came to the U.S. quite recently. Within the common frame, there was great variation among the three. Jessica was a high school girl in the Intermediate 2 ESL class who came to the U.S. fairly recently. Her literacy skills in Korean were high. Compared to Jessica, John and Inhee had been in America for a long time. Their literacy skills in Korean were not high; Inhee’s were especially low. John was a middle school boy transitioning between ESL and Language Arts classes. Inhee was a middle school girl in the Beginner level ESL class. The reasons for coming to the U.S. also varied from a father’s visit as a cultural exchange visitor to a father’s study to immigration. More detailed descriptions of the participants are provided in the findings chapters, with each chapter devoted to a different participant.

**Data Collection and Procedures**

Data collection was determined by the underlying research questions, the forms of evidence deemed necessary to answer those questions, and what I as the researcher planned
to do with the data (Duff, 2008). In this study, data collection was carried out in three places: the MCS community center, the participants’ homes, and their schools. These settings were for data reflective of transitional students’ in and out of school literacy practices. Also, I collected data related to key school literacy activities at home through the interviews with participants and their artifacts. In order to gather data reflective of transitional adolescents’ literacy practices in and out of school, I used multiple approaches to data collection: participant observation and non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, field notes, informal conversations, documents and artifact collection, and tutorials.

**MCS Community Center**

In the community center, my initial research design was divided into two phases. The first phase of the study (March 2009-August, 2009) was the preparation stage for my research. I taught an ESL class for academic purposes from March, 2009 to August, 2009. In particular, during the summer, I observed a technology class that was offered for both ESL and non-ESL students. During the first phase, I gained a sense of how the programs of MCS were conducted and how ESL programs were funded and managed. In particular, I was able to develop a close relationship with the program coordinator, which provided me with an opportunity to design an ESL program in Fall, 2009, which included the multimodal project examined in this study.

In the second phase of the study (October, 2009 to June, 2010), most of the ESL students in the summer classes registered for the fall ESL class, which enabled me to have a closer relationship with them during the fall quarter. I collected data for this study throughout the winter quarter and spring quarter from January, 2010 through June, 2010.
During this period, I was more deeply involved in MCS, especially in curriculum development at the K-12 grade levels, including an ESL program. This was when I designed and implemented the multimodal projects. The technology class featuring the photo shop program described earlier was also offered during this period, and I observed the class to learn more about it as an observer. Also, I taught a multicultural literature class in my ESL class (as previously mentioned). After these two classes ended in December, they were integrated into one class in January. The ESL students worked on their multimodal projects in a computer lab, and the technology teacher and I assisted them as they developed their projects. I was a participant observer and teacher there. As a participant observer, I carefully observed, consciously recorded in detail the many aspects of a situation, and constantly analyzed my observations in the context of particular goals that directed my behavior. Thus, the two roles as a participant observer and teacher enabled me to be more like a full participant. In addition to in class, I observed the participants and their interactions during break time and before and after class.

Further, I gathered documents and artifacts such as MCS flyers, the MCS curriculum guide and teaching materials, community center websites, and the students' reading and writing materials/samples. The documents were useful tools for gaining realistic insights into the social organization and for analyzing and interpreting the meanings transmitted by certain types of documents (Harber, 1998). As cultural artifacts are “the products of individual activity, social organization, technology, and cultural patterns” (Reinharz, 1992), the texts of their multimodal projects were gathered and later analyzed. In addition, after returning from the fieldwork, I wrote field notes, half descriptive and half analytic with
commentary. The descriptive part included descriptions of the participants, research contexts, events, activities, conversations, and specific interactions during the class. The analytical part was used to write down feelings, work out problems, jot down ideas and impressions, clarify interpretations, and speculate about what was going on. This was a reflexive process of connecting what I observed to the research questions. Also, this “analytic noting was a type of data analysis conducted through the research process; its contributions range from problem identification, to question development, to understanding the patterns and themes” in my work (Glesne, 2006, p 59).

The following table shows the methods and sources of data collection used in MCS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Sources of data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant observations and non-participant observations</td>
<td>Multicultural literature and multimodal project classes in computer lab/break time/before and after class Technology class in computer lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal conversations</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections of field notes</td>
<td>During and after observations After informal conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections of artifacts</td>
<td>Participants’ multimodal projects Participants’ writings and worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections of documents</td>
<td>Funding proposals for MCS, curriculum guide of MCS Flyers of MCS for introducing and recruiting students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Classroom Data Collection in MCS

Home

I visited my research participants’ homes once a week during the data collection period. As data gathering instruments, I used participant observations, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, field notes, collections of artifacts, and tutoring. In particular, I
provided each participant with tutoring sessions for 90 minutes once a week. Because they were ELLs and I had experiences with teaching them at MCS, I offered to help them with any English skills they wanted to work on more. Jessica asked me to teach SAT, John to teach vocabulary and writing, and Inhee to teach grammar and writing. The tutoring played an essential role in making all of the data collection procedures at home unfold in a natural and non-obtrusive way. Due to the tutoring sessions, I could visit their homes, which allowed me to observe the environment they lived in and made it possible to conduct informal conversations and interviews with them. In the beginning stage of data collection, I focused on informal conversations. The informal conversations were more natural and precipitated various discussions in a natural and unpredictable way. Many of these conversations led me to frame semi-structured interview questions.

In the middle stage of data collection, the semi-structured interviews were framed for the three research participants with the purpose of learning about (a) their transitional life outside school, (b) their out of school literacy practices at home and at the community center, and (c) possible common features between in and out of school literacy practices; more specifically, their American life, their multimodal projects, their out of school literacy activities at home, the use of the computer at home, a writing competition they all chose to join, their literacy histories, the use of L1 and L2 for specific literacy activities, and the use of social networking sites were explored during the interviews. I conducted six interviews with each participant in Korean after tutorial sessions, each of which lasted approximately one hour. In the final stage of data collection, I conducted one semi-structured interview with the mother of each participant. The interview was framed with
the ideas of (a) the mother’s perceptions of literacy, (b) degrees of influencing their children’s literacy, (c) ways of engaging in their children’s literacy in Korea and the U.S., and (d) their children’s literacy biography. All of the interviews were audio-taped under the agreement of participants and their mothers and transcribed right after I came back home.

Also, I accessed their social networking sites such as Cyworld and Facebook and analyzed them. In this way I could see their interaction patterns with their acquaintances and their use of multiliteracies as communication tools. In addition, there was a special literacy-based activity for the research participants. It involved writing an essay and/or a Korean traditional poem in English for something called the Sejong writing competition, which I had not expected during the data collection. Jessica and Inhee received the flyers from their Korean bilingual aides, and John heard about it from Jessica and Inhee. All of them voluntarily decided to participate in the Sejong writing competition.

The writing competition was held by The Sejong Cultural Society (www.SejongCulturalSociety.org), Chicago, IL in collaboration with the Harvard University Korea Institute. The Sejong cultural society is a non-profit organization founded in 2004. It provides the younger generation (children and young adults) of any ethnicity growing up in the U.S. each year with a chance to take part in writing, music, and music composition competitions (a) so as to increase awareness and understanding of Korea’s cultural heritage, (b) to promote harmony among people of various ethnic backgrounds, and (c) to bridge Asian and Western cultures. Through this effort, Korea’s rich culture will be accessible to people of any ethnicity and nationality while being a unique part of the
larger, more familiar western culture, in the belief that such harmonizing of the two cultures will create a better understanding between them.

In particular, the writing competition consists of two genres: essays using Korean folk tales and poetry using a poetic form called Sijo. The Sejong Cultural Society describes Korean folk tales and Sijo in its websites as follows:

Korea has a rich tradition of storytelling, and its folk tales reflect important aspects of its history and culture. Many of the old historical texts are full of local legends and myths. Folk tales can be entertaining and educational, but they can also strike a deep chord in our personal lives, and many Korean folk tales demonstrate the universal tragedies and triumphs of daily life in the family. Sijo is a traditional three line as a Korean poetic form, typically exploring cosmological, metaphysical, or pastoral themes, organized both technically and thematically by line and syllable count. The three lines have usually forty five syllables; the first line introduced or states theme; the second line expands or develops theme in equal length and power; the third line twists or surprise at the beginning of the last line acts as a counter-theme before the rest of the line completes the poem. The basic standard line is: first line 3 4 4(or 3) 4/ second line 3 4 4(or 3)/ third line 3 5 4 3 (www.SejongCulturalSociety.org).

The Sejong writing competition asked the essay participants to choose one among three topics based on the assigned folk tales. The topics that year were: (a) to select one folk tale from the list and explain your interpretation of the story. What do you think it means? What is its importance? Why do you think it was created? (b) If you could change one of these folk talks, what would you change and why? Do you disagree with something the tale is trying to convey? (c) Which Korean folk tales character do you relate to best? Why? Would you make the same decisions as that character? As for the Sijo competition, the participants were able to choose a topic of their choice. The submission guidelines stated that (a) the essay must not exceed 1000 words, (b) both essay and Sijo must be written in English, (c) the contestant’s entry and application must be sent as email attachments to writing@SejongculturalSociety.org due on April 30th, 2010, (d) the contestant’s name
cannot be written in the document, (e) the format must be 12 point type, Times New Roman font, one inch margin, 1.5 spacing between lines, and write the page number, such as page X of Y.

The following table shows the methods and sources of data collection used at each participant’s home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Sources of data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant observations</td>
<td>Helping participants with essays and poems for the writing competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Participants, Mothers of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(audio-taped)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal conversations</td>
<td>Participants, Mothers of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections of field notes</td>
<td>After interviews and tutorials, After observations, Informal conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections of artifacts</td>
<td>Participants’ writing samples during tutoring, Participants’ online social network sites such as Cyworld and Facebook, Participant’s favorite online sites (<a href="http://www.youtube.com">www.youtube.com</a>, <a href="http://www.comic.naver.com/index.nhn">www.comic.naver.com/index.nhn</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections of documents</td>
<td>Home page of the Sejong writing competition (<a href="http://www.SejongCulturalSociety.org">www.SejongCulturalSociety.org</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Data collection at home

**Formal School Setting**

As previously mentioned, I collected data related to formal school setting through an indirect data collecting site. I gathered certain artifacts as essential sources of data and used them to conduct informal conversations and semi-structured interviews. For instance, I asked the three research participants to bring their ESL class packets (Inhee and Jessica) and Language Arts’ packets (John) to me so that I could explore their academic literacy
practices at school. Their packets included various materials, such as their course syllabi, reading and writing materials, worksheets, class writings, and projects. I then asked them about the purposes and uses of these materials, and their experiences with them. This helped me gain a sense of their academic literacy practices, then frame semi-structured interview questions around them and triangulate these with our informal conversations about academic literacy practices. The interview questions were framed with the ideas of (a) their school life in Korea and the U.S., (b) their favorite and non-favorite school work in ESL and Language Arts classes, (c) their concerns about school life, (d) the use of the computer, and (e) the possibility of using L1 knowledge for their English work.

The following table shows the methods and sources of data collection used at each participant’s formal school setting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Sources of data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews (audio-taped)</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal conversations</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection of field notes</td>
<td>After interviews and informal conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection of Artifacts</td>
<td>Participants’ school work such as worksheets, reading materials, journals, writing samples, projects, syllabus, and drawings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Data collection in formal school setting
Data Analysis

Data analysis involved “organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (Glesne, 2006, p. 147). In this study that eventually meant identifying and exploring what were deemed “key literacy events” within the study’s three research contexts described earlier. During the data analysis process, data collection, data analysis, and theory stand in a reciprocal relationship with each other (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate, for qualitative researchers, “data accumulated in the field thus must be analyzed inductively (that is, from specific, raw units of information to subsuming categories of information) in order to define local working hypotheses or questions that can be followed up” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 203). I used inductive analysis of the data by focusing on the transitional students’ literacy experiences in three contexts (school, home and the community center) in terms of ways of engaging in out of school literacies, the accomplishment of literacy, learning outside school, common features of literacies across contexts, literate identities in multiliteracies experiences, the relationship between academic literacy and multiliteracies, and ways of engaging in school literacy.

I read through interview transcripts and field notes multiple times and began analyzing them. I identified what appeared to be important words, clauses, and sentences in the interview transcripts. I coded the data, labeling them using abbreviated codes of letters such as KGI (a Korean group identity), DI (a drummer identity), ES (emotional support), CRH (Cultivating reading habits), AL (Apprenticeship as learning), RC (Re-contextualization), MES (the movement of essay skills from school to outside school), KS
(Korean schema), \textit{L1 & L2 CMR} (The use of L1 and L2 in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way), \textit{UVMP} (the use of visuals for multimodal project), \textit{DNLU} (different notions of literacy between Korea and the U.S.), and etc. As I labeled them, I used italics for words frequently used such as \textit{MP} (multimodal project), \textit{KU} (Korean and the U.S.), and \textit{L1 & L2} to easily identify them. As for field notes, I divided my observation field notes into two sections: descriptive and analytical. These were also coded. For example, in the descriptive part of field notes (05/15/10), I wrote down Inhee’s question, “에세이에다 개인적인 경험 같은 것을 써도 되요?” (“Is it O.K. to use my personal experiences for an academic essay?”) I coded this \textit{EEKAE} (English essay as Korean academic experiences). In the analytical section, I wrote down my thoughts such as “This question is especially common among Korean learners of English essays because in the Korean context, academic essays do not value one’s personal experiences.” This comment produced a category: Transition from \textit{K} to \textit{U} (her status as an adolescent in transition from one culture to another).

After coding the interview transcripts and the field notes, I moved to documents and artifacts. The data collected through the documents and artifacts also clarified some previous codes and played a role in producing new codes. For example, Inhee’s worksheets used in her ESL class clarified the previous code, \textit{EIS} (easy and insubstantial school practices), stemming from the interview transcript and produced a new code, \textit{CNS} (a circumscribed nature of school literacy). After coding the data, themes and categories were generated. I put abbreviation codes next to the themes I found, which helped organize the data into categories. I provided a descriptive label for each category I created. I also
identified patterns and connections within and between categories. I organized the themes and categories into larger, more abstract ideas - that is, theoretical constructs, which were generated both from the data and relevant literature about adolescents’ literacy practices in three contexts from a social perspective. In the process, my grounded theories were tested against data and were confirmed, revised, or rejected. Alternative explanations were sought when a theory that seemed to explain the case of one student did not hold true in the case of another.

Finally, I organized my theoretical constructs into a theoretical narrative, which summarizes what I had learned about the major issues guiding the research. The narrative tells the story of the participants’ subjective experiences, using their own words as much as possible. However, it also includes the researchers’ theoretical framework by including the theoretical constructs and themes through the narrative. Weaving together subjective experience and abstract constructs brings together the two very different worlds of researcher and participant (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003).

Trustworthiness/Ethics/Reliability and Validity

Trustworthiness

The qualitative research field has questioned the objectivity valued in quantitative research. Although quantitative research argues for the scientific method, Lather (2005) points out that due to politics, desires, and beliefs, no paradigm is neutral. Thus, reality is socially constructed and contextually bound, and multiple realities exist. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (1998), the traditional positivist criteria of reliability and validity are replaced by trustworthiness in qualitative research. In order to
increase the trustworthiness of this study, several methods were used: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, member checking, triangulation, and reflexivity. I spent six months with my research participants at the community center before the research started to achieve certain purposes: being acquainted with the research participants, learning their culture and the culture of the research context, and building trust. After those six months, I conducted the research for another six months, including teaching English at MCS and tutoring them at their homes. This allowed me to persistently observe their literacy activities at home and in the community. This prolonged engagement and persistent observation enabled me to understand in-depth their everyday literacy practices and their related culture and to establish trust with my research participants.

Also, member checking was embedded in interview sessions and informal conversations and was conducted in informal member checking sessions. I listened to each interview I had held the same day and noted my interpretations of the interviewees’ comments. In the next interview session, I discussed verbally my interpretations or sought clarification regarding their comments. For example, I asked John about why he wanted to attend the writing competition in the interview. He bluntly said, “I want to buy something if I win the prize money.” After listening to the audiotape of the interview at home, I sensed that there might be a more meaningful purpose. At the next interview session, I wanted to clarify this. Having more conversations about the writing competition with me, he used the words, “To achieve something.” This suggested that he did not appear to have a sense of achievement from his school literacy practices. I asked about his school literacy
practices, especially in terms of accomplishments. As such, member checking enabled me to clarify the interview data and played a role in generating a notable issue.

Moreover, I conducted two informal member-checking sessions at a Korean Chinese restaurant with my three research participants and at a Korean restaurant with their mothers, respectively, where I summarized my interpretations through informal conversations. The three research participants and their mothers commented on them and gave me feedback regarding the clarity and accuracy of the interpretations. These procedures allowed them to reflect on their given data and examine and discuss relevant issues with each other, and it provided an opportunity to elaborate on my data. For example, I explained to my research participants about their use of literacy as a tool for retaining their Korean heritage and identity. This provided them with some opportunities to discuss whether their Korean heritage and identity were beneficial to their Americanization. This discussion enabled me to elaborate on the data related to literacy as a way to retain their Korean heritage and identity and to capture the complicated nature of the transitional life of transitional students.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation strengthens reliability and validity, especially in terms of using multiple methods of data collection and analysis. I collected the data from multiple sources (i.e., interview transcripts, field notes, documents, and artifacts), multiple sites (i.e., school, home, community center), and multiple viewpoints (the research participants and their mothers). “Multiple realities” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.296) were captured through not only direct observations of different sites, but also interviews (reports) with multiple perspectives, showing the complexities of the examined issue. I analyzed the data based
on interview transcripts, filed notes, documents, and artifacts and cross checked them across multiple sources. I attempted to understand their engagement with various literacies across school, home, and community center. I also sought the data from their mothers to gain multiple perspectives on their literacy engagement. This enabled me to triangulate across the data sources, contexts, and viewpoints (Merriam, 1998) to achieve accurate interpretations of transitional life of the transitional students and the roles literacy played in the transitional adolescents’ lives.

**Reflexivity**

"A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (Malterud, 2001, p. 483-484). This statement indicates the need to reflect on my subjectivity in terms of what I observe and hear and to engage in reflexivity, critically thinking about the research process as a whole. My ongoing reflections on theoretical concepts, methodological decisions, and data analysis were used, and I attempted to balance my subjectivity, such as my own attitudes, beliefs, values, and suppositions, with data obtained from the research. I shared the same native language and culture as the participants and had also undergone the process of establishing a new life in a target culture. In addition to sharing the same heritage as the participants, I had important experiences that further sensitized me to what they were facing as transitional adolescents. These included my English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching experiences, my work in helping Korean families to adjust to the U.S, and my role as an immigrant mother whose
daughter had spent her school life from elementary school to college in the U.S. As such, I was well positioned to act as an insider throughout the study.

At the same time, I was aware of the importance of not letting my assumptions get in the way of capturing the participants’ voices. I attempted to listen to them through the interviews. My training as a researcher and as a novice scholar in the academic community also allowed me to have an outsider's view as well when necessary, such as during the analysis of data. However, it was not always easy to balance insider and outsider roles. For example, it was difficult to separate my roles as a researcher and a teacher in the multimodal project class in the beginning stages of data collection. However, I was becoming more proficient at managing the dual roles as time passed by. Balancing my subjectivity with data from an outsider's views assisted in producing more trustworthy interpretations of the findings, which was especially important since I was the sole interpreter of the data.

**Ethics**

According to Christians (2003), ethical issues can be considered in four ways: informed consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality, and reciprocity. The issues of informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality were protected by explaining to my research participants the purposes and goals of the study, using pseudonyms, and controlling the disclosure of key data. However, in terms of privacy and the internet, confidentiality might raise an ethical challenge to the right to privacy. When I included quotes from Facebook for my research, even though I used pseudonyms, I felt that it would be easy to track down the source by conducting a search for the quote. Also, even though I received consent for
using their social network sites at the beginning of the research project, their online communications were spontaneous and ongoing, which would not guarantee their privacy. This issue might pose ethical challenges.

Another issue I faced in my study was deception. Deception and informed consent are mutually exclusive concepts, and deception is considered wrong. However, there was an occasion where obtaining informed consent caused a problem during the research. My research participants were informed of the purpose and goals of the study through the informed consent process. However, the informed consent created an ethical dilemma in terms of credibility of data. For example, I decided to interview the mothers of the participants because I thought that the mothers’ perceptions toward literacy were critical for understanding the participants’ literacies. In interviewing Jessica’s mother, especially when I was recording, she behaved unusually and attempted to intentionally provide positive answers concerning her daughter’s education. She did not indicate the academic pressure she put on Jessica, which was different from what Jessica mentioned (she said that her mother was greatly involved in her academic work). To overcome such an issue, I used triangulation, prolonged engagement, and persistent observation. Because she was informed, she was aware of the research objective. Therefore, I could not obtain completely natural data.

**Reliability and Validity**

Qualitative research views toward reliability and validity, which are based on different assumptions about reality and a different worldview compared to quantitative research, necessitate considering reliability and validity from a perspective congruent with the
philosophical assumptions underlying the paradigm (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam, “since there are many interpretations of what is happening, there is not a benchmark by which to take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense” (Merriam, 1998, p.205). To enhance reliability—the extent to which there is consistency in the findings—I provided an explicit and detailed description of the design features of the study. I explained the theory behind the study, the criteria behind selecting the participants and a description of them, and the context from which data were collected (Lecompte and Preissle, 1993), and how the findings were derived from the data. I triangulated data and explained my role as the researcher (Merriam, 1998). Internal validity—the extent to which research findings are congruent with reality—was addressed by using triangulation, checking interpretations with individuals interviewed or observed, prolonged engagement with research sites over twelve months, involving participants in all phases of the research, and clarifying researcher biases and assumptions. To increase external validity—the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be generalized to other situations—I used thick and in-depth descriptions because “richly contextualized, problematized and theorized reports and interpretations” (Edge & Richards, 1998, p350) help the reader judge the applicability of the findings to new contexts. Having multiple cases rather than a single case may also be helpful to some extent (Merriam, 1998).

**Summary**

This chapter describes the research design used to conduct the study. The study employed multiple case studies to explore the literacy experiences and key literacy events of three Korean adolescents during their transition from their original lives in Korea to a
new life in the United States. The study was conducted in a mid-western city, and data collection was carried out in two places: the home and a community center. I gathered multiple sources of data through participant observation, non-participant observation (technology class in MCS), semi-structured interviews, field notes, informal conversations, documents and artifact collection, and tutorials. Data analysis was carried out by coding data, and then forming themes, categories and theoretical constructs, followed by a theoretical narrative and examining trustworthiness, reflexivity, and ethical issues I faced during the study. The next three chapters (Ch.4, 5, 6) take turns portraying the stories of each research participant, Jessica, John, and Inhee. Chapter 7 then discusses the data through a cross-case analysis while addressing the study’s research questions. Conclusions arising from the study are also identified and discussed.
Chapter 4: Case Studies

Introduction

The findings of this study are presented in the form of case studies in order to capture the rich individual stories of the study’s three participants. The emphasis in these case studies is on key literacy-related events connected to the participants’ lives as transitional adolescents born and raised in Korea and fairly recently arrived in the United States. Each had acquired a set of literacy skills and an identity connected to their Korean heritage, and they carried this background to their new lives in the U.S., where they had to confront the need to develop new literacy skills and a new identity that would enable them to move forward in their American-based lives. The chapters look at some of the challenges the participants faced during this transitional phase and the roles played by literacy in the course of addressing those challenges. The transitions and challenges they engaged in were complex and in need of exploration, especially as the numbers of such individuals continue to increase.

Addressing the need for such research just described, the three findings chapters attempt to put the participants’ transitional experiences into a meaningful context by looking at how various engagements with literacy mediated their movement from one life and reality in Korea to another in the U.S. Hence, Chapters Four, Five, and Six describe and analyze selected, key literacy experiences of three transitional Korean adolescents.
(Jessica, John, and Inhee), who engaged in a wide range of literacy activities in and out of school contexts.

In this study, then, I examined their engagement with various forms of literacy across three sites: their English as a Second Language (ESL) classes (in case of John, his Language Arts class) in a suburban high school, in their homes, and at a community center (MCS). Knowing that these three Korean-born adolescents led border crossing lives encompassing multiple cultures, including Korean culture, American culture, and adolescent popular culture, I sought to capture the kinds of activities they engaged in across the three research sites, or spaces, and their use of the cultural and literacy-based capital they possessed as they moved across those sites. As will be seen in the case studies, these three individuals represent a valuable cross-section of transitional adolescents in terms of their attitudes toward literacy and their engagement with it.

In order to explore the issues related to the study, I utilize the New Literacy Studies perspectives to examine ways of using literacies (instead of literacy) as multiple and situated within various social and cultural practices (Kress, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; the New London Group, 1996). In addition, I employ Gee’s (1996) notion of Discourse as an “identity kit” or a set of beliefs, actions, and activities that others recognize and that signals membership in particular groups. Further, the understanding of identity construction is grounded in sociocultural theories of identities and literacies (Gee, 1996; Hall, 1990). According to these theories, people take on identities in relation to context and experience by either aligning or contrasting themselves with others. The identities are not intrinsic or separate from social contexts and interactions. The process of building an
identity is continuous across contexts, and identities are multilayered as well as constructed in relation to others.

The chapter starts with Jessica, a strong academic achiever who was frequently told at school, “You are so Asian,” in reference to her strong resemblance to the commonly accepted model of Asian students studying in American schools, i.e., the notion of the “model minority.” In Chapter Five I move to John, who really feared being portrayed as “a nerd” by his friends at school and thus pursued the image of a cool guy, had a good sense of humor, and participated in a rich, online literacy world. Next, in Chapter Six, is Inhee, characterized by her church friends as “You are such a fob” (fob=fresh off the boat, or not yet adjusted to the target culture), because she retained many aspects of and allegiances to her native Korean culture and was only slowly adapting to an American school and the use of English. Following the separate presentation of the case studies in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, Chapter Seven addresses the study’s research questions via a cross-case analysis of the three participants and provides further discussion of the study’s findings. Later in the chapter, I present pedagogical implications arising from the study’s findings and make recommendations for further research as well as offering some closing comments.
JESSICA

In my dark and lonely shell I wait,
Weak and scared, not yet full grown
I wonder, will I survive
To see spring, kissed by the sun?
Look at me! With colors bright,
Dancing on new wings, I take flight
(Jessica’s poem for a writing competition)

Background

Jessica’s family came to the U.S. in April, 2009 for her father’s cultural and academic exchange program. Although Jessica felt a little bit sad because she had to leave her friends in Korea, she looked forward to her new experiences in the U.S. It quickly became apparent to her parents that Jessica and her brother needed to study English extensively in order to achieve a smoother transition to life in America, especially at school, where Jessica was initially an 8th grade student. Jessica was outgoing and, notably, a strong academic achiever in Korea. However, when she came to the U.S., she could barely communicate in English. She was completely overwhelmed at school while surrounded by the American students, “who seemed to confidently express their opinions in English and to be very smart.” (Interview, 04/23/10) In the beginning, she stayed after class to copy down notes and get extra help from her teachers. This was completely opposite to who Jessica was in Korea; there, she was very confident in her ability and spoke freely and easily. However, in the U.S., she was very depressed and shy, waiting in her dark and lonely shell, wondering if she can survive in the class, as expressed in her poem above. As this research began in the beginning (January) of 2010, her school work had improved tremendously and she received
positive comments such as “You are so Asian” among her ESL friends as they saw her devotion to studying. This strong identification with the American stereotype of the diligent and high achieving Asian student became a primary marker of her life at that point in time.

After two months as an eighth grader and a summer vacation, Jessica became a high school student as a 9th grader and took three kinds of English classes in the 2009-2010 academic year: (a) ESL Resource, (b) an individualized reading class, and (c) Intermediate 2 ESL class. Jessica started her day with the ESL Resource class, which was a required class for ESL students. This class, a credit-bearing study hall class for ESL students, provided ESL students with an opportunity to do their homework, receive help on academic work from a bilingual aide, and/or read their self-chosen books. Another class was an individualized reading class which Jessica chose, recognizing the importance of reading skills; there, Jessica’s main literacy activity was reading the books she chose by herself, often accompanied by the writing of book summaries and reviews. There was also vocabulary work with a website program, “Free Rice.” The other class was the Intermediate 2 ESL class, where her everyday practices focused on various activities intended to strengthen English proficiency: (a) proofreading practices, (b) listening to CNN news, (c) writing short journal entries, and (d) dictation.

Throughout the three English-related classes, there was a notable theme. Despite Jessica’s sincere attitude toward and seemingly strong engagement with school work, she was not able to construct an academic identity, something she had certainly possessed previously in Korea. The problem, as Jessica explained, was that she did not find these classes or their activities helpful. If anything, much of what went on in them struck her as
basically remedial in nature, and there was little that challenged her intellectually or academically. Looking at her English classes, it is easy to see why she felt that way. Overall, they focused heavily on language practice, as might be expected for classes serving students attempting to learn English as a second language. There was a strong focus on syntax, punctuation, or vocabulary and routine tasks such as completing worksheets, listening to and writing about CNN news, and writing five or six sentence entries for the journal. The worksheets typically required only single word responses or, at most, short three to five word sentences.

A revealing example of Jessi’s discomfort with her ESL classes came in her attitude toward an emphasis on students reading self-chosen books. Jessica believed that it was at home where students should read self-chosen books (for pleasure or learning). This is quite understandable, considering that Jessica had been educated in the Korean context, where the curriculum was textbook and workbook-based and strictly focused on academic skills needed for college admission. Allowing high school students to read what they wanted at school was inconceivable in the Korean context; teachers decided what they read. This was the reality that Jessica worked from. Students should do work assigned by teachers, and should be challenged academically in the process. For Jessica, then, school meant a place for strictly developing academic literacy, and her ESL Resource and reading class as well as her intermediate ESL class did not, in her view, promote academic literacy development. This, in turn, meant that, as she saw it, school literacy practices in the U.S. did not support the construction of her new academic identity, and this was an identity she eagerly sought, especially after having formed one in Korea. The desire for such an identity was a key
element in her life as a Korean transitional adolescent. It is with this background in mind that we will now look at one of the literacy events that helped her move more positively through that transition process and toward a new academic identity.

**Writing a persuasive essay at school**

A pivotal literacy event for Jessica was an activity that ran counter to the kinds of simplified, proficiency-oriented work she normally did in her ESL coursework at school. This was the writing of a persuasive essay, which constituted a significant literacy experience for her in her second language (L2), English. Through this literacy activity, Jessica was provided with an opportunity to be a creative, critical, and reflective thinker and to show her ways of constructing a sense of agency. In the middle of the academic year (from December to February), Jessica learned how to write a persuasive essay with the use of the MLA citation system in her ESL class and had the assignment of writing a persuasive essay. This, for her, was ‘real’ academic work of the kind that contributed to an academic identity. As such, she now invested herself heavily in the experience of preparing for and writing the essay.

This experience was enriched by an important encounter she had while discussing her experiences learning about European history with her American tutor. From this discussion, she got the sense that Americans thought that world history only consisted of European history and thus completely overlooked Asia and Asian history. It suddenly occurred to her that the school curriculum had European history and world history but lacked a focus on Asian history. Then, while she was talking about her American history class with her Korean-American church friend, they questioned the diversity of history classes taught at
the school. Unhappiness over this inspired her to choose Asian history as a topic for her persuasive essay, which was to propose to her school principal the addition of a new class, Asian history.

Another crucial variable, and a revealing one for a transitional adolescent like Jessica, was that this assignment, unlike other work in her ESL classes, allowed her to draw upon rhetorical capital she had acquired in Korea, where persuasive writing plays an important role in the Korean language arts curriculum from elementary school through high. In fact, Jessica reported with confidence that her strong foundation in native language (L1) writing played an essential role in writing the essay in English, as revealed in the following interview segment:

Jessica: "에세이는 배우지 않았지만 논리적으로 어떻게 에세이를 써야 하는지 한국에서 연습했어요. 그래서 Organization 은 어렵지 않았어요. 언어는 다르지만 논리는 같아요. 초등학교 5 학년때 논술을 배웠거든요. 선생님께서 논술을 잘하셨어요. 거기서 한 것이 기초가 되었어요.
JS: 그래도 영어와 한국어 writing 은 다르지 않아?
Jessica: 근데 막 critical reading 하고 생각하고 이유를 organize 하고 이런 것은 한국어로 base 가 있으니까요. 근데 제 생각을 영어로 표현하는 것이 제일 어려워요. (Interview, 03/12/10)

Jessica: Although I didn’t learn English essay, I practiced the logic of the essay in Korea. Therefore, the organization was not difficult. The languages may be different, but the logic is the same. I learned how to write an essay when I was in fifth grade. The teacher was very good at teaching how to write an essay. What I learned at the time became the basis of writing the essay.
JS: But still...English writing is different from Korean writing, isn’t it?
Jessica: critical reading, thinking, and organizing the reasons are the same. I learned them from Korean essay writing. However, the most difficult part is to represent my thoughts in English. (Interview, 03/12/10)

For Jessica, a strong foundation of L1 academic knowledge empowered her in writing the essay in English, even though she had no prior experience with persuasive writing in
English. As her interview comments indicate, she possessed already established persuasive writing schemata in Korean and was able to activate those schemata and transfer that knowledge to her English writing assignment. It may also be the case that this opportunity to tap into literacy-related knowledge and ability she had acquired in Korea allowed her to reconnect with her strong Korean academic identity as well. This was a reminder of what she had been able to do, and do well, in her previous academic life and within her previous academic self, in Korea. By linking that literacy activity in Korea to her current activity in her L2, English, Jessica was engaged in a positive border crossing experience that could help pave the way for a new academic identity in America.

A look at the persuasive essay she wrote makes clear that she was highly engaged in this task and displayed skills one would not normally expect to see in an ESL student with so little academic experience in the U.S:

Dear principal of Scioto high school,

The new class, Asian history

Have you read a little bit about Asian history, even a little bit? I hope you did because Asian history is very interesting and educational. I think including Asian history as an official subject is a good idea. Lately, Asian culture has become the part of America and the importance of Asia has increased. Also students need a variety of knowledge about history.

First of all, Asian culture is part of America. Many people from Asian have immigrated to America and there are lots of Asian-Americans in the United States. “Asians are expected to continue to grow rapidly as a share of U.S. population and make up a significant share of population over the next decades….“ (“Asian persuasion: A rapidly growing influence in the U.S.”). Furthermore, trade between the U.S. and Asia has risen. You can see numerous manufactures of Asian brands such as Samsung, LG, Toyota, Honda, and Sony in the U.S. Cars, cell phones, computers, microchips, food, TVs, and cartoons are commonplace in everyday life. In the school, many students learn Chinese or Japanese. Asian food is sometimes used as a meal at lunch. Americans live with Asian products and culture every single day of their lives.
Next, Asian power and significance has grown enormously. “Japan was ranked second in 2008 in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with 4, 923,761 billion dollars. Korea was ranked fourth in rate of growth of Gross Domestic Product at 2,52%” (IMF World Economic Outlook). Additionally, China is anticipated that it has vast potential to be an influential and developed country with rich labor, natural resources, and extensive land. In the U.S. Asians are known as well-educated and brilliant at math and science.” Asians recorded the highest percentage of taking Algebra 2 and summative high school math in 2008.” (African and Latino 11th graders were far less likely to take the Summative High School Math CST in 2008”). Many companies and good in the U.S. rely on Asian countries’ technologies: India, Japan, and Korea. If there weren’t Asian technologies in America, I’m absolutely sure that American would have a hard time to maintain their economical fame.

Last but not least, a diverse understanding about history is requisite to a successful life. As developments of the internet, transportations, and international exchanges, people call the world a “Global world.” Therefore, American students are required to learn about different history and society to be active internationally and not to be blocked in America. While contacting and studying about Asian history, they will realize information about how the world is different and similar, how they can work or solve problems in different ways, how people have various personalities and how to deal with them, and how to accept different culture that is not your type which will help them to survive in a harsh, varied, and broad society.

I wish there would be an Asian history class because America includes Asian culture and the influence and power of Asian has increased dramatically recently. In addition, I believe encountering varied colors of history is essential to American students. I’m Asian and I know how fascinating the history of Asia is. Asian history class will fetch a large number of interests and benefits to the students and the school of Dublin Scioto High School.

Sincerely,

Jessica Kim

For a transitional student navigating between two cultures, as Jessica was, this essay demonstrates considerable depth and ability. Writing it created an opportunity for her to powerfully represent her border crossing experiences and her Asian identity. This is reflected especially vividly in her statement “I’m Asian and I know how fascinating the history of Asia is” as the essay closes. There is a sense of joy and pride in that assertion of her Asian background and identity, and this is happening in the medium of English, not Korean. Jessica called the writing of this essay her “best literacy experience” (Interview,
03/12/10) at school, and it is not difficult to imagine why she felt that way. It was an empowering experience in which literacy served as a tool in helping her connect her past and present amidst her transition from her former life in Korea to her new life in the U.S.

**Writing an essay and a poem for a competition**

Jessica’s mediation of her transitional adolescent life in the U.S. was not confined to school-based activities. Indeed, activities outside school played an important role in her navigation between her Korean past and American present. One set of key literacy events falling into this category was her participation in a literacy-based competition outside school. Jessica received a flyer about this event, the “Sejong Writing Competition” sponsored by “The Sejong Cultural Society” in Chicago in collaboration with the Korea Institute at Harvard University, from her Korean bilingual aide at school. Though the focus of the competition was on celebrating Korean culture, the idea was to do so through English so as to introduce the riches of Korean culture to an English speaking audience. Jessica felt that, if she were to win one of the three prizes available, joining the writing competition would look impressive on her college applications. In fact, after Jessica’s “best literacy experience” with her persuasive essay at school, which had been praised by her ESL teacher, she was looking for another opportunity to engage in what she regarded as a meaningful experience with literacy. This was the type of involvement that constituted what she saw as a valuable use of her talent and effort and that led to the type of success she needed to construct the kind of identity she had in Korea. As such, the writing competition would be a good opportunity for her on various levels.
As expected in light of how she had approached the writing of the persuasive essay at school, Jessica invested very heavily in the writing competition. Indeed, she prepared both an essay and a poem to increase her chances of winning a prize. However, as will be seen shortly, this experience was actually not only about winning a prize; it also evolved into another important opportunity for her to address important issues connected to her life as a Korean transitional adolescent. She spent two weeks developing her thoughts, composing her essay and poem, and revising with a tutor.

We will look first at the essay that she wrote. For her essay, “The Tiger in Me,” Jessica chose to focus on a Korean folk tale, “The Tiger and the Cloudburst,” on a list of resources which the Sejong Cultural Society provided. This tale was about the experiences of a Chinese tiger that went to Korea but did not understand the Korean language and Korean culture. This folk tale is very commonly known among Korean children, including Jessica. Thus, she was drawing from her Korean schema by utilizing a resource that she was already familiar with from her school years in Korea and at the same time empowering herself to use the essay writing experience to explore the identity-related dilemma she faced as she wrestled with her new life in America. The essay Jessica wrote illustrates the ways that Jessica, as a transitional adolescent student, used literacy practices to express her bitter experiences regarding her lost identity and to describe her efforts to construct a new identity in the U.S.

The Tiger in me

1. On April 29th 2009, an eager, hunger Korean tiger took her first steps on American soil. She wanted to feast on American culture, make American friends and master the language so she could reach her dream of being attorney at the United Nations and advocating for abused children the world over. But like the
Chinese tiger in the folktale “The Tiger and the Cloudburst” things were not like she expected.

2. The Chinese tiger thinks a Korean will make an easy and tasty meal so he comes from China, where he is strong and strikes terror in the populace, to Korea where he is out of his element and unfamiliar with the language. When I was in Korea I was confident, humorous, involved in class leadership and debate. I was generally an outgoing, likeable person. I had immovable confidence in myself and my destiny. I liked to see people whom I didn’t know, make them my friends, and I enjoyed showing my English ability since I believed English was one of my assets. Then I came to America. “I’m afraid…I’m scared of English. American culture, the loneliness, and everything in America…,” I cried out like the Chinese tiger roared at the cow thief, even though in America, nobody listened or understood what I said. I could not adjust to American culture. Living in America required a whole new level of employment of English. I was not prepared for that.

3. I became like the Chinese tiger in folk tale when he hears the Korean farmer talking, unsure of myself and the sights and sound of my new surroundings. I roamed between American and Korean cultures, my fear of American and English transformed a 14 year-old Korean girl who had been so strong and self confident, into a timid little Asian girl who just tried to hide herself among other Koreans just as the Chinese tiger attempted to conceal itself from Sonagi by hiding with the cows.

4. In the story the tiger is frightened by the sound of thunder which he thinks is the Sonagi that the villagers are afraid of. When I first came to the U.S., my Korean church friends told me about the schools here and how hard it was to understand American students and teachers. My friends said Americans used slang that I would not know, they had different accents than I had heard in Korea, and they all talked way too fast to be understood. I was as frightened by this as the tiger was of the thunder.

5. The tiger reaction to the sound of thunder was to hide in the barn with the cows. Well, when I heard of horrors awaiting me in American school, I too hid. I stayed close to other Koreans and tried to avoid English at all costs. I listened to Korean songs and shows; I read Korean books and magazines. On the internet, I only had contact with Koreans. I avoided contact with Americans or looking at their eyes. In the study a cow thief comes into the barn and puts a rope around the tigers’ neck and leads him away. Well, my parents practically had to put a rope around my neck and drag me to school that first day.

6. The tiger tried to run away but the cow thief held on tight to his fur and the tiger could not escape. I tried to run away and hide in my Korean cocoon, but I couldn’t get away either. My parents forced me to confront my fears. Painfully I began to interact my new circumstances. I worked hard on my studies and took extra lessons in English to improve my proficiency.

7. I have taken steps to overcome my shyness and improve my oral and written presentation skills by using my Korean strengths: my knowledge of Korean culture and history. When I had had a choice of subjects, in school I have written or spoken about Korean topics. I wrote a paper about Korean history for my history class. In
my ESL (English as a Second Language) class, I have given talks and demonstrations about Korean foods, holidays, and traditions. I have enjoyed telling other about my heritage. Telling people from America and other countries about Korea makes me proud to be Korean and gives me confidence. I have not mastered English or American culture yet, but I will not stop trying.

8. The story, the Tiger and the Cloudburst, is the tale of a tiger that, due to his irrational fear of the unknown and lack of understanding of another countries culture and language, ends up being defeated and devoured by the very people he sought to feast upon. I will not be like the tiger in this regard. I will not let myself be beaten by the English language. I will be the aster of my circumstances and overcome my fears and difficulties with the English language. I will not run away at the first clap of thunder. I will stand and face my language Sonagi head on and I will win! The foolish Chinese tiger thought Koreans would make an easy meal, but we are not so easily eaten or beaten.

As a documentation of the agonies of life as a transitional adolescent, this is a powerful essay, one into which Jessica poured her emotions. The use of the essay to portray her own struggles like the Chinese tiger in the folk tale starts in the second paragraph, where she acknowledges and celebrates her Korean identity that meant so much to her. For instance, she declares, When I was in Korea I was confident, humorous, involved in class leadership and debate. I was generally an outgoing, likeable person. I had immovable confidence in myself and my destiny. I liked to see people whom I didn’t know, make them my friends, and I enjoyed showing my English ability since I believed English was one of my assets. That she wanted her readers to know of her confidence and success in Korea is noteworthy, particularly since she no longer possessed such feelings in America. And then, in that same paragraph, we see moving references to her far different life in the U.S.: Then I came to America. “I’m afraid…I’m scared of English. American culture, the loneliness, and everything in America....” I cried out like the Chinese tiger roared at the cow thief, even though in America, nobody listened or understood what I said. I could not adjust to American culture. The contrast between these lines and those describing her happy life in
Korea is not only striking but also haunting, as the pain of her new American life is vivid and deep.

The profound sense of loss and pain just articulated appears again, and just as powerfully, in the next paragraph with the lines *I roamed between American and Korean cultures, my fear of American and English transformed a 14 year-old Korean girl who had been so strong and self confident, into a timid little Asian girl who just tried to hide herself among other Koreans just as the Chinese tiger attempted to conceal itself from Sonagi by hiding with the cows.* From a “so strong and self-confident” individual in Korea, she had become “a timid little Asian girl” hiding herself within the Korean culture, though she was now in the US. Also interesting here is her use of the phrase “I roamed between American and Korean cultures,” a stark reminder of her movement back and forth between these two very different worlds she had experienced. In other words, she was not going to focus only on her American life; retaining connections with the previous life that had been so meaningful for her was essential.

The essay is also quite interesting in the way it portrays later stages of Jessica’s transition. As she says in paragraph seven, *I have taken steps to overcome my shyness and improve my oral and written presentation skills by using my Korean strengths: my knowledge of Korean culture and history. When I had had a choice of subjects, in school I have written or spoken about Korean topics.* Here we see her trying to adjust to her new life, and doing so by relying on Korean schema. This is evidence of a clear transitional strategy: move into the new by grasping and using the old as a resource.
Finally, in paragraph eight, we see her strong assertion about overcoming the challenges she had been facing and willing herself into a new identity in the U.S.: *I will not be like the tiger in this regard. I will not let myself be beaten by the English language. I will be the aster of my circumstances and overcome my fears and difficulties with the English language. I will not run away at the first clap of thunder. I will stand and face my language Sonagi head on and I will win!* The foolish Chinese tiger thought Koreans would make an easy meal, but we are not so easily eaten or beaten. Her powerful declaration, “I will win!”, resonates very strongly as a marker of her new life and identity, while her reference to “we Koreans” is another example of her finding a way to make her Korean heritage an important, ongoing asset in her transitional adolescent life.

This essay clearly demonstrates why the Sejong competition was a key literacy event for Jessica. It afforded her the opportunity to use literacy as a sense-making device in a way that was rarely available to her and yet was very much a need she felt. Writing it may well have been a cathartic experience for her in not only reasserting her Korean identity but also proclaiming a kind of victory in life as a transitional adolescent in America.

Given the power of Jessica’s competition essay, it was interesting to see that she did not stop her efforts at identity construction there. Jessica’s bitter transitional experiences described in “The Tiger in Me” were also represented in her poem “Butterfly,” based on a Korean poetic form called Sijo. In the poem we see the same themes as in the essay.

**Butterfly**

1. In my dark and lonely shell I wait,
2. Weak and scared, not yet full grown
3. I wonder, will I survive
4. To see spring, kissed by the sun?
Commenting on the poem in an interview, Jessica said that this poem was about her story:

This poem is about my story. I came to the U.S alone, despite my family, leaving my friends, my church, my school, and everything I did for fourteen years in Korea. I prepared alone for a new me like how a butterfly changes in a dark and lonely shell to finally become a butterfly. I want to speak English freely like how a butterfly flies freely. (Interview, 04/30/10)

She described her early harsh life in the U.S. as a newcomer in this poem, using the adjectives, “dark, lonely, weak, scared, and not full grown.” This sense of alienation was movingly expressed in the words, “I wonder, will I survive?” in line 3. And then, like in “The Tiger in Me,” we see her determination to complete a successful transition to her new life with her words “Look at me! With colors bright, Dancing on new wings, I take flight.” Echoing the same stages of development seen in her essay, the poem depicts the unfolding of her transition and the movement from despair to determination to succeed. Here, too, then, she used a form of literacy to play out the dimensions of her transitional journey. Also interesting to note here is how she had once again drawn on her prior literacy experiences in Korea while writing in English. Her fifth grade teacher in Korea, a Sijo poet, strictly trained the students in how to write Sijo poems. Although she had never written Sijo in English, Jessica saw an opportunity to make use of that Korean poetic schema to make sense of her transition through the medium of English. Once again, then, we see how
resourceful Jessica was in employing the dual languages and literacies in her life: what she already knew well in Korean and what she was learning in English.

**Engaging in Cyworld and Facebook**

Up to now, the focus of this chapter has been on Jessica’s use of more traditional or conventional uses of literacy, that is, print-based writing via her essays and poem. Just as important to her was the use of multimodal forms of literacy. In this subsection there is a shift to the place of social networking sites in Jessica’s transitional life. First there is her involvement in a popular Korean language site called Cyworld, followed by her activity on her Facebook homepage. She was extremely active on both sites after moving to the U.S. and was already an experienced use of Cyworld during her years in Korea.

Cyworld (www.cyworld.co.kr) is, among Koreans, a famous Korean language social networking site heavily used by Korean youth in particular. It features an online blog and a personal mini home page (called a “mini hompy”). Since its initial launching, Cyworld has been an integral part of everyday life for many Koreans and has had a significant effect on Korea’s internet culture. In particular, the growing popularity of the digital camera in the early 2000s enabled the users of Cyworld, especially young people, to use digital images to share their experiences or express themselves through Cyworld. Cyworld members cultivate relationships by forming friends with each other through their mini-hompy. The mini-hompy consists of a home section, profile, diary, photo, board, visitor, and setting sections, which are decorated in the member’s own preferred ways.

A picture (figure 4.1) of an attractive but depressed looking woman is set as Jessica’s profile picture with the quote, “tired of being a third wheel…” on her home page. In the
middle of it, the greetings in Korean are notable: “잘 지내? 언제 한국에 돌아 올 거야? 예쁘다. 널 기다리고 있는데. 미국생활 재미있니?” (“How are you doing? When are you going back to Korea? You look pretty, I am waiting for you. Are you enjoying your American life?”)

Like her Sejong competition essay and poem, these words on her Cyworld home page resonate powerfully. We once again see her agony between the new and old lives (“tired of being a third wheel…”). That is, in a sense, the statement in in Jessica’s transitional adolescent life, and the fact that she posted it as her profile picture on Cyworld home page signified that importance. Its symbol form (…) also suggests that it remains a third wheel issue with an air of sadness and loneliness. As with her Sejong competition writing, then, Jessica used literacy to foreground and announce to others, central issues in her life: her identity as a third being, who is not Korean nor American. While her Korean-based friends expected her enjoyable new American life as they said, “You look pretty. Are you enjoying your American life?”, the reality was that her new life was not.
Figure 4.1: Jessica’s Cyword home page

Also worth noting about Jessica’s Cyworld site was her employment of multimodal resources. Though not connected directly to examining her transitional life, they reflect her engagement in literacies. For example, in the profile subsection, which was intended to passionately display her spiritual world and was also arranged to show who Jessica was, she designed it by using multimodal resources to depict the role of Christianity in her life. For instance, there was a picture of Jesus hugging a girl, who was presumably herself, as there was no writing accompanying the picture. Furthermore in a profile subsection she called in Christ, she included comics, song lyrics, Bible verses, essays, and diary entries, all of which showed Christian life lessons and Christian truths through various genres.

On Cyworld, Jessica was especially fond of posting pictures. Through this means, she shared events in her American life by designing the photo section into four categories: Jesus, Jessica, missing, and the countryside Ohio. Among the four categories, two (Jessica and the countryside Ohio) she had created were especially notable. In the Jessica section,
she placed her current pictures (her birthday picture in her ESL class, a picture of herself and her friends in a school lab); in the *countryside Ohio* section, she put pictures from her life in Ohio, such as her apartment and its surrounding area (swimming pool, gym, tennis court, lake), her school, her school bus, school parking lot, school bathroom, and her family’s trip to New York. Jessica captured her American life using these visual images. While these images conveyed a sense of her life in America, what was also interesting about this activity from a transitional perspective is that she *wanted* to engage in this sharing. As we saw earlier in her Sejong competition essay, she had, for a while, seemingly done all she could to, as she put it, “hide in my Korean cocoon” in the U.S. And yet she assembled and displayed these pictures of her life in America as well. That she wanted others to know something of that life suggests that she felt it was worth seeing. This apparent contradiction with her efforts to retreat as often as she could into Korean-based experiences and resources in the U.S. signifies the complexity of her transitional adolescent existence.

Another interesting feature of Jessica’s use of Cyworld was how it helped her develop a hybridized cultural understanding of the two nations (cultures) in her life. The immediate nature of social networking sites allowed Jessica and her friends to converse about pictures after she posted pictures of her American life, which produced various interesting online conversations with her Korean-based friends. These conversations mostly reflected her hybridized cultural understandings of two nations (or cultures). Hybridity can be understood as “a space betwixt and between two zones of purity” and “the ongoing condition of all human culture, which contains no zones of purity because people undergo
continuous processes of transculturation (two-way borrowing and lending between two cultures)” (Tomlinson, 1999. p.143). In Jessica’s case, the hybridized understanding of the two cultures refers to her unique ways of understanding the two cultures from an in-between standpoint, that is, her transitional adolescent status. For example, the most frequent topic of their conversations was around comparing Korea and the U.S. One of the examples was as follows:

Jessica: 불쌍한 것 (Jessica’s Cyworld)

What we see here is that when Jessica posted the picture of the bathroom at her school to show her friends her American life, the talk about Jessica’ American school toilet expanded to Korean toilets, and globally the Korean power of Samsung traversing the U.S. and Korea.
For Jessica, this was an interesting way to make connections between her former and new lives. Rather than leaving her Korean life behind, as might have been helpful in grasping the full reality of having to live a completely different life elsewhere, Jessica once again sought ways to create ties between the two. This may well have been a strategy (perhaps an unconscious one) intended to generate a smoother negotiation between the old and new worlds in her life. It appeared that this was partly how Jessica was learning to reconcile herself to her fate as a transitional Korean adolescent. Perhaps, in her own way, she was seeking to make the best of her status of straddling the previous and new lives by bridging the old and new lives.

Meanwhile, Jessica was also actively involved in another social networking site, Facebook. Facebook had different formats (three sections: wall, information, and photos sections), and its main language of use was English. For Jessica it was a way of maintaining contact with school and church friends in the U.S. Shortly after Jessica arrived in the U.S., she rushed to make a Facebook account, because it was the most popular website among her new school and church friends and, without it, she would not be able to socialize with them. An interesting and notable dimension of Jessica’s Facebook activity was her use of the Korean language as a kind of secret code. This was yet another manifestation of her desire to retain ties to her Korean heritage and identity while in the midst of transition to life in the U.S. As already shown, Jessica communicated with her local friends in the U.S., such as her non-Korean friends and Korean-American friends (who were not literate in Korean) in English. Therefore, upon visiting Jessica’s wall section in Facebook, the conversations were mainly conducted in English. However, in this English dominant place,
there were notable parts written in Korean as well. These occurred when Jessica conversed online with her close friend Inhee (another research participant in this study and thus another Korean transitional adolescent). They had the same ethnic background and were both newcomers who could share the same school experiences.

Jessica and Inhee sometimes encouraged, empathized with, and playfully teased each other in Korean, and while using Korean was an understandable practice because of their shared linguistic background, it also signified yet another desire to retain ties with the Korean heritage and identity. This use of Korean was a kind of comfort zone for both of them in which they could not only use the language they knew best, but also behave in the L1 culturally-determined ways that were so familiar and reassuring. In this regard, their Korean language exchanges on Facebook were a manifestation of their transitional lives, only in this case perhaps as an escape from the pressures of such lives. They could simply be ‘Korean’ for a while, though they could also use such exchanges to navigate challenging areas of their lives in the U.S. In this latter way, they could use Facebook for mutual identity construction, since these exchanges could help them make sense of and learn to work with the American-based challenges they faced. Then, too, this allowed them to share their experiences and their emotions in ways which their American and Korean-American friends would not notice. This might have allowed a degree of honesty or frankness they would be reluctant to display in English. This is another way which Facebook served as a comfort zone type of space for these transitional adolescents. This multiliteracies activity was a telling example which shows “the negotiation of the multiple linguistic and cultural
differences in our society” (The New London Group, 1996), especially of transitional students.

**Composing a multimodal project at a community center**

The final key literacy event to be examined in this chapter is a project Jessica completed while taking a course at a local community center, MCS, where I worked and where Jessica was a student of mine in my ESL class. This project was one aimed at allowing students an opportunity to make use of different forms of literacy while also exploring a social issue of personal interest (as described in Chapter Three).

Jessica’s multimodal project was based on an inquiry-based approach to learning. For Jessica, accustomed to a heavy dose of langue practice of various kinds in her ESL classes, it was her first time attempting to learn in this way. Jessica created “Confusion of identity in America” as the title of her MCS project. For her topic, she chose an appealing and intriguing issue based on both her reading of an adolescent novel called *Yankee Girl* by Kyusun Chung and her observations about her Korean-American friends in school and church. In classroom discussions about *Yankee Girl* (which is about the experiences of a teenage Korean immigrant student trying to adjust to life in America), several issues, including identity issues, were problematized. Among those issues, Jessica showed a strong interest in the dual identities of Korean-American youth, whose appearance was likely to be Korean but whose behavior was more ‘American’ in style. In particular, Jessica pointed out the identity dimension of Korean-American youth, taking as an example Korean-American youth encountering cultural differences between their Korean parents and themselves. Jessica wondered if Korean-American youth considered themselves
Koreans or Americans. This issue, which Jessica had never experienced in Korea, was especially intriguing for her, as someone who had come to the U.S. recently. She problematized the dual (or hybrid) identities Korean-American youth faced as ‘confusion of identity’, as the title of her project showed.

In line with the inquiry-based approach, Jessica had generated a set of research questions to answer. To investigate her research questions, Jessica interviewed two mentors at MCS- a Korean- American and a Chinese-American. Several Asian-American college students and Asian- American adults worked at MCS as volunteer mentors. The mentors had a close relationship with regular class students in the SAY Program (as illustrated in Chapter Three) by helping them with their homework and being involved in their activities. In contrast, my ESL students did not have close relationships with the mentors, because they rarely asked for help and they appeared to be uncomfortable with the concept of mentors. Although they often talked and joked with the mentors, the students’ awkwardness and annoyance towards the mentors were apparent. My students wondered about their backgrounds as Asian-Americans, especially the Korean adoptee mentor, Lauren (pseudonym), whose appearance was Korean but whose behavior was perceived as ‘American.’ Lauren, despite not being fluent in Korean, sometimes tried to speak simple Korean greetings and phrases with my students, but my students did not reply in Korean sincerely and sometimes used a condescending tone toward her. In fact, it was not easy to close the social distance between my students and the MCS mentors. Among my students, Jessica had rarely interacted with the mentors, not showing any interest and focusing only
on her work. However, the interviews for the project provided Jessica with a chance to talk
with Lauren as well as the other mentor, the Chinese-American.

As Jessica explored her research questions, interviewing enabled her to understand the
seemingly complicated identity issue by interviewing Lauren, who struggled with her
identity. During the interview, Jessica was able to listen to Lauren’s heartwarming story:
her childhood in Korea and her struggle with her identity issue as a Korean-American
adoptive raised in an American family. For Jessica, it was not just an interview, but a time
when she started to understand Lauren and to establish a sense of connectedness with those
who had the same ethnic heritage. As she explained: “생기기만 동양 사람처럼 생겼지 완전히
미국 애들이랑 같다고 느꼈는데요 인터뷰하면서 점점 같은 피를 물려받은 사람이구나” ("I
originally thought that she only looked Asian and that she was completely American on
the inside. However, as I interviewed her, I realized that we had the same blood, the same
heritage."). (Interview, 04/02/10).

The interview activity enabled Lauren and Jessica to construct a close relationship
through Lauren’s story, which gave Jessica the impetus to extend her understanding of the
issue of Korean-Americans’ dual identity. It may also have been giving her meaningful
‘food for thought’ in terms of her own transitional adolescent life. That is, as she heard
about Lauren’s identity struggles, Jessica was likely reviewing her own as well and may
have been gaining additional and beneficial perspectives on the transitional process she
was engaged in.
Having seen Jessica’s background leading up to the creation of her multimodal project, which was based on her interviews, her reading of *Yankee Girl*, and observations she had made at her high school, we can now look at the project itself.

![Figure 4.2: Jessica’s multimodal project](image)

Slide 1 Title  
Slide 2 List of the contents  
Slide 3 Sources  
Slide 4 How do we call Asian new comers and Asian American? And the pictures of banana, twinkie, oreo and two Asian girls are seen  
Slide 5 What is identity? Its definition is shown based on the internet site, Naver.  
Slide 6 When do they usually struggle with their identities?  
Slide 7 Why is identity important?  
Slide 8 Who feels confused about his or her own identity?  
Slide 9 What causes them to feel confused about their identities?  
Slide 10 How do they find their identities?  
Slide 11 and 12 Conclusion

While not directed at her own identity struggles, this project provides another interesting look at Jessica’s use of literacies to investigate issues related to her transitional adolescent status. What stands out is the power of the identity-related questions she raised.
in slides 5-10. These are questions she was seemingly wrestling with herself. Though the project itself may not reflect the kind of deeper engagement she could have experienced by creating a more multi-faceted representation of her content (such as adding music and more visual images), the inquiry-based approach that helped her gather the material she needed for the project may have aligned well with her own transitional challenges. As stated earlier, through this project about others, she was perhaps vicariously looking at herself and her own answers to the questions she posed. It was also an opportunity to use literacy resources while conducting an inquiry.

**Summary**

Most of Jessica’s school-based activities did not support the construction of her new academic identity because of their heavy focus on easy language practice and her notions of what constitutes serious academic work. On the other hand, writing the persuasive essay at school allowed Jessica to work at constructing an academic identity by drawing on her cultural resources as a transitional student. Standing in such sharp contrast to the rest of her schoolwork, the persuasive essay experience appeared to be a transformative one for Jessica. It showed her that engaging in meaningful, literacy-based activity could occur in an American school setting and that she could achieve the kind of academic success she had in Korea. This was a message she needed as she looked ahead to the next two years of study at an American high school.

Meaningful, through re-contextualization (Dyson, 2003) across genres (essay, poem) during the Sejong competition, Jessica was able to express her bitterness about her lost L1 identity and her major steps toward the construction of a new L2 identity. This was a release
of emotion she was perhaps in deep need of. Rather than concealing it inside, where it could be damaging emotionally, she ‘vented’ through the poem and essay. In this process, as with her persuasive essay at school, despite her weak English proficiency, her L1 knowledge played an essential role in the writing of her competition essay and poem, and it enabled her to make important connections between her old and new lives. Instead of seeing them as in opposition to each other, she appeared to be trying to build bridges between as she drew upon her Korean schemata. Her multiliteracies practices through Cyworld and Facebook were likewise important in her efforts to make sense of her transitional adolescent life, and here, too, she was able to make positive connections between her old and new lives as she negotiated her Korean and American experiences. Finally, the multimodal project, with its overt focus on identity issues, may have indirectly allowed her to further engage important questions in her own life.

In exploring these key literacy events in Jessica’s transitional adolescent experiences, this chapter has attempted to generate deeper understanding of the challenges faced by transitional youth like Jessica and to gain perspectives on how literacies can be a resource while those challenges are being navigated. The next two chapters make a similar attempt regarding the other two participants in the study.
Chapter 5: John

In this chapter the focus shifts to John, another transitional Korean adolescent, with an emphasis on key literacy events that reveal the roles played by formal (school) and informal (outside school) literacy as John grappled with the complexities of his transitional life.

**Background**

When it’s something I want to do, I try really hard at it, but when I don’t want to do something, I bs it…when it is something I don’t want to do, I can’t focus. However, when it’s something I enjoy like playing the drums or drawing, time seems to fly by very quickly. (Interview, 04/27/10)

As the quotation above suggests, John, an eighth grade student who had been in the United States for about a year and a half at the time this study began, was marked by erratic shifts in motivation when it came to studying as well as engagements with literacy. He had come to the U.S. with his family while his father pursued a doctoral degree, thus interrupting his education in Korea. In school, as I saw in my MCS class, he struggled with focusing on his studies and rarely invested himself in the assigned coursework and classroom activities. He was a procrastinator. Paying attention was another problem. On those occasions when he did participate in class activities, he was inclined to offer less than serious remarks and was seen by the other members of the class as the class clown. Outside
class, he actively engaged in such activities as playing drums, listening to hip-hop songs, drawing (including cartoons), and reading and writing fantasy novels. As he observed, “something I enjoy like playing the drums or drawing, time seems to fly very quickly.” This comment is crucial in terms of analyzing and understanding John’s approach to involvement in literacy activities, as it shows that, when sufficiently motivated, John was capable of investing himself deeply in what he was doing.

John was not a strong academic achiever in Korea, and he followed his mother’s study plan for him involuntarily. He had had an experience in which he spent six months in the U.S. before coming to the U.S. with his family. During that time, he struggled with American education, but when he returned to the U.S. later, his adaptation process was much easier. He was assigned to an advanced level ESL program when he came to the U.S. However, in the U.S., as previously in Korea, he ignored his mother’s study plan for him and continuous nagging to get a tutor for English. He preferred lying on his bed daydreaming. He had many friends at school and church, and his social skills enabled him to facilitate the development of his speaking and listening skills in English. These skills may have aided his partial exit from the ESL program in just a year (a relatively short period of time for English Language Learners), as he was allowed to move from ESL classes to a mainstream Language Arts class.

Actually, although John was allowed to take a Language Arts class, this did not mean that he had completely exited from the ESL program. During my research (from January to early June, 2010), John was officially in a period of transition between ESL and Language Arts classes because of his borderline OTELA score (the Ohio Test of English
Language Acquisition), a state-mandated test for ELLs. This meant that while he was taking a Language Arts class, he was to be monitored by the ESL program until the end of the academic year as well as retaking the OTELA to ensure his exit from the ESL program. This straddling of the ESL program and the Language Arts class was a marker of John’s overall transitional status, one that mirrored the transition from his life in Korea to his new life in America.

An interesting dimension to his transitional status between ESL and the Language Arts class was the role that good fortune seemingly played in John being allowed to enroll in the Language Arts class. Like other ELLs, John had taken the OTELA; a sufficiently high performance on that test allows ELLs to mainstream into Language Arts classes rather than staying in the ESL program. That was what had happened to John. However, as he explained, “I was so lucky to get good grades in the last year’s OTELA test.” (Interview, 03/19/10) That is, he succeeded (at least in part) because he was good at guessing, not because of his English language proficiency. This reliance on luck was typical of John in situations where his personal interest was low. Despite the luck, there was another challenge for him: depending on the OTELA results, he faced the possibility of having to return to the ESL program. Unfortunately, at the end of this study, he did not receive a sufficient score on the OTELA and was supposed to return to the ESL program in the next academic year. This situation also had important implications for his involvement with school-based literacy in the Language Arts class.

In the Language Arts class, John participated in various reading and writing related activities, such as reading and writing about current events on Fridays; writing a research
paper; reading a nonfiction book, “Night” by Elie Wiesel; giving a persuasive position speech; engaging in reading skills practice sessions for the OAA (Ohio Achievement Assessments) tests; and compiling a reading journal, a Dream reader’s I-log, every day as homework. Overall, John’s Language Arts class focused on reading and writing practices rather than the language-related activities Jessica experienced in her ESL class, thus giving John more substantial exposure to academic literacy than was the case for Jessica. There was some focus on syntax and vocabulary as well as routine tasks such as completing worksheets. However, John’s Language Arts class included varied, extensive and more academically demanding practices; further, the various reading and writing related activities allowed student choice on many of the assignments. The students were allowed to choose their topics for their current events assignment, research paper, and persuasive position speech. For these activities, the students were also able to freely use various resources such as magazines or newspapers (for current events), encyclopedia, subscription database, and other websites (for research papers). The student choice was not limited to in-school activities; they also chose their own books for a reading journal. All of these options provided the students with the possibility of becoming a more engaging reader or writer, especially compared to ESL classes Jessica and Inhee engaged in. Thus, John was in a position to significantly enhance his academic literacy skills in English.

In terms of performance, in the Language Arts class, John was seemingly able to manage the work, as his average grade B revealed; however, he seemed to lack a sense of connection to the class, despite being thankful that he was there and not in an ESL class. He sometimes lost his worksheets, forgot detailed instructions for various projects, and
frequently submitted his projects late. Even when he was given time during school to work on projects, he spent the time talking with his friends or playing on the computer and then rushed to do them the night before they were due.

Also, he did not construct a true reader or writer identity through school work. For example, John’s approach to his research project, which dealt with the history of the Olympics, mirrored his strategic and superficial tendencies to initially select a topic that would tap into his personal interests but then suddenly change it to a manageable topic and copy online articles the night before the project was due. Thus, he completed his assignments with little regard for the quality of his work or a desire to learn from them. He failed to produce a creative research project, thus not becoming a true writer. Likewise, he attempted to find a shortcut in reading materials for his reading response journal, I-log. In the beginning, he sometimes used his favorite fantasy reading material at home, such as *The Hunger Games, The Lightening Thief, The Black Pearl*, and his reading at MCS, such as *Yankee Girl*, but as time passed, he chose poems, which he did not need to read a lot to follow the story and did not read them sincerely. This reduced his homework load as a reader and allowed an easier pathway to writing about this material. However, later, his reading of them proved to be not meaningful because when he chose a poem for a writing competition, he could not use this experience or knowledge. As his ways of engaging in school literacy practices showed, John appeared to view reading and writing in school only as requirements for good grades and did not engage with them in creative, critical, and reflective ways as a writer or reader. John was a passive learner who viewed these academic tasks as insignificant in his life. However, this was not an attitude he adopted.
after he arrived in the U.S.; as noted earlier, in Korea he had resisted his mother’s attempts to have him follow a rigorous study plan, and in his new life in America he was following a similar path.

Using the information in this section of the chapter as a launching point, the focus now shifts to important literacy events related to John’s life as a transitional Korean adolescent.

**Reading and writing about current events at school**

Although John was, as already shown, a reluctant learner, there was an ongoing literacy event at school that helped him gradually move toward a new identity as a reader and writer in English and thus aided in his transition to a more workable life in the U.S. This was reading and writing about current events in his Language Arts class. Every Friday, John had a journal writing assignment about current events that involved (a) finding an interesting news article via online sources, newspapers, or news magazines such as *Time* or *Newsweek*; (b) writing about key vocabulary, composing a summary of the article, explaining the reason for choosing the article, and discussing reactions to it; (c) sharing this material in the classroom. This literacy activity appeared to require knowledge of American society and high level reading skills and vocabulary, which would be a quite difficult task for John as a transitional student. However, unlike his other Language Arts assignments, he invested himself in the work, approaching it with pleasure. He attempted to choose articles related to his interests in everyday life, such as football, snowboarding in the winter Olympics, and arts (two times) rather than academically related topics or controversial topics such as political events. He also chose manageable reading mediums such as the local newspaper and accessible online articles, which he could easily
understand and not be overwhelmed by many difficult words, rather than more substantive sources such *Time* or *Newsweek*.

In this case, then, John showed a commitment to the work and thus demonstrated that he was capable of a deeper level of engagement with literacy. His persistence was different from his usual, laid-back attitude, perhaps because the current events task allowed him to make connections with his own interests. We will see an example of this in his treatment of an article with the headline, “Emotion colors dreamlike landscapes” in a local newspaper which explained the drawings of Todd Buschur that were scheduled to be displayed at a local art gallery. Among many kinds of articles in this newspaper, John picked the article about the drawings because its headline strongly appealed to him, and he had a strong personal interest in art. Thus, he had a personal connection to the content, and this motivated him to approach the task seriously. Furthermore, in this case he was able to activate schema from his past in Korea, where he had devoted a great deal of time and effort during his elementary school years to drawing by himself. As a result, there was a bridge between his past and present, and this kind of bridge was important for someone caught in a transitional life, as John was. His artistic identity constructed in Korea carried over to his work at the moment in the U.S. and thus allowed John to use literacy in creating a rich transitional experience for himself. Also, while reading the article, his schema in drawing enabled him to read the article smoothly and easily and guess the meanings of difficult words, as reflected in what he wrote in his journal:

I chose this article because I like art. I like the ways to draw and Buschur’s drawings are very interesting. He draws a simple thing, like house, but the effects he adds
have very strong feelings. I wanted to know about his drawings. So I picked this article. (Writing log, 02/06/10)

In this journal entry, John demonstrated what could happen when a literacy event overlapped with his personal interests and prior knowledge. On the whole, John’s engagement with reading and writing about current events was a positive, pleasant literacy experience in which literacy served as a tool in helping him connect his past and present amidst his transition from his former life in Korea to his new life in the U.S.; it was also meaningful in that he was able to experience a sense of agency through a school literacy activity.

**Watching Youtube and webtoon sites.**

John’s mediation of his transitional adolescent life in the U.S. was not confined to school-based literacy activities, as revealed in a set of closely related literacy events taking place in online spaces. Outside school, John spent a considerable amount of time playing on the computer while he only spent the minimal amount of time he deemed necessary for school work. As this quote suggests, John’s online literacy practices, especially multiple forms of literacy, meant enjoyment (as opposed to learning) for him. Among various online literacy practices, one essential literacy event was watching Youtube and Naver webtoon sites. This activity is especially notable because these two websites, in different cultures and languages, provided John with ways of constructing a sense of group identity and a “class clown” identity that intertwined with his group identity. John was considered a “class clown” and socialized well with his peers in Korea, but in the U.S. it was difficult to maintain that image because of the different language and culture. Thus, he experienced a significant shift in identity from being an insider in Korea to being an outsider in the U.S.
In this regard, as in others, John’s case shows how transitional students like him navigate two worlds at a critical stage of their lives, when they are establishing their social identities in adolescence, a crucial period in terms of the importance of peer acceptance. John, after being popular and accepted in Korea, was now experiencing a different self in a new country where American youth had their own peer culture based on American values and perspectives. To overcome his lack of a meaningful identity in this new setting, John needed to find some kind of outlet, and for him it was oral and visual literacy in the form of engagement in online spaces.

Operating in these new circumstances, John regularly visited several video blogs of various Youtube comedy stars, such as Ray William Johnson, Nigahiga, and Smosh (all of them are Youtube celebrities). John spent a great amount of time watching them and laughing at the funny scenes and words (jokes). He looked forward to the weekly updates on each site. The sites themselves were diverse in interesting ways. For example, the comedy of Ray William Johnson and Smosh was immersed in American culture and encoded heavily in such terms, while the one for Nigahiga, an American-Japanese man, relied more on Asian comedic elements (e.g., Ninja) while expressed in English. John enjoyed these two different culturally-based comedy settings, which mirrored his own simultaneous links to both the Asian and American cultures. In these online spaces, he was able to find comfort in each of the worlds he inhabited during his transitional period of life.

What was also interesting about this involvement in oral and visual literacy was how John brought this activity to the school context, through which he cultivated loyalty and a group identity among his social group at school and had opportunities to use (learn) English.
For example, the video blogs John enjoyed were what John’s peers, especially John’s social group at school, regularly visited. Whenever a new video was uploaded, it would be the focus of the next day’s social interaction. A group of boys, which consisted of his mainstream school peers (white Americans, as well as a few Indians, but no Asian except for John), crowded together in a circle at school, copying jokes and social uses of language and reenacting funny scenes. Sometimes John, who had learned martial arts in Korea and was familiar with Japanese culture due to his own Asian heritage, showed and explained several Ninja tactics (e.g., survival fight skills) of Nigahiga’s Japanese comedy to his peers in English. At these moments, John was once again a class clown, but this time through the medium of English.

Thus, through multiliteracies, the boys like John and his peers centered around shared interests (literacy), and more importantly were affiliating around literacy (Smith and Wilhelm, 2002). This group used literacy to lace its members tightly together and exclude those beyond their circle of significance. Indeed, John was able to be socialized with his mainstream class peers, which would normally be difficult for transitional students. Furthermore, within this group, English was the medium of communication, and for John this was helpful in some ways. John needed to understand the linguistically and culturally sophisticated jokes of Ray William Johnson and Smosh in English and their social language which Gee (1999) termed (e.g., assplode, pwned; assplode means ass+explode and pwned means to own and to be dominated by an opponent). In these peer-oriented conditions, John used (learned) English as an insider, not as an English language learner, and it was this kind of experience that helped ease his transition from his old to his new one.
Another one of John’s favorite websites was a Korean language website, “The sound of heart” (마음의 소리), a webtoon site on Naver (www.comic.naver.com/index.nhn). A webtoon is an animated cartoon which is distributed by the internet and is created by using flash, a software program such as movie maker, or a simple image editor. It provides the amateur creators with a chance to showcase their work and, as a result, some of them become famous professional cartoonists as they are noticed by the cartoon industry. Indeed, the creator of “The sound of heart” was originally an amateur cartoonist who became a famous cartoonist due to this site. One of the attractive characteristics of the site is its use of nonsense and humor, which are intricately associated with the Korean mentality and Korean culture. John visited this cartoon website in Korea every day for entertainment and continued to enjoy it, especially the Korean style of humor and cartoons, after he moved to the U.S. For him this was an important, ongoing link to his native language and culture and, as a consequence, his Korean identity.

Sometimes John brought the humor of the webtoon site to MCS and shared it with other Korean peers in the computer lab, which caused them to burst out giggling. At this moment, John was not a trouble maker who was not motivated to study and often bothered his classmates in the classroom, as otherwise occurred at times. Given that the class at MCS was considered boring, John occasionally told his class about what he saw on the webtoon site and made the class laugh. In other words, John was a class clown at MCS, just as he was in school and in Korea. As such, oral and visual literacy once again assisted John in his efforts to navigate his transitional adolescent life.
Engaging in Facebook

Another online literacy event that mediated John’s transitional life in the U.S. was his ongoing engagement in the social network site, Facebook, which was an important part of his social life. Unlike many Korean young people, John did not use Cyworld, the popular Korean language social networking site, when he was in Korea, and rarely contacted his friends in Korea after he came to the U.S. On the other hand, as soon as he arrived in the U.S., he created a Facebook account. He had a good relationship with his school and church friends in the U.S as he attempted to cultivate his identities as a “class clown” and “cool guy.” He had a strong friendship with his Korean-American church friends, who were born and raised in the U.S. and communicated in English. Further, spending a considerable amount of time at church with them by attending church events, often as a passionate drummer on his “praise team,” contributed to this circle of friendship. That John so quickly sought, and established, social ties after his arrival in the U.S., particularly with Korean-Americans at the Korean church he attended, is an important marker of how he approached the transition in his life from Korea to the U.S., with Facebook playing an important role in that process. Despite his frequent face-to-face contact with these friends in the U.S., John wanted online interaction with them as well, thus attesting to the power of literacy in negotiating the kind of transition in life he was experiencing.

In his involvement with Facebook, John was re-establishing his identity through engagement with multiliteracies, in the sense that Facebook presented different options for the use of literacy, especially visual and written forms. An intriguing example was from the photo section, which had many pictures John selected, some of which were from a
summer church mission trip to Lima, Peru (ABBA Peru 2010) in which he participated with other youth members of his church. This was the first time he planned to travel abroad with his American-based friends. At that time, there was a special event—‘international youth training conference’ aiming to strengthen and spread their religious beliefs in addition to the usual mission trip to Peru every summer. For the event, the promotional video for ‘ABBA Peru 2010’ was shared on his Facebook site as well as the sites of his church group members and youth groups all over the world. By sharing the video with each other rather than other ways of promotion (e.g., a print-based flyer), they shared their enthusiasm about their mission trip across borders. In other words, for these adolescents, multimodal literacy resources were strong meaning-making tools, and that was very much the case for John at a time when identity construction was especially important. His sharing on Facebook about ABBA Peru 2010, which occurred in English, connected John with other young people locally and internationally and helped John develop a sense of belonging, via group identity, he needed amidst the transition he was experiencing. Indeed, this sense of group identity within the global discourse he participated in through online literacy helped him accelerate his transition to his new life in the U.S.

Another interesting example of the role of Facebook as an important literacy event for John was his use of his Facebook name, which also illustrates his identification of himself within a global discourse frame. Upon entering John’s Facebook site, something catches the viewer’s eye immediately: the name, “Jack Kiechan Bruce Lee.” It wittily combines the names of two famous Hong Kong action stars (Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee). Instead of simply using his real English or Korean name, John created a hybrid name in English,
developing a global understanding of himself situated in a local context. This recent new name also drew on his L1 cultural resources, as the online conversation with his best friend, Young (pseudonym), a Korean-American born in Korea who had moved to the U.S. at the age of three, showed:

Young: oh wow I just got the KiechanBruce part in ur name…wow nice
John: wow, Young. was it that hard 4 u to figure out, told u I learned taekwondo
Young: all Koreans do (John’s Facebook)

What we see here in this conversation in the wall section between Young and John is that John, though now living in the U.S., was eager to tap into his Korean heritage through his reference to having learned Taekwondo and his Asian roots by referencing two of the biggest stars in Asia. By adopting a new name that drew on theirs, John was using literacy to engage in a very interesting act of identity construction in which he wanted an association with being a martial arts practitioner and an action film star. John appears to project an air of pride in this association he’s created as he makes connections between his past and present lives.

This literacy event is also noteworthy in the sense of revealing an important aspect of John’s social interaction in the U.S. For John, who was born in Korea and had spent nearly his entire life there, what might be called his “Koreanness” was an essential component of his life and identity, but it could be a hindrance in socializing with his Korean-American friends, who did not share his roots in the Korean culture and language. John had a much stronger degree of Koreanness, and this could be intimidating for his Korean-American friends, who had a degree of “Americanness” that John, as a newcomer, could not share,
though he was attempting to acquire it. The literacy-related resources of Facebook allowed John to retain his heritage traits and develop his new culture traits while solidifying his bonds with his Korean-American friends. In the exchange with Young, for example, it was interesting how Young, despite having left Korea at the age of three, was aware of the commonality of the Taekondo experience among Korean youth there. John’s new Facebook name and their online conversation about it allowed them to touch upon this shared Korean cultural knowledge they possessed.

Rather than engaging strictly in Koreanness or Americanness, John sought ways to create ties between the two within a global frame, and his new Facebook name was an example of that kind of effort. This construction of what has been called a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) may well have been a strategy intended to generate a smoother negotiation between the old and new worlds in his life. It appeared that this was partly how John was learning to reconcile himself to his fate as a transitional Korean adolescent. Perhaps, in his own way, he was seeking a useful channel to straddle his previous and new lives by bridging the two in a global way.

**Writing a poem, *The beat of my drum***

Up to now, the focus of this chapter has been on literacy events within John’s multiple forms of literacy. In this subsection, there is a shift to a more conventional or traditional form of literacy: John’s paper-based writing. John was voluntarily involved in a somewhat different featured literacy activity outside school, that is, participating in the literacy-based Sejong writing competition introduced in Chapter 3 and seen again in Chapter 4. Participating in the Sejong writing competition was a huge occurrence for my transitional
Korean ESL students at MCS, including my research participants. They conversed about what they chose as a genre, how they wrote, what folk tale they chose, and what they would do with the prize money if they won. Attending the writing competition marked the transitional Korean group at MCS and appeared to serve as a powerful tool for creating insiders (those who participated) and outsiders (those who did not participate). This situation also sheds light on the power of literacy during the course of transitional life cycles.

John, at least initially, did not seem to be interested in joining the competition; while I was talking about their competition work with Jessica and Inhee, he listened to his i-Pod, laying back and propping his leg on the desk. However, when I visited his home in the evening on the day of the deadline for entering the writing competition, he showed me his willingness to take part in it because he wanted to buy an i-Pod touch (instead of MP3 player he was using at the time) with the prize money. Later, in a conversation we had, he expressed this material purpose of experiencing a sense of accomplishment. More specifically, John wanted to feel a sense of accomplishment through literacy. This was understandable, in that John had rarely felt such a sense through his school literacy practices. He could have been looking for such an opportunity, and now it presented itself within a context in which he could link literacy and his Korean heritage, which would provide him cultural knowledge of value in composing the type of writing he selected. In this he would be recycling his past life while transitioning into his present existence.

In the end, he chose to write a poem because he knew that he did not have enough time to write the essay by the deadline, 12:00 A.M. CST of the same day. This was also a bold
choice due to his lack of poetry writing experience in English. However, his boldness seemed to disappear when it was time to write. Between having no poetry writing experience in English and limited knowledge of poetry in his L1 to draw from, he was left without meaningful resources to work with. He remembered learning about poetry in his L1, especially Sijo in elementary school, but he did not have a clear sense of it; indeed, he did not know exactly what it was. As such, as a transitional student who had a weak academic background in his L1 (as noted earlier, he had not studied very hard in Korea) and limited proficiency in English, writing the Korean traditional poem in English was a challenging task that would require extensive guidance. During the whole process of writing—brainstorming, composing drafts, and submitting—John was partly drawing on his Korean poetic schema and empowering himself to use the poem to explore an important part of his life: his world of drumming and his drummer identity.

In the beginning, I suggested brainstorming, and he brought up several topics in the process of brainstorming. We eventually decided to focus on the snare drum, which had been an important part in his life. In Korea, witnessing a high school senior’s passionate performance of playing the drums at church inspired John to take up drumming. From then on, whenever he went to church, he taught himself how to play the drums, and one day, he asked a senior student to teach him how to play the drums. It was an apprenticeship process between his senior and John, stemming from his strong desire to learn how to play drums. Since then, drums had been an essential part of his life. In the U.S., his drum set took up most of his room, which was not spacious, and sometimes he crazily beat the drums at home as well as at church and school, as this seemed to relieve the stress from his
transitional life; in fact, beating the snare drum in the school band was another source of pleasure in his transitional school life. When he adjusted to American life in the beginning, drumming was his only tool to represent himself to his peers and demonstrate his superiority over them, since he was not good at English. Since I was aware of his deep connections with drumming, I recommended him to use it as a topic for the poem; then I saw a spark of interest in his eyes. This is an important point, in that even though a transitional student like John did not know how to create a poem, once provided with the opportunity to inject his real life interests and experiences into the poem, there was a willingness to invest in the experience. When we brainstormed again about drumming, I wrote the word, “drum” within a circle in the middle of a piece of paper. He first associated “drum” with the words beginning with the letter d, such as dream, draw, and drumstick and then brought up related words, such as rhythm, soul, 시원 (cool), 뜨거운 (hot), 답답 (Stuffy), 그냥 쳐(just beating) in both English and Korean; clearly, the two languages facilitated his brainstorming, just as thinking about drumming linked his past and his present.

Surprisingly, as we talked about how to bring what we brainstormed to the poem, he started to imagine a scene to get a sense of the whole picture of the poem, as if he was reminded of a movie: “햇볕이 빛나는 사막가운데서 땀에 젖어서 막 텝구는 것이 멋있을 것 같아요.” (“It would be cool if I beat the drum in the middle of the desert with the burning sun getting sweaty.”) (04/27/10) Probably he activated (unconsciously) the Korean schema he had learned about the poetry. He associated this vivid image with his experience in the school marching band in the U.S.: occasionally beating the drum on a sunny day while
surrounded by the cheering spectators. Moreover, his association of the image with his
experience was represented with sensory details in the poem. His poem was as follows:

**The Beat of My Drum**

The blinding sun is grasping my throat; my body is stiff.
Soon, the cheering of spectators moistens my arid lips.
My pumping heart becomes the beat of my snare drum, I march.

As an expression of his world related to drumming, this is a powerful poem, one into which
he constructed his drummer identity. Line 1 gives details about his nervousness about the
upcoming event through his visual image of the sun and his sense of touch (stiff); line 2
provides details about the cheering of spectators and its impact on him through his sense
of sound (cheering) and touch (moisten, arid); line 3 shows John’s cheerful experiences
while playing the drum surrounded by spectators through his sense of sound (pumping and
beating). In particular, the last line, “my pumping heart becomes the beat of my snare drum”
illustrates poetically the moment when John and his drum became one, indicating his
construction of a drummer identity into the poem.

This poem clearly demonstrates why the Sejong competition was a key literacy event
for John. As with his drumming in his life, it afforded him the opportunity to use literacy
as meaning making about the events in his everyday life and to generate a space to forge
an identity as a transitional student, who often had difficulties with making his or her own
space at school. Writing it may well have been a cathartic experience for him in not only
reasserting his drummer identity, but also in making his own space in life as a transitional
adolescent in America.

Also worth noting is his process of creating the poem. Despite his good sense of sensory
details, his weak proficiency in English hindered his creation of the poem, which enabled
him to use his L1 and L2 in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way. This is a dilemma commonly seen in a transitional student like John. After an hour and a half of brainstorming, his first version was created in Korean because he could not write down his thoughts in English. This was helpful for getting a sense of what he wanted to write. Next, he translated his first version into English in prose form because he was not able to make poetic forms at that point. And then he drew on the translated version in greater depth through more vivid images in English. Finally, he attempted to follow the Korean poetic form, Sijo, but he could not adjust what he had created to its conventions. He called me and asked me to help an hour before the submission deadline. I counted the syllables with him and advised him to change several words to adjust to them. He had difficulty finding adequate words, and I advised him to use a thesaurus. Even though he had already learned how to use it at his American school, he seemed not to know how to apply what he learned to another context. As he located possible words from it, he pronounced them, depending on his sense of the words; as a result, the words, gasp, arid, and stiff were eventually chosen. This is important, in that he became more aware of the importance of syllables and was able to choose English words with this knowledge of syllables. Thus, in this micro sense the Sejong competition strengthened his connection to literacy in English.

John’s experiences with writing the poem outside school show that, in a time of need, he bridged his Korean and American/English worlds while generating or reinforcing a sense of identity as a drummer. While doing so, he displayed a level of interest and engagement missing in most of his school-based literacy activity. Hence, this was a
significant literacy event for John, one that helped him solidify a new identity in his transitional life. A few months later, he won a prize.

**Reading and writing fantasy novels.**

Interestingly for someone who displayed little interest in school-based literacy, John was heavily engaged in literacy in the form of reading and writing fantasy novels away from school, and this activity constitutes a major out of school literacy event for him. The reading, writing, and discussion that John did around his fantasy novels were quite sophisticated. As John watched Youtube and Naver Webtoon sites in different languages, he encountered fantasy genres that ran across Korea, America and Russia. John considered Russian fantasy novels as derivations of classics from the past, a fact he respected and that led him to sometimes re-read them. He classified Korean fantasy novels as true reading, which meant he was able to comprehensively enjoy them because of the fantasy novels’ use of the Korean culture and language; these he read several times, and he asked for new ones when his mother’s friends or his father visited Korea. He classified English fantasy novels, such as *The Lightening Thief* by Rick Riordan and *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, as social reading because his reading of them was driven by his peers’ conversation around them and was transported into conversations with his peers at school and MCS.

In fact, for John, the fantasy novel genre represented a crucial component of his literacy world in his movement between childhood and adolescence. Though not a diligent student, John read a lot (in Korean) in his childhood because his mother tried to cultivate good reading habits in him; she placed a great deal of value on reading and being literate. His mother and he had good memories of spending a lot of time reading books together in bed.
His mother borrowed and purchased a lot of books for him. During recess at school, he sometimes did not hear the school bell ring because he was so deeply involved in reading books. However, as he encountered fantasy novels between the elementary and middle school ages, he experienced “a new shocking world,” one which was full of imagination, excitement, and adventure. His new literate world generated a true sense of reading pleasure, and from that point on, he only read those kinds of novels.

While talking about fantasy novels, I sensed that John had more expertise and knowledge of them than most adolescents who read them for entertainment. He was quite a knowledgeable reader who formulated his own opinions and had high standards as a reader. One of our conversations hinted at these high standards. I once asked him if he read and wrote the novels via online sites, where people with the same interests posted and shared their writing, and he replied, “I just read them online long time ago, but now I don’t. They are too mediocre.” (Interview, 05/21/10) In other words, and quite interestingly, he considered online reading and writing sites as amateur spaces. In this regard he had established very definite standards for literacy. Perhaps it was for this reason, as well as the complex nature of his transitional adolescent life in which he navigated two cultures and languages, that he much preferred Korean fantasy novels when it came to his own writing.

Given his high standards for reading fantasy novels, it comes as no surprise that John chose to write them in his native language, Korean. He would likely have felt that he lacked the English language proficiency necessary to write them in that language, plus writing them in Korean allowed him to retain a strong connection with the language through which
he could best articulate his own identity. Indeed, he engaged in this writing practice in a serious yet enthusiastic way, as shown in his comment, “잠자려고 누웠다가도 아이디어가 생각나면 벌떡 일어나서 끼찍 끼찍거리요” (“I get up and jot them down if I get an idea in the bed at night.”) (Interview, 05/21/10).

Recognizing how important this form of literacy activity was for him, I asked John to show me his novels, but he did not, saying that “부모님한테도 안보여 줬어요. 저만 알고 있는......” (“I haven’t showed ever them to my parents, though. And they are my own...”) (Interview, 05/21/10) Unfortunately, by the end of the research, I was still not able to see his novels. I jokingly asked him if he actually wrote any novels at all. He said, while laughing, “부모님도 그렇게 말해요” (“my parents said that too.”). However, behind his privacy, there was something else of importance: John was projecting his identity as an emerging writer:

I don’t think writing is my forte. I’m amazed at how authors write books. I’m curious at how they write such natural and eloquent sentences and describe well...I know from experience. It’s really hard to write descriptions. For example when I want to describe a character, I can’t do it without disturbing the flow of the whole story. I try rearranging and restructuring the whole thing but I just can’t do it. But if you look at what the authors write, everything flows very well and seems natural while painting a vivid picture of what’s going on. I can’t figure out how they do it....it’s fascinating (Interview, 05/21/10)
Here it is interesting to see that, on the one hand, John did not regard himself as a writer (“I don’t think writing is my forte”), and yet he had clearly given a good deal of thought to how accomplished writers compose, and the fact that he found it “fascinating” may have been partly what drove John to engage in the same form of writing. What stands out most, though, is the passion John expressed toward this form of literate activity, a passion similar to what he apparently felt about drumming, as shown earlier. In each case, there was apparently an element of identity construction at work as he sought to improve his schools, and in the case of writing fantasy novels, he chose to do so through the medium of his native language. Reading and writing fantasy novels was an essential literacy event for John. This activity afforded him the opportunity to use literacy as a sense-making device, perhaps as a form of compensation while moving from a lost or missing identity (probably at school) to an envisioned identity in his transitional life. In this regard, writing the fantasy novels, especially in his native language may well have been a cathartic experience for him in not only asserting his writer identity but also proclaiming a vision in life as a transitional adolescent in America.

**Composing a multimodal project at a community center.**

The final key literacy event is a project John completed while taking a course at a local community center, MCS. Of all the students, John appeared to enjoy the multimodal project the most. John chose to use PowerPoint, a Microsoft program, to represent his ideas about his peers’ social worlds and the social issue of stereotyping. John gathered his favorite images and music from websites to convey his message. Throughout the project, his eyes were bright, as if he were making a marvelous discovery, and he laughed and
tapped his feet to the music flowing from the YouTube videos. As he engaged in the project, he made full use of what he enjoyed in his daily life. Additionally, if he found funny pictures on websites, he would show them to his classmates, which made them all laugh. At other times, when he listened to music for his project, he shared his thoughts about it with his classmates by discussing it with them. Therefore, all of his preferred everyday cultural practices—listening to music, surfing the websites he liked, and interacting socially through these practices—were integrated into the project. This was a remarkable contrast to his other classes (in school or the MCS technology class), in which he often surreptitiously listened to music in class or opened other websites to hide another website that was not allowed. However, he did not need to do this during the project. Importantly, this literacy event allowed him to transfer his practice of using multimodal literacy to make sense of his life from his home to the community setting. Therefore, extending the process of composing into John’s out of school resources allowed John to shift his identity from a non-engaged writer to an engaged writer.

As the boundary between his everyday cultural practices and his multimodal project practices became blurred, John’s approach to the social issues of his lived experience proved interesting to observe. Among the list of assigned topics to select from, he did not hesitate to choose stereotypes. While he was reading a novel, *Yankee girl*, by Kyusun Chung, in class, he showed a strong interest in this topic and approached it eagerly in the class discussions. In a conversation about the project, John talked to me at great length about Asian students (especially recent immigrants) who did not mingle well with American students. John seemed to be proud of himself (he called himself a “cool guy”)}
as a transitional student because, unlike his Asian peers, he was socializing with both American and Asian peers. This was important to him in his transitional adolescent life and led him to confidently show why and how the two groups stereotyped each other. He told his peers’ stories: Asian students were stereotyped by their American peers as shy, nerdy math geniuses, while the Americans were stereotyped as McDonald’s-loving gangsters by the Asian students. In fact, the story of his Asian peers was part of his story. Before coming to the U.S., he pictured America as the country of McDonald’s and imagined all Americans as having guns (he later realized that this was the influence of Hollywood movies). He portrayed such experiences in his project as a writer in a classroom in which his literacy practices were valued.

While John was engaging in the multimodal project, his use of multimodality was notable because he used various modes for meaning making in his unique ways, through which he was able to construct his literate identity and convey his intended meaning within the boundaries of his proficiency level in English. As he selected images, he took on a literate identity as an author. To represent his thoughts, John spent considerable time surfing and searching for appropriate images; for example, when he searched the images of gangsters, the image which included a North Dakota gangster’s finger sign was John’s preferred one because it would show exactly the identity of gangsters he had in mind, thus increasing the effects of the gangster image. To choose this image, John needed to search various websites and images, just as a writer would choose appropriate words in print-based writing as an author. Likewise, other images for the project such as McDonald’s,
tough cookie, Asian nerds, and etc. were selected in the same way. As he conducted these
searches, John displayed his high level of computer literacy skills.

In addition to images, John used one particular song throughout the project, “Where’s
the love?”, by an American hip hop group, The Black Eyed Peas. The music he chose was
typical of the hip-hop genre that is so popular among adolescents, with a strong, lively beat
and lyrics that referenced a peaceful world where racism and ideology do not exist. John
greatly loved hip-hop music, which was interwined with his identity in his life. In Korea,
as well as America, this kind of music is extremely popular, and so it was one of the ways
in which John experienced an ongoing bridge between his past and his present. What was
also interesting in this regard is how, throughout the project, John took advantage of music
to express emotions as an author that he otherwise would not be able to express in print-
based English writing. In other words, he compensated for shortcomings in his print
literacy through a strong reliance on aural literacy, thus demonstrating his relationship with
multimodal literacy. The music played an essential role in making his project cheerful,
vivid, and meaningful (in terms of lyrics).

In addition, throughout the project, John’s favorite techniques for displaying meaning
were sequence, animation, and bouncing effects. The sequence effect enabled the audience
to equally distribute their attention across different parts of the project. The animation
effect, with its colorful visual imagery, was effective for grabbing the audience’s attention.
The effects of these two techniques would not be afforded by language, and John,
recognizing that, extended his multimodal composing skills to tap into other features that
were available to him. Further, the bouncing effect enabled the boundary between written
words and images to be blurred. John put written words first and then images, but the bouncing effect allowed one picture to move from down to up and the another picture from left to right; as a result, the two pictures went to the boundary of written words.

Not only did John use each multimodal feature in meaningful ways, but he also used it in synthesized ways to make meanings, which also enabled him to powerfully construct an author identity and effectively convey his meaning despite his weak proficiency level of English. In other words, John was skillful at compensating for his challenges with English.

For example, slide one (Figure 5.1) started with two animated pictures, along with the title, *Stereotypes*, and fascinating faint background music. The pictures appeared first, followed by the title and his name. The two pictures showed the contrasting images of the white and Asian people. The picture of the white people looked “conservative, stiff, and narrow minded,” while the Asian woman on the right side looked the opposite. The combination of the two pictures, language (the title, “*stereotypes*”), and music were an immediate introduction to John as a multimodal composer utilizing different dimensions of literacy to express his ideas. In process, John’s creativity was also revealed. As shown in the quote from John at the beginning of this chapter, when he felt motivated, he was capable of fully investing himself in a venture, and this multimodal project serves as a model of that characteristic of his. And, with his contrasting American and Asian images (the white couple and Asian woman), John signaled his own involvement in each of those worlds.
Another example of John’s high level of engagement in the project and the way in which he was referencing his Asian heritage and American life was perhaps the most fascinating moment in the project, one which made the audience laugh during his presentation in class. In slide 8 (Figure 5.2), John attempted to reflect the stereotype of Americans through language and images. To explain the stereotypes of Americans, John wrote the rationale such as “Americans kids try to act cool, so they can be look like gangsters by Asians’ point of view.” However, because of his English limitations, he appeared unable to fully explain what he meant. Instead, he chose two representative American cultural images (Ronald Mcdonald and Westside gangsters in North Dakota) associated with American stereotypes. In particular, the ways of using these two images accompanied by special effects (bouncing effects) were impressive: The picture of Ronald McDonald (the image of the famous fast food restaurant), with a gun pointed at the sky, rolled on and off the screen; then the picture of a white man mimicking the sign of the Westside gangsters in North Dakota bounced on to the screen. The bouncing effects of the two pictures conveyed vivid violent images of the gun, which is regarded as a key representative of American stereotype images, and produced a lot of laughter. The humorous presentation of the stereotypes showed that they were, indeed, absurd. This orchestration of multimodality conveyed his message more comprehensively than when writing only was used. This also demonstrated John’s ability to use humor cross-culturally. Humor is known to be notoriously difficult to understand and learn when entering a new culture and language, and John’s ability to use it so
successfully with his Korean and American audience in the MCS class demonstrated that he had figured out how to do so.

Having seen John’s multifaceted meaning making of the project through multimodality, we can now look at the project itself:

![Figure 5.3: John’s multimodal project](image)

**Figure 5.3: John’s multimodal project**

Slide 1 Stereotypes
Slide 2 Lists
Slide 3 What are stereotypes?
Slide 4 How Americans think about Asians
Slide 5 How Asians think about Americans
Slide 6 Why do Americans think Asians are shy?
Slide 7 Why do Americans think Asians are good at math?
Slide 8 Why do Asians think Americans are gangsters?
Slide 9 Conclusion

This project provides insight into John’s use of multimodal literacy to investigate issues related to stereotypes from a transitional adolescent perspective. What is especially interesting is how John attempted to show both sides of the story. For instance, in slides 4, 6, and 7, he addresses stereotypes of Asians from an American perspective, while in slides
5 and 8 he reverses course and examines stereotyping through the lens of Asians’ stereotypes of Americans. In moving between the two worlds, he is in a sense mirroring his own movement across the Asian and American worlds in his own life. What also stands out is the power of the inquiry based project to critically frame his transitional story and its representation by multimodal texts of images, special effects, print, and sound in ways that leveraged cultural resources he brought to the project. This computer-mediated literacy practice transformed an otherwise paper bound inquiry process into an opportunity for youthful agency as his everyday cultural practices merged into his multimodal practices and his meaning making expanded to multimodal practices.

**Summary**

John held mostly onto separate identities between school work and out of school work. John did not develop a sense of belonging to school work, and he did not construct true reader or writer identities through school work. Instead, he was a passive learner who did not invest in school work. On the other hand, through reading and writing about current events at school, John demonstrated what he said at the beginning of this chapter: when a task interested him, he applied himself eagerly. In the process, he was apparently better able to navigate the parameters of his transitional adolescent life. Watching Youtube and Webtoon sites in two languages and cultures provided John with an opportunity to construct a sense of group identity and a “class clown” identity that had been important to him in the past and that he wished to re-create in his new life. As a transitional student, this was an important act of identity construction, connecting the past and present, as was also the case with his involvement with Facebook and the Sejong writing competition, as well
as the multimodal literacy project. Meanwhile, his passionate involvement in reading and writing fantasy novels illustrated yet again John’s capacity for using literacy when the activity mattered to him. Collectively, these various sites for literacy events in John’s life show that he was often actively engaged in using literacy, or literacies, during his transitional adolescent journey.
Chapter 6: Inhee

As with the chapters focusing on Jessica and John, this chapter presents and analyzes a series of literacy events that stood out in the life of a transitional Korean adolescent, Inhee, after her arrival in the United States, with the intent of once again examining relationships between literacy and the experiences of transitional youth.

Background

I am afraid that my English hasn’t improved. I thought I would speak English very well if I came to the U.S. However… My English……One of my mother’s cell group members have two children, who immigrated to the U.S. when they were in 7 and 8 grade and are now college students. Recently… the game rules were explained in English… they still did not understand and remained confused about the rules until the game was over. One of them was supposed to be a junior in college, but was still a freshman. It seemed like she was held back a couple of years… I am afraid I might become like her (Interview, 03/06/10)

Inhee, a female 8th grader, had been in the U.S. for a year and a half as an immigrant when I started my research. Because her father was able to get a job with an American company, her family immigrated to the U.S. Six months after the family had settled down, her father’s company unexpectedly went into bankruptcy. Her father was not able to find
an appropriate job in the U.S., and to secure income, he went back to his previous work place in Korea. Her mother and Inhee decided to stay in the U.S. for her educational purposes; Inhee was afraid of the competitive Korean educational system, and her family seemed to think that studying in the U.S. could provide her with a more competitive edge. Despite the strong and positive expectations of Inhee’s family, Inhee’s adaptation to the U.S. was quite challenging. Her mother was concerned about Inhee’s English because she did not see the improvement in Inhee’s English fluency that she believed would result from the kind of language exposure Inhee would have in the U.S. This was significant because improving Inhee’s English was a big issue for her family. Even for Inhee, English was something to be afraid of. For example, she associated her situation with her mother’s cell group (a Christian small group) member’s child, who said “I am afraid that my English hasn’t improved.”

One day, Inhee said to me that “교회 친구가 저보고 fob 이래요. 좋은 거예요 나쁜 거예요? 사전을 찾아 보았는데요. 한국적인 것을 간직하고 있는 것은 좋다고 생각해요. 전 자랑스럽게 생각하거든요. 나쁜 것 아니죠?” (“One of my church friends said to me, “You are such a fob.” Is it good or bad? I looked up the word, “fob,” in the dictionary. I think keeping Korean related things is good. I am proud of that. It is not bad, isn’t it?”) (Field note, 04/17/10)

These were very interesting and noteworthy comments. Inhee did not know the connotations of the fob image (fob=fresh off the boat, or not yet adjusted to the target culture), which was negatively used among Korean- American students. As the comments show, Inhee assumed that retaining ties to her Korean heritage and identity was something
commendable, when in fact her strong retention of many aspects of and allegiances to her native Korean culture seemed to hinder her adaptation to the target culture, including the development of English proficiency. Inhee’s dilemma at that time was whether to adapt to the target culture, which was socially expected, or to strongly align with her Korean culture and thus retain the “fob” identity she had acquired.

During the whole 2009-2010 academic year, Inhee, as an 8th grader, took both regular subject classes, such as social studies, drawing, algebra, and science classes, and an ESL class. She was officially assigned to an intermediate ESL class but studied with beginner level ESL students because of her low reading scores on the OTELA test she had taken the previous academic year. As a result of her ESL class situation, Inhee was only exposed to very basic English at the word and sentence level, and yet at the same time she was working with much higher level conventional academic English and content in her other classes. As such, Inhee found herself in a perplexing and exasperating situation at school, where she moved between two different academic worlds on a daily basis.

In her ESL class, Inhee engaged in such activities as learning a new word a day (called “today’s word”) and completing worksheets that dealt with vocabulary and grammar. There was also some reading practice, such as through a book called *Hate that Cat*, which was a narrative poem by Sharon Creech, and a reading response journal called “dream reader’s I-log,” something explained earlier when looking at John’s case. In other words, Inhee’s academic activity in that class was of a limited nature and was not connected to her work in her content area courses.
Inhee approached all of her ESL work very seriously. She submitted her homework on time and made a resolution that she would get all As in the tests of all of her ESL work. After school, she always worked on school work and prepared well for the quizzes or tests while she was at home. Her commitment to completing school work allowed her to gain quite good grades and a reputation as a studious student, even though her English skills were quite low. However, Inhee was not intellectually engaged in her ESL work. To her, it was easy and lacked substance, and as a result it failed to allow her to construct an academic identity. This was important because she believed that “ESL 이 중요한데, 거기서 영어를 잘 배워서 해야 공부를 잘하죠” (“ESL courses were critical to improving her English skills and her English skills would play an essential role in achieving academic success.”) (Interview, 03/27/10) Further, this academic identity was something she had not possessed in Korea and so eagerly wanted to have it the U.S. On multiple occasions in the middle of conversations, she expressed her exasperation over her ESL class associated with her abhorrence of it, leading to a deep desire to leave her ESL program. She described it as “너무 많은 것을 ESL class 에 기대하지 마세요.” (“Don’t expect too much from my ESL class.”) (Interview, 03/27/10) and “일년 동안 ESL에서 배운 것이 아무것도 없어요.” (“I’ve learned nothing new at all during the entire year.”) (Interview, 06/01/10).

These critical comments about her ESL class are important because Inhee, like other transitional youth coming to the U.S., had to spend time as an ESL student during critical moments of her transitional life. Inhee, as an academically inclined person, needed academic experiences that were appropriately challenging and thus would strengthen the
view of herself at a time when she was especially vulnerable. Instead, the activities in the ESL class suggested that she was deficient and thus prevented her from moving forward in her identity construction. Completing simple grammar and vocabulary worksheets and reading a children’s poem, *Hate that Cat*, in her ESL class contrasted starkly with the work in her other courses (e.g., social studies), where the level of vocabulary and sentence structures were significantly different and “their learning degrees were different” (Interview, 03/27/10) Similarly, she commented harshly on the book she read in her ESL class, “*Hate that cat*”, where some pictures were drawn with the poem, as childish and an insult to her English skills, saying, “유치하게 picture book 이 뭐에요!” (“Picture books are so childish!”) (Interview, 03/17/10). This association of her ESL material with what young children would experience constituted a major obstacle in Inhee’s strong desire to form an academic identity she could be proud of.

Different educational and cultural practices between Korea and America also prevented Inhee from constructing the academic identity she so eagerly sought. A revealing example of this came in her attitude toward the reading response journal (I-log). A reading response journal required students (a) to read for a minimum of 20 minutes in or outside of school context for five days, every week, (b) to write about what books students had read at home in a certain format according to some ideas school suggested such as: reflection, wonder, prediction, question, background knowledge, summary, character details, and connections (text to self, text to text, text to world), and (c) to compile and submit a journal in an assigned format every two weeks. This was an assignment for the entire grade students (including both mainstream and ESL students). While Inhee was reading various genres of
books at home, she had a chance to use all of them for the I-log writing. This school journal could have been a meaningful tool through which Inhee was able to link her out of school readings to school work. Inhee, who did not have much to do at home except for reading books and doing her homework, was initially very interested in this activity and did her I-log very sincerely. Despite her initial interest, Inhee ultimately did not like this practice. She criticized how the I-log was used, even though she understood the school’s intention for making the students read outside of school. This activity did not fit into her idea of what would be an intellectually appropriate way of using reading as a learning tool. As she commented on the value of the I-log as a learning tool:

전 한국에서 왔잖아요. 그러면 이렇게 쉬운 방법이 아니라 좀 빡 settle 해야지 하려면……책을 마음대로 선택하거나 아니면 책을 정해 주거나 해서 이걸 읽고 느낀 점을 쓰라고 하면가 아니면 여기에 있는 방법 중에 하나를 선택해서 쓰게 하던가 해서 하던가요…… 이런 방법이 원가 꽤 주는 것 같아요. 이건 저한테 조금씩 조금씩 주는 것 같아요. 마치 밥을 먹을 때 볶 채서 먹어서 든든한 느낌이 아니라 조금 먹이 간에 기별도 안가는 것 같은 느낌이에요. (Interview, 04/24/10)

I came from Korea. I wanted to do hard working, not such an easy way… I’d rather write reflection papers or write one of the things in the last section. This kind of way would be hard working. This is like feeding me a spoonful instead of a full meal. (Interview, 04/24/10)

What is interesting here is how Inhee started the conversation with the statement, “I came from Korea,” as this reveals how Korea was still her starting point and benchmark in looking at education. It also reveals that she continued to evaluate educational experiences by the standards she had developed in Korea, despite having been away from Korea for around a year and a half. Basically, she was expecting a Korean style of learning in the U.S., and in this regard her transition to America had stalled. As a result of her continued
reliance on Korean notions of teaching and learning, Inhee portrayed the use of the I-log as equivalent to an inadequate, unfulfilling meal, and she felt like she didn’t take anything meaningful from the activity. Inhee wanted work in the American school that required in-depth engagement similar to what she had experienced in Korea. As such, as a transitional student who was in transition from one culture to the other culture, Inhee was not likely to negotiate the two to achieve her desired academic identity. Nevertheless, Inhee still saw greater opportunities in the U.S. in comparison to her homeland. In line with this, the first literacy event to be examined provided her with an ample opportunity to construct a confident and empowered identity.

Writing the essay, The Green Frog

Like Jessica and John, for Inhee an important literacy event was an activity that contrasted sharply with the constrained work in her ESL classroom: participation in the Sejong competition shown in the previous two chapters. Inhee rushed to me for help in participating in the writing competition right after her bilingual aide at school handed her a flyer about it. After I read the flyer, we both started laughing, because only a few months previously, she had learned, at her request, how to write an English essay from me. I was somewhat perplexed at the time by her request because, considering her low English proficiency level, learning about essay writing seemed like too great a leap for her. On the other hand, this request exemplified her deep interest in academic experiences and achievement. In response to her request, I felt that learning about narrative essays would be most helpful in developing her writing skills. During the tutorials, she practiced writing
a couple of narrative essays. This gave her a glimpse into what academic essays in English were and helped inspire her to join the Sejong writing competition.

Like Jessica, Inhee was highly motivated for various reasons with respect to the competitor. Winning a prize would strengthen her college applications, and with the prize money, she would be able to buy “a gorgeous digital camera with a flash function.” Furthermore, Inhee recognized this writing practice as an opportunity to succeed in her academic life in the U.S., especially by beating American students, as she drew a line between Korean and American students. The following interview segment illustrates this point:

Korean folktale이라고 하잖아요. 그러면 나라면 할 수 있겠네요. 미국아이들이 그런 것에 대한 경험이 없잖아요. 직접 들어 보지도 않았거든요. 저는 basic 이 있잖아요. 한국에서 왔으니까 들어봤니까. 나라면 미국아이들보다 더 잘 할 수 있겠고 생각했어요. (Interview, 05/15/10).

I heard that the essay was about Korean folktales. I feel like I can do it because American students don’t have experiences with them and haven’t heard about them. I am from Korea and I’ve had experiences with them. I think I will do better than them. (Interview, 05/15/10)

When she heard that the essay was about Korean folktales, she recognized that her cultural knowledge of folktales, what has sometimes been called “cultural capital,” would be a strong resource for her essay writing, especially as an advantage for beating American students, which Inhee did not experience at school as a transitional student. Coming from the highly competitive academic environment that is dominant in Korea, Inhee was accustomed to being in a position where she could compete. The absence of such opportunities in the American school, where Inhee lacked the knowledge and ability in
English of her native English speaking classmates outside her ESL class and thus could not compete with them, was difficult for her.

Inhee, like other Korean children, was raised hearing her mother’s stories from an early age, and the *Green Frog*, on a list of folk tales which the Sejong Cultural Society provided, was one that had made a strong impression on her when she was younger. This connection to her prior literacy experiences and culture in Korea constituted for Inhee a degree of involvement that was extremely important, as it allowed her to link her present and her past while drawing on resources she already possessed. Furthermore, writing about this folk tale could lead to the type of success she needed to construct the kind of identity she wanted to have in the U.S.

However, during the process of writing her essay, Inhee encountered a frustrating juxtaposition between her interest in what she was doing and her struggles with writing in English. Despite her initial eagerness to connect the cultural knowledge related to *The Green Frog* that she possessed to her essay, her low level of English proficiency and lack of experiences with an academic essay greatly hindered her creation of the essay. Despite her earlier work with me on narrative essay writing, she was still underprepared when it came to writing academically in English, especially outside the genre of narrative writing. Therefore, writing an academic essay in English was a challenging task that would require extensive guidance.

From a transitional youth perspective, how Inhee’s competition essay was composed is revealing in the way it demonstrates how such youth can draw on different resources while positioned in both their old and new cultures. In particular, in Inhee’s case, using her
L1 and culture (e.g., her linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge) as a starting point and utilizing her experiences and knowledge in both L1 and L2 in a coherent and reinforcing way may have been indispensable in coping with her transitional existence. To illustrate, during the brainstorming sessions, while speaking in our joint L1 (Korean), I attempted to connect her lived experiences to her cultural knowledge of The Green Frog by asking why she chose the folk tale, The Green Frog, among several folktales available for use during the competition. In response, she explained that “청개구리의 후회하는 행동이 인상 깊었어요” (“the regretting behaviors of the green frog was very impressive”); I asked again, “같은 경험이 있니?” (“Do you have the same experiences?”) She replied that “청개구리처럼 엄마 말을 안 듣고 후회했거든요” (“I did not follow my mother’s opinions and regretted it like the Green Frog”) (05/15/10). Also interesting was how the knowledge of how to write an academic essay in English was constructed by comparing it to the Korean academic essay, which she was already familiar with. As already shown, Inhee had relatively little knowledge of how to write an essay in English. For instance, in the middle of our brainstorming session, she asked me “에세이에다 개인적인 경험 같은 것을 써도 되요?” (“Is it O.K. to use my personal experiences for an academic essay?”) (Field notes, 05/15/10) This question is especially common among Korean learners of English essays because in the Korean context, academic essays did not value one’s personal experiences. Thus we once again see how, as noted earlier, Inhee had a tendency to use her Korean academic experience as the starting point in constructing how she should approach tasks in the
American setting. This situation exemplified her status as an adolescent in transition from one culture to another.

After the brainstorming session, she spent a considerable amount of time writing her first draft in the library by herself, translating it word for word through a Korean-English electric dictionary. This process continued through her next two drafts. The next reveals the development of her introduction from the first draft to the third draft:

First Draft: Do you know The Green Frog of Korean folk tale? The Green Frog is one of my favorite Korean folk tale because I think I relate with green frog. For example, do not listen to parents, act to opposite, and had regret.

Second Draft: When I was six years old, my grandmother used to told Korean folk tales. The green frog is commonness Korean folk tale but it stayed my mind. When the green frog’s mother was died, he could not do anything. The Green Frog is one of my favorite Korean folk tales because I think I relate with green frog. In particular, do not listen to parents, revolt against school rule, and regret my past 7th school life.

Third Draft: When I was six years old, my grandmother used to tell me several Korean folk tales. Among them, the Green Frog is one of my Korean folk tales. Although the Green Frog is a common Korean folk tale, it has stayed in my mind due to the last part of the story, which said that the Green Frog, which was concerned about his mother’s tomb in the river bank, continued to cry in the pouring rain during summer. In particular, reflecting on my experiences as an immigrant student in the U.S., I am similar to the Green Frog because I did not listen to my parents, rebelled against school rules in Korea, and regretted my past 7th grade school life.

This essay showed how Inhee, as a transitional writer from L1 to L2, developed her voice with language difficulties from the first draft to the third draft. In the first draft, she got a glimpse of what to write for her essay by connecting the Green Frog to her lived experiences. She also had a clear sense of a thesis statement. However, she did not seem to be able to reveal her thoughts thoroughly and clearly in English, which might stem from a
different language system as well as her low level language proficiency. This was also where the transitional experience stalled, as her L1 cultural knowledge was no longer an asset. On the other hand, in the second draft, when she was prompted to elaborate on her thoughts and feelings, it acted as a scaffold to develop her thinking through writing. In the third draft, she asked me more linguistic questions about grammar and sentence structure while translating what she was thinking from Korean to English. She was more likely to come to know how to represent her thought in English as an author, overcoming language difficulties. In particular, when language learning was contextualized in meaning making, transitional students like Inhee invested in writing. Once the what and how of her writing were valued in her transitional stage, she was likely to be able to develop into a writer with depth of thinking and a voice of her own.

In fact, this complicated writing experience was a great challenge for her, but from the first draft to the third draft, she patiently revised her essay, spending three whole weeks in the library and attempting to get over the barrier of the English language. This persistence was another side of her transitional equation. Persistence was necessary to survive in the competitive educational environment in Korea, and now in America she was benefiting from that kind of experience as she transferred it to her writing in English.

During an interview, I asked what this experience had been like for her. Reflecting on her bitter experiences with writing competition in the interview, she said,

여러 감정이 교차했어요. 내가 이렇게 grammar 를 못하는구나 그리고 막 영어가 까다롭구나. 만약한 것이 아니구나. 또 한국에서 있었으면 죽어 나갔겠구나. Grammar 를 build up 해서 다음에는 잘 써야 되겠구나....... (Interview, 05/15/10)

I had mixed feelings. I have a lot of problems with grammar, and English is difficult. It is not easy. If I were in Korea, I would be dying, studying English. I felt
I should write the essay better next time after building up my grammar... (Interview, 05/15/10)

Clearly, writing this essay had been a difficult task for Inhee, but it could be said that the experience provided something of a turning point for her as a writer transitioning from one language and essay writing system to another. Despite her struggles with English grammar and vocabulary and the arduous job of translating word by word from Korean, Inhee considered this literacy experience as one of her favorite ones (although she did not win prize). As she explained: “에세이 대회를 통해서 많이 배웠어요” (“I learned many things through the writing competition.”) (Interview, 05/15/10). Reflecting on her writing experiences, she self-defined them as learning, and it was interesting to see that she stressed the positive aspect—learning—over the less than satisfactory dimensions of what had taken place. Inhee went on to say that “이런 것을 제가 학교에서 배우기를 원하는 거예요”. (“This is what I expected at school”) (Interview, 05/15/10). This was an important observation on her part. First, it shows how much she depended on school to serve as a place for both learning and the identity construction that accompanies it. Second, it reinforces her disappointment with the American educational environment compared to what she had experienced in Korea, where the bar of expectations for students is set high. Inhee wanted to see a similar bar in America and was keenly disappointed upon not seeing it, in part, perhaps, because it meant that the lowered expectations of the American school denied her the identity construction experience she associated with formal education. That is, against such lower expectations, how could success and the identity it generates be accomplished via school? Hence, she needed the excitement and expectations of the Sejong competition
to open doors for a meaningful engagement with literacy and learning that she was not finding at school, thus making that experience an important one for her, as she noted earlier.

Basically, then, Inhee was able to use non-school literacy to make visible her entry into what she thought studying English should constitute. The challenges involved in writing the Sejong competition essay pushed her to learn English in ways that her ESL class had not. Not intellectually engaged in her ESL class, Inhee felt a sense of accomplishment for the first time in the U.S. and looked forward to joining the competition again the next year: “이번에 상을 못 타도 내년에 또 도전할 거에요.” (Although I don’t win this year, I am still going to participate next year) (Interview, 05/15/10). Having that kind of literacy-based intellectual challenge to look forward to was something Inhee needed during this transitional period in her life.

Now we will look at the essay she wrote. The essay describes the ways that Inhee used the essay to express her reflections about her life as a transitional adolescent, with a particular focus on regrets that were important to her. The sentiments expressed in this essay illustrate why writing it was such an important transitional experience for Inhee.

The Green Frog

1. When I was six years old, my grandmother used to tell me several Korean folktales. Among them, the Green Frog is one of my Korean folk tales. Although the Green Frog is a common Korean folk tale, it has stayed in my mind due to the last part of the story, which said that the Green Grog, which was concerned about his mother’s tomb in the river bank, continued to cry in the pouring rain during summer. In particular, reflecting on my experiences as an immigrant student in the U.S., I am similar to the Green Frog because I did not listen to my parents, rebelled against school rules in Korea, and regretted my past 7th grade school life.
2. To begin with, I was a typical teenager and did not listen to my parents. In particular, when I was in Korea, my parents wanted me to study English hard. Therefore, they sent to me to an English academy, but I did not study hard. At that time, I could not understand why my parents forced me to study by sending me to
the English academy. I thought that I would not have any chance to use English because I would live in Korea for all of my life. However, a few years later, I immigrated to the U.S. and struggled with English considerably. Through the struggle, I came to understand why my parents forced me to study English in Korea. I realized that it was too late to change, and once in a while, it would be better to obey my parents even though I could not understand them.

3. Furthermore, when I was a middle school student in Korea, I attempted to protest the school rules by complaining about my school. Most of the Korea middle schools have strict disciplinary rules. For example, students cannot dye or grow their hair and must wear their uniforms. When I was in 7th grade in Korea, I really detested such rules. Also, I did not understand why students must obey such absurd rules. However, when I came to the U.S., I saw my American students that did not look like students. They wore short skirt and heavy make-up, and dyed their hair with bright colors, which was what I wanted for a long time. In Korea, all middle school students looked the same. Their hair color was all black and wore the same uniforms. However, American middle school students did not look familiar to me. I was accustomed to Korean ways although I did not like them. When I thought of my attempt to rebel against the rules of my Korean middle school, it was ironic.

4. In addition, I immigrated to the U.S. in 7th grade. At that time, I was not good at English. In spite of my poor speaking and listening skills, I did not make an effort to improve my English skills. I heard that as time went on, English skills would get better. I believed in time instead of studying. However, as time passed, my English skills did not improve. Furthermore, during my 7th grade’s summer vacation, I had a chance to attend a community center in my town. I thought my writing and vocabulary skills were good, but I saw several students using English very well. I was shocked and regretted my lazy life in 7th grade. A saying that “if you do not walk today, you have to run tomorrow.” came to my mind. As the Green Frog did, I regretted my lazy life.

5. To sum up, I am fourteen years old, who want to try to do many things by myself and sometimes go against my parents and school. However, while the Green Frog is crying for his mother, sitting in the pouring rain by the river bank without doing anything, I believe I will have lots of chances to change myself.

As a documentation of an 8th grade teenager’s life as a transitional student, this essay has a clear voice and perspective with which Inhee honestly expressed her regrets, connecting the Green Frog’s heartwarming story to her own. One of its striking features is the way Inhee comments about her deep unhappiness during her 7th grade year in Korea, where she felt a strong desire to rebel against the conformity around her as well as the way in which she was forced to learn English in school. This suggests that she would embrace the lack
of conformity she encountered upon moving to the U.S. and would feel empowered to learn English under a new set of circumstances. Instead, as the essay shows, this empowerment did not emerge, especially with respect to English. Instead, she encountered new struggles. She saw how proficiency in English could have a transformative effect on her new life but somehow was unwilling, or unable, to take the steps necessary to learn English as she had expected to. Like the Green Frog, she had come to an exciting new place but could not take advantage of the opportunities it offered.

Here it may be important to remember how young she was: someone in her early teenage years who had been taken from one reality she knew well and thrust into another she had to acculturate into. Inhee’s essay is powerful in the way it conveys her sense of regret and confusion. It is also a testimonial to the power of literacy to help individuals make sense of circumstances confronting them. Participating in the Sejong essay competition ended up providing Inhee with the opportunity she needed to give voice to what she was experiencing and thus take a step forward in her transitional adolescent life. In this regard, the last paragraph resonates especially strongly. We see her identity as an adolescent who justified her regrettable behaviors, and at the same time we see her strong assertion about the construction of her new identity in the U.S, positioning herself differently from the Green Frog: while the Green Frog is crying for his mother, sitting in the pouring rain by the river bank without doing anything, I believe I will have lots of chances to change myself. That optimistic declaration about having changes to change herself suggests that Inhee was now on a new trajectory in her period of transition.
This essay demonstrates that involvement in the Sejong writing competition was a meaningful literacy event for Inhee. It afforded her an empowering experience to use literacy as a tool for meaning making beyond the limitations she encountered at school, for reaffirming her Korean identity in America, and for constructing a sense of the academic identity she longed for.

**Reading of books outside school**

Just as participation in a non-school writing event, the Sejong competition, had constituted a meaningful encounter between literacy and her transitional life for Inhee, reading outside school was another such connection that mattered to her. Recognizing that school work in the ESL class was not helpful for improving English, Inhee’s mother and Inhee attempted to find an alternative source for raising Inhee’s level of English proficiency outside school. The alternative selected, reading, was initiated by her mother, who believed that academic literacy would lead Inhee to educational success in the U.S. Acting on this belief, Inhee’s mother made Inhee read social studies textbooks and then pushed her to read books on the school Scholastic list her mother brought to her. However, in the case of social studies textbooks, Inhee only read the texts she underlined in class or the handouts the teacher gave her. For the books on the Scholastic list, Inhee only read a summary of the books selected. Books that did not interest her were left alone. After recognizing that attempting to guide what Inhee read was not working, her mother finally gave Inhee the chance to choose her own books. This change in approach brought into play an ideological conflict around academic literacy and out of school literacy.
Being allowed to choose her books, Inhee read books based on social purposes associated with entertainment (as opposed to academic purposes). This orientation is important in understanding the priorities Inhee was experiencing during this important transitional period, particularly because it added the dimension of interaction with American peers to her use of literacy as a transitional adolescent. These dynamics are revealed in Inhee’s first experience with a self-selected English book in the U.S., the extremely popular fantasy novel “Twilight” by Stephanie Meyer. For Inhee, as a recent immigrant to the U.S. with limited English proficiency, socializing with her peers was not easy, and yet it was something she wanted, as would be expected of an adolescent. At school, the conversations during lunch time were mostly about Twilight, an English book Inhee had never heard about:

All of the kids were talking about Twilight during lunchtime, but I didn’t have anything to say. I didn’t even know what the book was about. So I decided to try reading it, it seemed hard but I wanted to try it anyway. At first, I had a difficult time reading it but I slowly got caught up in the story. It was really fun. I could talk about it with other people, American students. It felt good to talk with Americans after having to talk with ESL students all the time. And I felt like I was good at English (Interview, 04/24/11).

As these comments suggest, reading this book created opportunities for Inhee to engage in interaction with peers, thus fitting in with them, at least for that moment. This was
something she needed as she sought to construct a new life and new identity for herself, and literacy in the form of voluntary reading for pleasure helped fulfill that need as well as enhancing her English language ability (Krashen, 2004). Reading the book provided her with input necessary to promote second language acquisition (e.g., vocabulary), while talking about *Twilight* with her peers gave Inhee opportunities to speak English and thus improve her oral skills. This kind of learning could not be achieved in her ESL class, where easy and insubstantial instructional practices were mainly focused on, and where Inhee was surrounded by ESL peers who were likewise attempting to learn English. Talking about *Twilight* with native English speaking American peers exposed Inhee to richer and more fluent English that she could incorporate into her own linguistic repertoire, something that simply did not occur in her ESL class. Thus, Inhee’s self-selection of *Twilight*, which she read mostly outside school but talked about in school, bridged Inhee’s worlds in and away from school and added momentum to her transition to life in the U.S.

As already shown in Inhee’s *Twilight* experience, she attempted to fit in with her American female peers through literacy activity. In fact, she had a lot of curiosity about popular American girls at school and their world and wanted to make friends with them. However, she initially felt the presence of an invisible wall between them and her. Breaking through such a wall is not easy for transitional students like Inhee, and yet it is something many desire to happen. Inhee’s solution to this problem was reading the books her American peers read. This solution is illustrated in Inhee’s interaction with an Asian-American girl, Deborah (pseudonym), who was adopted by an American family and rode the same school bus with her. Deborah sometimes taught Inhee how to pronounce English
words and how to manage school life. Inhee eventually asked Deborah to recommend books to read, with a particular interest in knowing what kinds of books American girls read. Deborah recommended a novel called *That Summer*. Inhee read the book, enjoyed it, and through the book experienced a closer look at the world of her American girl peers. This experience also left her feeling that she was getting closer to their world.

In both of these cases, Inhee read a popular novel, and this kind of reading appeared to give her considerable reading pleasure as well as a sense of accomplishment. In her words, it was “a great moment in my life to finish an English book” (Interview 04/24/10) after reading *Twilight* (approximately 500 pages). Considering her struggles with English language proficiency, this was a significant undertaking on her part and thus a major achievement as a second language learner. This was especially interesting because Inhee was not an avid reader in Korea and did not cultivate her reading habits in her L1. But now, confronted by a new reality as a transitional adolescent seeking acceptance and an identity in a different language and world, Inhee used literacy to shift her positioning and enhance her circumstances.

While much of Inhee’s voluntary reading in English took place at home, she also crossed the school boundary with it, and in the process enabled her to frame herself in a different way at school. For example, one day in her ESL class, she took out a book she was reading at home. Her ESL classmates crowded around her and asked, in surprise, “Are you really reading this book?” In that class she usually read the assigned handouts and a very thin poetry book that she called “a childish book” (*Hate That Cat*). When she brought to school the book she was reading voluntarily at home, her ESL classmates were surprised
at the thickness and apparent difficulty level of book, which appeared to be aimed at high level English readers, such as the students in a regular Language Arts class. At that moment, Inhee felt as if “ESL 애들이랑 좀 다르고 유치하지 않는 사람” (“I was in a different league than my ESL classmates, not a childish girl anymore”) (Interview, 04/24/10) This incident appeared to give Inhee, who was not able to be intellectually engaged in school work, “a sense of superiority” (Interview, 04/24/10). In this way, Inhee’s engagement with literacy in the form of reading enabled her to construct a new identity at school, something she eagerly wanted to have in the U.S.

Engaging in Cyworld and Facebook

Like the other participants in this study, Inhee’s literacy activities were not confined to traditional paper based literacy. Her online involvement was another of her key literacy activities as she navigated the two worlds, Korea and America, that constituted her transitional life. For example, every Saturday, Inhee was tremendously busy using the computer for one and a half hours on activities that she chose. Inhee used the limited time mostly for participation on her Cyworld and Facebook sites. Unlike her American school peers, Inhee used both Cyworld and Facebook simultaneously, going back and forth for different purposes (emotional support and development of heritage culture and identity work) and in different ways in terms of language use and the application of available online resources. We will see first her involvement in Cyworld and then Facebook, both of which have been explained in Chapters 4 and 5.

Inhee used Cyworld, a Korean language online space, to make social connections that helped her and her friends find emotional support. For example, Inhee used Cyworld
mostly for its diary features, which thus allowed her to write in personal ways about what was happening in her life and inside herself. She was a heavy writer who did not hesitate to share her feelings in writing with her friends in Cyworld. Recording and receiving nearly instantaneous feedback from her friends motivated Inhee to use Cyworld on an extensive basis. With respect to her diary writing, she employed the lock function (one of the Cyworld functions), which limited access to her site and thus enabled her to share her daily life only with her online group of friends. These were her actual friends or acquaintances, that is, those with whom she had on off-line relationship as well; all were the same gender (girls). Because they were geographically separated, they worked as an online emotional support community facing many of the same circumstances in life.

As an illustration of this support function, when Inhee feared that she might fail in exiting from the ESL class the next academic year through the OTELA, which would lead to anger and depression about her slow progress of English, she shared those emotions on Cyworld. One of her friends who had left Korea and was living in California expressed compassion about the situation, consoled her, which she also faced, and suggested that they study English harder together. In this case, Inhee was sharing information and feelings that she could not with her school or church friends, who did not take ESL classes and thus would not understand what she was experiencing. What matters from a literacy perspective is that here Inhee and her friend were using writing form meaning making purposes in an online space.

Looking further at Inhee’s involvement in Cyworld, one of the functions of Cyworld, 파도타기(waving)- a way to find people in Cyworld, enabled Inhee to establish or maintain
social networks with a wide range of Korean friends both in Korea and the U.S. Because these individuals were located in both her old and new worlds, Cyworld offered her an opportunity to traverse those worlds and construct a new identity that accounted for them, as well as playing an important role in supporting her emotionally as a transitional adolescent. When she was in Korea, her friends in Cyworld were limited to her close school friends. However, after she moved to the U.S., her relocation was a big issue among her friends in Cyworld. Through the social network on Cyworld, the news that she was in the U.S. spread. One of her friends, who had not been close to her in Korea, contacted her via Cyworld because she was planning to study in the U.S. Inhee told her about American school life and replied to her friend’s questions, and soon, they became best friends online. In addition, her old and forgotten friends (e.g. elementary school friends), who had lived in Korea and then moved to the U.S., like Inhee, found her through the waving function. She became sort of “a star” (as Inhee’s mother described it) among her Cyworld friends.

As such, through writing on Cyworld and transcending geographic distances and boundaries, Inhee constructed a different self who was valued for her transitional life, as opposed to the Inhee who struggled with socializing with her peers at school (in the mainstream Anglophone culture).

Moving to Inhee’s engagement with the English medium Facebook, the circumstances were considerably different. That is, while Inhee used Cyworld to interact with her Korean friends in Korea and abroad, and in her native language, she used Facebook with her local friends, such as school peers and Korean-American church friends in the U.S. In particular, Facebook was a place for her to cultivate her friendships with various Korean-Americans.
Adjusting to the U.S., Inhee had more close social relationships with Korean-American friends at church, rather than her school peers. It would be easier for transitional students like Inhee to make friends with those who shared the same ethnicity, and that was the case with Inhee and her peers at the Korean church she attended. Further, Inhee’s involvement via Facebook reflected her engagement in multiliteracies practices, through which she retained and developed her ties to heritage culture while constructing a sense of group identity. Especially prominent in this was Inhee’s enjoyment of and connection with what has been called the “Korean wave,” a cultural phenomenon that includes Korean television dramas and Korean popular music (K-pop), which has spread quickly among Korean-American adolescents and even some of non-Korean adolescents in the U.S. Contact with these artifacts comes through the internet, and discussion of them in places like Facebook is a popular activity. Indeed, this was an activity that created a strong like between Inhee and her Korean-American peer. An example from Inhee’s Facebook page shows an online discussion of a Korean celebrity between her and her friend, Rebecca (pseudonym):

Rebecca: 우리 홈 커밍 사진 찍으면 그때 그걸로 체인지 하마. 글구 빨랑 아이러브 송중기의 큐트 스마일을 지우렴!!!
Inhee: nonono SONGJUNKI is my boyfriend kekeke jkjkk
때리지마 사랑해 ⇒ ⇒ ⇒
Rebecca: 죽는다 나 송중기를 예전 부터 좋아했따구
그러닌 송중기는 내꼬야 탈내지마 가시나야!!! (Inhee’s Facebook, 10/06/10)

Rebecca: If we take a picture for homecoming, I will change it. By the way, take off “I love SONGJUNGI’S cute SMILE” before I beat you up!!!
Inhee: nonono SONGJUNGI is my boyfriend kekeke jkjkk
Don’t beat me up. I love you (laugh out loud)
Rebecca: I will kill you. I liked Jungki Song before you did. So, he is mine and stay away from him beyotch!!! (Inhee’s Facebook, 10/06/10)
Here, Inhee’s “soul mate”, Rebecca, asked her to change her reference to this celebrity because Jungki Song (SONGJUNHKI) was already Rebecca’s “boyfriend.” They enjoyed talking about a Korean celebrity and playfully argued about whose boyfriend he would be. Notable here was not just the discussion of a celebrity from the Korean cultural heritage they shared, but also their use of Korean language and symbols popular among Korean adolescents. They used informal words, especially those in girls’ social world, such as “맞다, 때리다, 죽는다. 내꼬야, 탐내지마, 가시나야” (bold ones in above), and they code-switched between Korean and English, as seen above. For a transitional adolescent like Inhee, Facebook exchanges like this one allowed her to move between her Korean and English language and cultural worlds in ways that were valuable to her. It was through activity like this that Inhee mediated the issues and challenges she faced as someone moving from one life and identity to another. For transitional youth like Inhee, who had spent the formative years of her life in Korea enjoying interaction with her friends for a long time, it was not likely to be an easy task to move to another world. Cultivating loyalty and establishing a sense of group identity via the internet through Facebook would be meaningful and empowering because it gave her a sense of belonging associated with ethnicity. Unlike her interaction with her American peers at school, through Facebook Inhee could retain important links to her heritage language and culture while also forming new ties with adolescents who also understood the American world she was struggling to engage more successfully. In this regard, participation in Facebook-related activities played a kind of bridging role for Inhee as she traversed her old and new worlds.
While Facebook allowed Inhee ways of retaining her heritage culture and constructing a sense of group identity with a new group, that is, Korean-Americans who were born and raised in the U.S., the situation was a complex one. Even though this group and Inhee shared the same Korean ethnic background, socializing between was not easy for them due to cultural differences. That is, the Korean-Americans communicated primarily in English and were more American in their thinking than they were Koreans. Thus, there were gaps between them that Inhee needed to try to overcome. Through Facebook, she developed interesting ways of building and reinforcing relationships with her Korean-American friends born in the U.S. For example, in the wall subsection, on the left side, Facebook has a common format through which people introduce themselves and friends to others. Below we can see how Inhee introduced several close friends to others visiting her site:

| jane is BEHPUH ever & FAVORISTE ddal| ♥RACHAEL is SOUL MATE & my umma♥ |
| justina is #1 DDAL♥ |
| janny is BEST DDAL♥ |
| deborah H. is myWEIRDO bffl♥ |
| sunkyung is FAVORITIE bffl♥ |
| da-yeon is YUBOH♥ |
| flora is AWESOME ahdul♥ |
| cindy is my scioto umma♥ |

Figure 6.1: The wall subsection of Inhee’s Facebook

**BEHPUH:** best friend (initial)
**bffl:** best friend for life (initial)
**ddal:** Romanization of daughter in Korean
**YUBOH:** Romanization of darling or honey in Korean
**ahdul:** Romanization of son in Korean

What we see here is an interesting mix of cultures and languages. For instance, Inhee classified all of her friends within family oriented categories: children, siblings, and parents.

This was a trend among some Korean-Americans at her church intended to represent
loyalty, and Inhee had taken up that trend for herself, as the interview segment below illustrates:

교회에서 친한 친구들 만나면 너 내 딸 해라, 아들, 아빠, 엄마 해라 그래요. 그리고 그걸 facebook 에다 써요. 친한 걸 나타내는 거죠. (Follow up interview, 10/01/10)

When I meet my close friends at church, I said, “You are my daughter, son, father, and mother. And I wrote them on Facebook. This is to represent closeness. (Follow up Interview, 10/01/10)

Within the strong Confucian framework that exists in Korean culture, building on themes of loyalty and family membership signifies a desire to remain connected to that framework, as was the case for Inhee and her friends. For example, Rachel was like Umma (mother) for Inhee because Rachel had the closest relationship with Inhee and sometimes scolded Inhee as Inhee’s mother did. Also striking is the use of language, which was a mixture of Korean and English that the Korean-Americans at Inhee’s church had developed. For example, words such as ddal, umma, yuboh, and ahdul that Ineee used were Korean family related terms written in English Romanized forms. Collectively, these uses of languages and terms helped construct a sense of group identity that was important for Inhee during her transitional adolescent period, and she used the online space of Facebook to construct that group identity. This reflects Inhee’s search for useful channels between the two cultures and languages in her life, which in turn signifies a transitional youth’s way of adjusting to America - retaining Koreanness within “her own ethnic communities while pursuing a strategy of paced, selected acculturation into the U.S. society” (Gibson, 1997, p.440).
Composing a multimodal project at a community center

The final key literacy event to be examined in this chapter is a project Inhee completed while taking the same course at a local community center, MCS, as Jessica and John did. What was especially interesting was that, while Inhee was reading the book *Yankee Girl* by Kyusun Chung mentioned earlier, she had a stronger response to the immigrant girl’s new American social life at school than the other students in this class. That is, Inhee felt a much closer connection to the character and the book. Inhee sought close connections with her peers and highly valued peer influences in her life, and so the experiences of the main character in the book resonated strongly with her. Inhee considered herself sociable and believed that her ability to make friends easily would be an asset for her future. In several essays she worked on with me during tutorials, she described herself as the person who “holds out her hand to a stranger in a camp” or “asks a stranger’s name first.” While reading and discussing *Yankee Girl* in our class, Inhee was instigated to reflect on her new American social life, thus bridging her experiences with those of the author (who was also the main character of the book). This was an important experience at a time in her life when she saw that her social skills were not always as effective as they had been in Korea. As a new “Yankee girl” herself, Inhee could relate to the struggles depicted in the book.

Not surprisingly in light of her personal connection to the book, among several topics to select from, Inhee confidently chose “Making Friends” as the focus of her multimodal project. As she explained, “It just appealed to me.” (Interview, 04/03/10). As such, it was notable that during the process of completing her multimodal project, Inhee’s old and new
identities were cultivated through the opportunity to build on her border crossing experiences through the use of multimodal resources.

In choosing the appealing topic, Inhee explained that she wanted to focus on a barrier between her peers and her, something she had never experienced before in Korea:

usually when the students transfer to a new school, if they have something special, it is easy to make friends. in korea, if the transferred student is pretty and sociable, she makes friends easily. in long island, all of the students were jewish and asians were only three boys and one girl, which was me. i think because i was different from the jewish, it was easy to make friends with them. here, ohio, because there are too many asians, it is difficult to make friends with americans. even if i want to make friends, it is easy for me to make friends with asians” (interview, 04/03/10).

having never thought of herself as an asian in korea, inhee had experienced herself within the identity of an asian for the first time when she was trying to make friends in the u.s. this proved to be a powerful experience for her, especially since her experiences in this regard varied. her asian ethnicity was helpful for making friends in long island, where she stayed before ohio, while it was a barrier for making friends in ohio. these contrasting experiences across korea, long island, and ohio were significant for her as someone who had come to the u.s. recently and who was accustomed to having success in social interactions. in particular, the challenges she encountered in ohio caused her to identify with the main character in yankee girl and thus reflect more forcefully on what she was experiencing. to help her in this process, i encouraged her to examine her experiences with inquiry-based questions; the barriers she was encountering empowered
her to pose two research questions for her project: (1) Why it is difficult to make friends in the U.S.? and (2) What is the solution to the problem of making friends? By addressing these questions through her project, Inhee was able to draw on her authentic experiences, thus increasing the value of the project for her.

After formulating these research questions as the starting point for her multimodal project, Inhee investigated them by interviewing her ESL peers, MCS peers, and church peers. Extending the process of the inquiry-based multimodal project into school and communities (MCS and church) allowed Inhee to connect her school and community contexts. Inhee found via her interviews that differences in languages and adolescent girl popular cultures were the main elements preventing newcomers, that is, transitional youth like her, from making friends in the U.S. In fact, living in the U.S., she wanted to make American friends, but her limited English proficiency and different background in adolescent girl popular cultures rooted in her experiences in Korea (e.g. make-up, wearing clothes, responses to celebrities) were the main impediments to her success. Interestingly, in an interview with me after conducting her interviews, Inhee said loudly, “finding 이 제가 생각한 거랑 똑같아요 (findings were exactly what I had thought.” (Interview, 02/01/10). In this way, the findings, which were consistent with her experiences, seemed to encourage her to become more engaged into the project and thus make full use of the resources available through various forms of literacy.

Having seen Inhee’s background leading up to the creation of her multimodal project, which was based on her choice of an appealing topic, her reading of Yankee Girl, and her interviews and findings, we can now look at the project itself.
Slide 1 Title
Slide 2 Picture (a variety of people standing on different colored puzzle pieces that are fitted together)
Slide 3 List of contents
Slide 4 Why did I choose, “Making friends” as a topic?
Slide 5 My experiences
Slide 6 Why is it difficult to make friends in America? with a picture (wooden figures standing around a globe)
Slide 7 Language
Slide 8 Culture
Slide 9 How to make friends with a picture (stick people standing in a line hand in hand)
Slide 10 Be active/friendly
Slide 11 Need to speak English well/Be nice
Slide 12 Conclusion

This multimodal project provided important insights into how Inhee perceived and conceptualized her transitional world, beginning with the fact that through the inquiry-based project, Inhee wanted to explore her own issues, as she mentioned in slide 4. What stands out is the power of forming it according to two research questions and organizing and conceptualizing her findings in language and culture. Another powerful point is a more
multifaceted representation of her voice as an author. To present her findings, Inhee appeared, like Jessica, to place a high priority on the linguistic mode over all other available modes in the project. She only used three images out of 12 slides: one for describing the image of the title (making friends), which showed people fitting in like pieces of a puzzle, and the other two for describing wooden figures standing around a globe and stick people standing in a line hand in hand. Although the three images appeared to be different images, they conveyed the same message stemming from the social barrier among her peers she experienced—“we are one regardless of race, language, and culture.” Though limited in number, these images played an essential role in representing Inhee’s own voice through the project. That is, she was personally invested in the project and wanted that investment to be revealed through the project’s content. Notably, this message was not represented anywhere in language (English). This was markedly different from her ESL school work, which did not provide an opportunity for her to represent her voice.

Three slides especially worth noting are #7, #8, and #11, in that they touch upon elements crucial to Inhee’s transitional life. Items 7 and 8 introduce the key elements Language (#7) and Culture (#8); it was within these elements that Inhee’s transitional struggle was located, and it was important to see that she recognized this. Meanwhile, she led into her conclusion with slide #11, Need to speak English well/Be nice. That is, Inhee recognized that if she were to repeat her success in social interaction that she was accustomed to in Korea, she would have to not only cultivate her skills in the dominant language of her new world (English), but also relate her use of language to personality (be nice). By utilizing the affordances of the multimodal project, then, Inhee was able to
identify the areas (language and culture) and resources (English and being nice) necessary to navigate her transitional journey successfully.

Summary

Inhee had a slow adaptation process to life the U.S., as she strongly retained her native Korean culture but at the same time saw the U.S. as a place for great opportunities. It was difficult, as an adolescent, to figure out how to reconcile this apparent conflict. Although she invested heavily in academic work, she grappled with the academic adaptation process to America due to its heavy focus, in the ESL class, on basic language skills and insubstantial learning practices and its different educational practices. Thus, she was unable to construct a new academic identity she had not had in Korea but desired in the U.S. However, participating in the writing of an essay at school was a transformative experience for Inhee, in that she was in a meaningful learning situation that involved participating in the practices of the community, using her home language and culture, and attempting to make her experiences in both L1 and L2 coherent, thus opening her eyes to new and better ways of learning English. This experience enabled her to push the boundaries set by the school upon ELL students and to make an important connection between her old and new lives.

As an adolescent girl, associating with her peers as means of self-definition, Inhee searched for a place where she fit in with American peers. Her voluntary reading of books in the L2, books her American peers read, helped her establish social relations with them, thus providing entry into the social world of the American peer group. At the same time, she was able to experience pleasure in reading and cultivate her reading habits, which she
was not able to experience in her L1. Meanwhile, Inhee’s multiliteracies practices through Cyworld and Facebook were essential in her transitional life in terms of allowing her to express her emotions, confess her shortcomings, and receive emotional support from her old friends at the same time create a new hybrid culture bridging her heritage culture and the American culture. This helped her cope with the daily stress of her transitional life and address a social need to make a sense of her transitional life. Finally the multimodal project, with its focus on making friends in the U.S., showed the possibility of connecting her transitional life and multiliteracies through an authorial voice.

Collectively, these literacy events constitute a set of activities that were essential in the kind of meaning-making that a transitional adolescent like Inhee required as she grappled with the changes confronting her during an important period in her life. Through these events we see, as we did earlier with John and Jessica, the power that engagement with literacy has for young people facing the kinds of challenges they encountered as transitional youth.
Chapter 7
Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This multiple case study investigated the literacy practices experiences of three Korean transitional adolescents as they engaged different literacies in different contexts of use. To understand their transitional life and the mediated nature of their literacy practices, I have investigated their key literacy practices and events across three sites: school, home, and community center. As transitional students moving from Korea to America, they faced complicated challenges as their Korean backgrounds (e.g., rhetorical, cultural) overlapped with their new lives in the United States. From a social perspective, I saw their literacies as literate behavior influenced by the social and cultural configurations of adolescent life. I also sought to capture various literacy activities of the three transitional students encompassing their multiple challenges and their efforts at constructing agency in the new country. In this chapter, I will discuss these perspectives while weaving together the findings reported in the previous chapters. While doing so, I will address the study’s research questions, discuss the interpretations and conclusions arising from the study, and look at the contributions the study has made to the literature related to L2 adolescent literacy.
The overarching research question of this study was “What happens to transitional Korean adolescents as they engage different literacies in different contexts of use?” More specific questions were as follows:

1. What did their out of school literacy practices accomplish for them?
2. How do their literacy practices permeate the boundaries between settings?
3. How do they cultivate their literate identities through their multiliteracies experiences?
4. How do they develop academic knowledge and English proficiency through multiliteracies processes and engagement?

In this chapter, I first discuss my findings as they relate to the research questions while drawing from the major findings reported in other research and scholarly work. Also, I relate back the specific question to the overarching question. I then present pedagogical implications suggested by the study, identify limitations of the study, recommend further research arising from the study, and conclude with closing comments about the study.

Discussion of the Study’s Findings

1. What did their out of school literacy practices accomplish for them?

This research question was designed to discuss what the participants gained by engaging in out of school literacy practices. From the social perspective, literacy (including language) is a tool used for specific purposes in specific contexts (Gee, 1996; Street, 1984). Therefore, literacy scholars have investigated a wide range of literacy practices outside of school as an integral part of students’ lives. They have noted that students labeled unsuccessful readers and writers in school actually were involved in significant out of
school literacy practices in meaningful ways (Hull and Schultz, 2002). Within the same vein, the question of what out of school literacy practices do for transitional students, who are in transition to a new culture and country, are not English proficient at school and often have difficulty with being part of the mainstream society at school, is worthwhile.

The key out of school literacy practices which the three transitional Korean adolescents engaged in encompassed a wide range of literacies such as formal writing (e.g., essays), pleasure reading and writing (e.g., novel reading and writing), creative writing (e.g., poems), multiliteracies reading and writing (e.g., social networking sites and Youtube and webtoons), and multimodal composition (e.g., multimodal project). They also had several of the same key literacy events (e.g., engaging in a writing competition, participating in social networking sites, and creating a multimodal project) because the key literacy events were selected relative to the research sites (home and community center) for the study, focusing on their transitional life and the mediated nature of literacy practices. They engaged in these out of school literacy practices as an integral part of their transitional life in various meaningful ways.

First, the participants were able to construct (represent) multiple group identities which were contextually constructed. The participants constructed (represented) a Korean group identity. During the writing competition, the main issue of the Korean group (including Jessica, John, and Inhee) at MCS was the writing competition, with conversations centering around what genre they chose, how they wrote, what folk tale they chose to work from, and what they would do with the prize money if they won. As such, a collective writing practice of Korean transitional students marked membership of the Korean group at MCS,
while also demarcating others who did not participate in the competition. Also, the construction of a group identity with Korean-Americans through social networking sites was notable. This was especially true for Inhee, who attempted to find ways of adjusting to the U.S. by retaining her Koreanness within her own ethnic communities. While Inhee was developing her heritage culture affiliation on Facebook by online discussion of a Korean drama and Romanization of Korean family relationship-related words, she forged loyalty and cultivated a sense of group identity with Korean-Americans who also participated in the site. This is quite similar to Finder’s (1997) study, which revealed how literacy, such as note passing, writing graffiti, and reading teen magazines, played an important role in the ways that girls made allegiances and constructed boundaries in their friendship circles. Thus, in the digital age, transitional female adolescents like Inhee make meaning via online-based multiliteracies (instead of print-based literacy).

In addition, the participants constructed a group identity with their mainstream school peers through various literacies. This is one of the important yet difficult issues these three transitional students encountered as they were adjusting to life in America. In fact, it has been reported that there sometimes are severe tensions or problems between immigrants and American-born teens—much of it focusing on language (Harklau, 1994; Kanno & Applebaum, 1995; Olsen, 1997, 2000). Further, at the critical stage of establishing their social identities, immigrant adolescents are often struggling to fit into frameworks espoused by their U.S. born peers, television, and other forms of mass media (Fu & Graff, 2009). In this respect, the participants’ attempts to cross the social boundaries of their mainstream peers through multiple literacy forms in English are worth noting.
John’s visual literacy through regularly watching several video blogs of various Youtube comedy stars and his oral literacy through sharing those blogs with his school peers by copying jokes and social language uses and emulating funny scenes enabled the boys like John and his peers to center around shared literacy at school, thus affiliating around literacy. Literacy served to mark loyalty and thus facilitated the construction of a group identity with mainstream peers. Beyond this local construction of the group identity, there was a global construction of the group identity. For example, John’s sharing on Facebook about ABBA Peru 2010, which occurred in English and via multimodal literacies, connected him with other young people locally and globally and helped him develop a sense of belonging via a group identity. These various means of constructing a group identity indicate that literacy events functioned as affinity group discourses (Gee, 2004) through which the participants attempted to cultivate a sense of group identity with Koreans, Korean-Americans, Americans, and global youth across borders.

Second, the participants were able to actively forge multiple individual identities through literacy practices. All of the participants struggled with a different self in the new country and attempted to construct a new self in the U.S. through a painful transition to American life. This was clearly revealed in the essays the participants wrote. Jessica’s essay, “The tiger in me,” expressed her bitter experiences with the loss of her identity as she navigated between two worlds and her transformation as she gradually formed a new self in the U.S by using her Korean heritage at her American school as a resource. In addition, Inhee’s essay, “The green frog,” provided her with the opportunity she needed to give voice to what she was experiencing. Inhee showed how her past rebellions against
English study and school rules led to her struggle with American life. However, her regrets were followed by her determination to succeed, which reflected her construction of a new identity in the U.S. as she positioned herself differently from the Green Frog. Comparing her difficult experiences to the Green Frog’s story, Inhee showed her willingness to construct her new identity in the U.S., thus taking a step forward in her transitional adolescent life.

As for John, although he did not appear to blatantly show such a painful transition through literacy as Jessica and Inhee demonstrated in their essays, he attempted to construct his multiple identities outside school in multiple forms of literacy in various ways. His efforts to reconstruct his class clown identity via oral literacy associated with Youtube, which he had in Korea yet lost in the new country, his construction of a global action star within a global frame, and his construction of a drummer identity via writing the poem about drumming (an important part of his life) were his unique ways of multiple identity construction. Moreover, by writing a fantasy novel, John caught a glimpse of a writer’s world. His identity construction as a writer documented his passage into and through adolescence, with the envisioned future connecting present and future and literacy playing a crucial role in the process. These multiple ways of John’s construction of various multiple identities show that, outside school, he was actively seeking new identities through various channels as opposed to the non-engaged, seemingly incompetent individual he appeared to be while encased by four scholastic walls. He was probably going through a painful transitional adolescent journey as well, but he elected to stay away from the types of expression Jessica and Inhee adopted.
Third, the young people saw literacy as a set of tools for coping with their realities and emotions. The Philadelphia urban adolescents in Camita’s (1993) study used literacy to take hold of their adolescent lives. Gang-connected adolescents in Moje’s (2000) study used literacy to express their fears and concerns and to make a plea for help in achieving success within a troubled space. In Shultz’s (2002) study, Ellen, who was pregnant, wrote in her diary to cope with the daily stress of her life, hence using literacy as an important outlet for her emotions. In my study, as the research participants faced various difficulties in their transitional lives, their literacy activities were used as sense-making devices and provided them cathartic experiences that assisted them in coping with their transitional realities and emotions. Here, unlike the other research participants just cited, these three transitional youth had two layers of emotions to sort through: those normally accompanying adolescence and those related to their transitional realities.

For example, Jessica’s writing of an essay portraying her loss of identity and pain in the new country and her willingness to forge a new identity in the U.S. may well have been a cathartic experience for her in not only reasserting her Korean identity but also proclaiming a kind of victory in life as a transitional adolescent in America. Similarly, John’s writing of fantasy novels afforded him the opportunity to use literacy as a sense-making device, perhaps as a form of compensation while moving from a lost or missing identity (probably at school) to an envisioned identity in his transitional life. In this regard, writing the fantasy novels, especially in his native (Korean) language, may well have been a cathartic experience for him in not only asserting his writer identity but also proclaiming a vision in life as a transitional adolescent in America. This also enabled him to retain
important ties to his home culture and language. John’s participation in the writing competition was another cathartic experience through which he could feel a sense of achievement he could not obtain at school. As for Inhee, her use of Cyworld with her Korean-based friends was a way of sharing her feelings and developing emotional support in an online community of girls, while finding a new self (a Cyworld star) also helped her receive emotional support as she sought to cope with her emotions due to unfamiliar circumstances, cultural differences, and linguistic barriers.

It is also important to note the participants’ need to escape from the pressures of their transitional lives. Even though this appeared to be ironic, escaping from that complex reality for a while was a way of coping with it. Just as Denise in Shultz’s (2002) study used writing to keep her mind off of the deaths in the world, Jessica’s Korean language exchanges with Inhee on Facebook in an English dominant allowed them to be Korean for a while and share their experiences and their emotions in ways which their American and Korean-American friends would not notice. This helped them make sense of and learn to work with the American-based challenges they faced, as communication in the Korean language with a peer sharing the same background and struggles constituted an important comfort zone to retreat into.

The cathartic experiences of transitional students in my study were very similar to the therapeutic role of Elizabeth’s public writing, Xanga – i.e., weblog writing (writing about her dislike of school) in Yi and Hirvela’s (2010) study. Elizabeth, a 1.5 generation adolescent, coped with the difficulties of American school life by venting her emotions via this form of online, public writing. Further, Inhee’s cathartic experiences of coping with
her emotions within the same gender via an online community are very similar to the use of online journaling by American adolescent girls in Guzzetti and Gamboa's (2005) study in terms of finding a way of expressing their emotions in their daily life and finding emotional support from an online community.

Despite the similar findings, what was especially notable in my study was that it was through literacies related to Korean heritage that the transitional students coped with their situation. They actively attempted to go beyond their limited experiences at school by attending a literacy based activity held by their heritage related institution (The Sejong Cultural Society) outside school, to employ the Korean language (e.g., writing fantasy novels in Korean, exchange of Korean language on Facebook), and to receive emotional support from an online community consisting of their old Korean-based friends. These findings attest to the importance of the constructive roles played by the heritage language and culture. Though ties to the L1 language and culture may have complicated the participants’ transition to a new (L2) life in a new language and culture, those ties were also an anchor the participants could rely on, as well as something they could utilize in forging a hybrid use of languages and cultures as they moved across different situations and interacted with different people in different settings.

Fourth, literacy was used to shift their positioning and enhance their circumstances. Inhee’s creation of the essay, “The Green Frog,” gave her an empowering experience of using literacy as a tool to push against the lower expectations the American school had for ELL students compared to what she experienced in Korea and for achieving success and the identity it generates. Similarly, since Inhee was generally not be able to intellectually
engage in most of the schoolwork in her ESL class and felt that her English did not improve there, she looked for an alternative at home to improve her English by reading English books, which was a motive for her to continue to read English books. This was an interesting act of agency on her part. Rather than abandoning English out of frustration over her ESL class, Inhee took it upon herself to find an alternative way of building her English proficiency. In so doing, she acknowledged the importance that English would play in her life as a transitional adolescent now living in an English-dominant country. Further, Inhee’s reading of books in English (Twilight and That Summer) which her peers read enabled her to fit in with them, look at their world, and develop a closer feeling with their world, something she needed as she sought to construct a new life and new identity for herself. Like most adolescents, she needed a sense of belonging among friends at school, and this common reading experience made that possible. This changed her positioning from a transitional student to a mainstream student for a while. Also, considering her struggle with English, her reading of the books was a significant undertaking on her part and thus a major achievement as a second language learner which then enhanced her circumstances in her school life.

Fifth, literacy served as a way to create ties between the old and new worlds. Considering that the research participants were transitional students, how to juggle their old and new worlds and identities was an important issue. Participating in online social networking sites played a kind of bridging role for them as they traversed their old and new worlds. For example, Jessica developed the hybridized understanding of the two cultures from an in-between stand- point in a conversation with her Korean-based friends on
Cyworld based on the picture of the bathroom at her American school. More globally, John retained both the heritage and new culture traits within a global frame as he created a famous action star Facebook name. Inhee’s online discussion of a Korean celebrity and her use of family related words in Korean Romanization with her Korean-American friend(s) on Facebook allowed her to move between her Korean and English language and cultural worlds in ways that were valuable to her. Also, John’s creation of the poem about drumming as an important part of his life in both Korea and America linked his Korean and American worlds.

Sixth, literacy served as a tool for retaining ties with their Korean heritage and identity. For example, the three participants’ participation in the Sejong writing competition, Jessica’s conversation with Inhee in Korean as a kind of secret code on Facebook, Jessica’s posting of pictures of her American life to show her Korean-based friends, John’s watching of a Korean webtoon site to enjoy the Korean style of humor and cartoons, and John’s writing of fantasy novels in Korean were all attempts to retain ties with their Korean heritage and identity through literacy activities. However, it also needs to be noted that, although retaining ties with the Korean heritage and identity clearly helped their adjustment to the new country, it was not always beneficial for their transitional lives. As Jessica wrote in her essay, “The tiger in me,” retaining her Korean heritage and identity was often a hindrance to her Americanization. Thus, she and the others faced a conundrum that appears to be embedded in transitional adolescent life: what was good or even necessary for them was also bad for them, and this presented them with an impossible choice. This dilemma captures the complicated nature of the transitional life of transitional students.
In addition, literacy practices served as a means for English improvement. Inhee’s voluntary reading of various genres of books in English at home matched what her mainstream school peers read and that were displayed at book stores in the U.S. as best sellers. This voluntary out of school reading provided her with input necessary to promote second language acquisition (e.g., vocabulary), and talking about it with her peers gave her opportunities to speak English and thus improve her oral skills. Further, because it was purely voluntary, it was accompanied by true reading pleasure and a sense of accomplishment, thus helping to cultivate her reading habits and frame herself in a different way.

Given that Inhee was not an avid reader in Korea and did not cultivate her reading habits in her L1 as well as in her L2 in school, it was noteworthy that her voluntary reading at home became a routine practice for her. This finding is consistent with what Krashen (2004) argued- that what he calls “free voluntary reading” is a powerful source of language competence. Krashen pointed out that enjoyment is essential, even though it does not always ensure the effectiveness of reading. More critically, this study found that through their voluntary pleasure reading, these transitional students constructed identities as a means of framing themselves in a different way as well as procuring enjoyment, which in turn facilitated their second language acquisition. Also, Inhee’s writing of the essay, “The green frog,” provided her with a chance to contextualize English learning in meaning making in order to develop her authorial voice. She self-defined this as learning.

In sum, the key literacy practices I documented in this study served as a means of identification for transitional students that could accomplish a variety of purposes, achieve
outcomes (sometimes unexpected and multiple), and create meaning. More specifically, they constructed identities (a group identity and multiple individual identities), coped with the realities they faced and the emotions they experienced, shifted their positioning and enhanced their circumstances, created ties between the old and new worlds, retained ties with their Korean heritage and identity, and improved their English. This finding in the study also provided the answers to the overarching question about what happened to transitional Korean adolescents as they engaged their out of school literacy practices. Considering that most previous studies have not focused on transitional students, my study contributes to an in-depth understanding of a specific population and its literacy practices that goes beyond what prior research has found. As such, this study provides a critical new understanding of adolescents, especially transitional adolescents, as having at least “some degree of agency within a larger collective of social practices” (Alvermann, 2009, p.19).

2. How do their literacy practices permeate the boundaries between settings?

This question was designed to ask about the nature of the mobility of literacy practices. A social approach to literacy in use enabled me to recognize the considerable overlap across the boundaries as people, texts, and practices track through different settings and scenes (Street, 2005). In my study, although literacy practices were imbued with underling goals, values, and purposes that were tied to particular contexts, they were not always bound to a setting. Further, considering that the participants were transitional students shifting from one location and language to another, it is worthwhile considering the journey literacies take with their writers. First, some of the literacy practices in this study were movable between local settings (school, home, and community center) as the writers moved. For
example, the literacy practices of the participants moved with respect to content. Jessica’s writing of the essay, “The Tiger in Me,” carried over to her writing of the poem “Butterfly” through re-contextualization (Dyson, 2003). The content of “The tiger in me” – her struggle with her lost identity and her transformation - transferred onto Butterfly in a way that used contrasting vivid adjectives and verbs in a Korean poetic form, Sijo, as she expressed her struggle and transformation through the image of the butterfly’s metamorphosis process. When the practices moved, Jessica changed her practices according to genres based on the same content, that is, re-contextualization (Dyson, 2003). Re-contextualization was a strong tool for Jessica to recast her bitter border crossing experiences onto another genre.

In terms of relevant research, based on the notion of re-contextualization, Stone (2005) examined four types of re-contextualization (setting, characters, language, and popular culture) through children’s book writing as a way to create connections between students’ in and out of school lives. The current study, whose participants were adolescents, discovered another type of re-contextualization, that is, through genre, as they wrote in a variety of genres across different settings.

Further, the literacy practices of the participants moved with respect to purposes. They brought, to school or to MCS, purposes of literacy that originated from a home setting. John brought to school and to MCS, respectively, what he watched at home on Youtube and in Webtoon sites for entertainment purposes. John used home literacy practices at school and MCS in a way that complemented his purposes of literacy as pleasure and supported his desire to enjoy them at school and MCS as well. Likewise, Inhee’s reading of Twilight at home enabled her to talk with her American peers during school lunch time.
Inhee used home literacy at school in a way that complemented her purposes of literacy as social (to know about her American peers’ world and fit in them) and supported her purpose to know and fit in with them.

Also, the literacy practices of the participants moved with respect to literacy skills, literacy knowledge, and literacy activities themselves. When the participants engaged in literacy practices outside school, literacy skills and knowledge they learned at school were transferred. For example, Jessica used English essay-related skills and knowledge she learned at school through the persuasive essay for the English essay writing (“Tiger in me”) outside school. Likewise, through writing a poem (“The beat of my drum”) outside school, John was able to choose English words using his knowledge of syllables. This was one of the academic skills John learned at school. Likewise, literacy activities themselves carried over to another setting. Inhee’s reading of books at home carried over to school (an ESL classroom) and John’s everyday cultural practices at home—listening to music, surfing the websites he liked, and interacting socially through these practices—moved to the process of composing his multimodal project at MCS.

Second, the literacy practices of the participants moved between two global locations (Korea and the U.S.) and two languages. All of the participants used their L1 or L1 related literacy, such as L1 literacy skills and, L1 literacy knowledge, for their L2 writings. For example, Jessica’s L1 academic skills were transferred to her L2 writing (e.g., two persuasive essays, “The new class, Asian history” and “The tiger in me” and a poem, “Butterfly”), and her L1 knowledge of folktales were transferred to her L2 essay, “The tiger in me.” John’s glimpse of L1 academic knowledge of poetry was transferred to his
L2 writing of a poem (“The beat of my drum”). His use of L1 was indispensable for his L2 writing of the poem during the writing process. Also, Inhee’s L1 knowledge of folktales was transferred to her L2 essay writing (“The green frog”), and her use of L1 was indispensable for brainstorming and composing the essay. Her L1 knowledge of academic essays served as a basis for understanding English essays.

What was notable was that the Sejong writing competition held outside school, which intended to bridge Asian and Western cultures as well as cultivating the participants’ Korean heritage, is where the participants actively drew on Korean literacy practices and languages. This starkly contrasted with their engagement with school literacy practices in ESL and Language arts classes. In ESL and Language arts classes, the participants were not able to construct their academic identities through most of the school literacy practices they encountered. This stemmed mainly from the circumscribed features of their school literacy practices and their different notions of literacy as cultural practices between Korea and the U.S. According to Enright (2010) and Vasudevan, Shultz, and Bateman (2010), a sense of themselves as students and literate identities is circumscribed by the restricted range of opportunities available to display their knowledge and to engage in meaningful participation in the classroom. In this regard, a sense of themselves among Jessica, Inhee, and John at school may have been limited by the circumscribed nature of the ESL and Language Arts curricula. For Jessica and Inhee, the ESL classes heavily focused on language practices such as basic skills (e.g., correcting grammatical and mechanical errors exercises and speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills) and discrete skills (e.g. a single word or phrase in the format of fill-in-the blank, multiple choice, and short answer
exercises). These practices were easy and insubstantial and showed an intellectual gap between ESL and other content area classes. This narrow range of literacy practices resulted in the failure to construct their academic identities as Jessica and Inhee harshly criticized ESL school work and Inhee was not able to intellectually engage in it.

Likewise, although John was in a Language Arts (not ESL) class, which focused on various reading and writing skills and provided the students with a choice of topics and resources, most of his school literacy practices were not engaging to him. He lacked a sense of connection to the class by losing his worksheets, forgetting detailed instructions for various projects, and frequently submitting his projects late. Subsequently, he never constructed a true reader or writer identity through school work. Instead, he relied on strategic and superficial tendencies to select topics and finding a short cut in reading materials. John appeared to view reading and writing in school as requirements for good grades and did not engage with them in creative, critical, and reflective ways as a writer or reader.

Further, the existence of different literacies as cultural practices between Korea and the U.S was another obstacle to the construction of academic identities. From the perspective of Jessica and Inhee, American ways of learning (especially in ESL class), such as reading self-chosen books in class and writing a reading response journal in a short format, were somewhat easy and insubstantial, while the Korean ones they had experienced previously were demanding and substantial. This somewhat different notion of literacy prevented them from constructing their academic identities through school work in the American classroom, thus making a smooth transition to the American classroom improbable.
As the participants showed different ways of engagement in two contexts, literacy practices (literate resources) and languages on the move are dependent on social contexts rather than tools as givens (a pre-given entity).

Also, some literacy practices learned or cultivated in Korea followed the participants when they moved to the U.S. Jessica used her Korean schema, such as Korean culture and history, for her presentation in an American classroom (as she mentioned in her essay, “The tiger in me”) and her two English essays (school persuasive essay, “The new class, Asian history” and out of school essay, “The tiger in me”). Martial arts skills John learned in Korea moved to the U.S. to create his Facebook name, and his watching of webtoon sites he enjoyed in Korea moved to the U.S. His knowledge of drawing, his drumming, and his readings of fantasy novels, which had been essential in his Korean life, moved to his English reading of newspaper about the drawings at school, his English writing of a poem, and his Korean writing of fantasy novels in the U.S., respectively. K-pop culture, Korean family related terms and their relationship to hierarchical Korean culture that Inhee used or was accustomed to in Korea moved to her writing on Facebook in the U.S.

What is noteworthy here is that although Jessica and John used Korean literacy practices they learned or cultivated in Korea, especially for English school literacy practices (e.g., Jessica’s use of Korean schema for her school presentation and her school essay, “The new class, Asian history,” and John’s use of knowledge of drawing for his school reading of a current event, “The drawings of Todd Buschur”), there did not seem to be any evidence of this for Inhee. This roadblock between two locations may occur when institutional structures constrain writers (or writers’ literacy) (Leonard, 2013). Once again,
social contexts drive literacy practices on the move. According to Luke (1996), literate success can “only be realized and articulated through a series of contingencies which arise in the cultural and social field” (p. 330), not on individual’s literate capital acquired in school and fully credentialed through grades or degrees. For example, the feature of Inhee’s beginner ESL class that stood out for her was that reading and writing practices became rigidly and narrowly defined, compared to Jessica’s intermediate ESL class and John’s Language arts class. This points out that the lower language proficiency level class was more likely to confine the literate practices of the students like Inhee and hinder their possible forms of expression and meaning making rather than appreciating their literacy experiences in their L1 country. Therefore, Inhee was not likely to move to a successful literate life at school while crossing two locations. This finding was supported by two studies. In Moje’s study (2000), when the literacy practices of gangsters moved to another context, their literacy practices were changed, refused to change, or negotiated. More globally in Leonard’s study (2013), three immigrant women showed that while they carried their literacy practices with them among multiple languages and locations in the world, when they reached for these practices in the U.S. their literacy practices stalled or slipped away.

In sum, all of the examples and findings show a complex picture of connections between the students’ literacy practices in different contexts. Going back to the overarching question, as transitional Korean adolescents engaged their school literacy practices in ESL and Language arts classes, they were not able to construct their academic identities through most of the school literacy practices they encountered. This stemmed mainly from the
circumscribed features of their school literacy practices and their different notions of literacy as cultural practices between Korea and the U.S. Also the literacy practices of transitional students move among languages, practices and locations. However, literacy practices on the move encounter social and cultural contingencies and are redefined by the social context. Therefore, literacies on the move have the potential to simultaneously empower and disempower writers, as appeared to be the case in this study. This study suggests that there is a need to rethink what counts as knowledge and to move beyond limited and limiting mono-linguistic assumptions and to understand global conceptualizations of literacies and second language education for L2 learners between two languages and cultures.

3. How do they cultivate their literate identities through multiliteracies experiences?

Scholars have begun to document growth or development in writing through the choices of media and modalities writers make as they compose (e.g., Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress, 2003). The multimodal approach to writing enables writers to have more choices for making and representing meanings (Jewitt, 2006). Writing texts has become a matter of composing through available designs, which translates into the notion of writing as designing (New London Group, 1996). Design refers to how communicators exploit the resources that are available at a given moment in a specific communicational environment to accomplish their objectives as sign makers (Jewitt, 2008). Therefore, according to Serafini (2012), “the concept of design involved the transformation, not replication, of available designs, suggesting that meaning is constructed anew in each act of reading.
(interpreting) or authoring (producing) texts, while at the same time reconstructing and renegotiating the reader’s identity” (p.158). The process of designing available modes of representation is not only a matter of individual choice but is also a representation of cultural, social, and discursive values and norms. Within this context, research questions 3 and 4 were designed to investigate the students’ composition of multimodal projects enacted at MCS through the lens of a new literacy paradigm: multiliteracies.

The research participants were able to express their literate identities as writers through the multimodal composition by actively drawing on their out of school lives (resources), such as their border crossing experiences of life in America, everyday cultural practices, multimodal resources, and the inquiry process itself. Through reading and discussing multicultural literature in classroom, they could see themselves as main characters in their own stories and begin to place the people in their lives around themselves with a new perspective (Garcia and Gaddes, 2012). Thus, they came to value their unique transitional experiences and built upon them for their projects. John eagerly approached his project about stereotypes, drawing on his local experiences with peers in his school life; Inhee used her authentic experiences by building on her border crossing experiences with making friends in the U.S, which was a big issue for her transitional American life; and Jessica brought in her new experiences in the U.S. with the dual identities her Korean-American church friends faced. These types of culturally responsive reading and writing engagement led to enacting a sense of agency in their own cultural worlds (Holland et al, 1998). Further, in the composing process, their composing of the project provided a space to recognize social and cultural differences in their positioning in Korea and the U.S. and bring to
fruition such transnational perspectives. These ways of drawing on their border crossing experiences and transnational perspective enabled them to invest in their project, thus constructing their literate identities in a creative and active way (Garcia and Gaddes, 2012; Sanchez, 2007).

Also, during the project, the participants integrated their everyday cultural practices into the project, which led them to be engaged learners. For example, John was able to engage in his favorite out of school literacy practices, such as listening to music from Youtube, surfing the websites he liked, and watching marvelous images from Youtube, all of which were integrated into designing his project.

In addition, the participants constructed literate identities as designers by using multimodal resources. Available modes as design elements allow individuals to create a variety of meaning making forms in relation to the individual identities to which these forms are affiliated. For example, using his hip-hop genre music to convey his feelings for the topic and selecting his favorite images (the choice of North Dakota gang signs, McDonald images) based on personal experience to convey the content of the stereotypes he identified, John was able to author an identity for meaning making. Further, orchestrating multimodality such as images, words, music and special effects (sequence, bouncing, and animation effects), John was able to author an identity in very powerful ways through his multimodal composition. Sometimes, John’s orchestrating of multimodality also complemented his weak proficiency of English, which played a role in authoring an identity. Inhee was able to represent her voice through three images in the project. Considering that her voice was not represented anywhere in the language (English)
in the project, this was especially meaningful for her. This was markedly different from her ESL school work, which did not provide an opportunity to speak her voice. Extending the process of composing into multimodality allowed Inhee to shift her school identity away from a struggling learner to that of a writer.

What was notable was that while John and Inhee represented an author identity through multimodal resources as meaning making, Jessica did not seem to strongly develop an author identity through them. This reflects tensions in implementing multimodal composition in the classroom. Similarly, several studies (Mattewan, Blight, & Davie, 2004; Moss, 2006; Shin, & Cimasko, 2008; Tan & McWilliam, 2009) pointed out educational challenges that arose as multiliteracies pedagogies encountered conventional institutional beliefs and practices in mainstream schooling. In particular, the findings of Shin and Cimasko (2008), which pointed out that some of the students in a college ESL composition class tended to use predominantly linguistic modes in multimodal compositions, were aligned with Jessica’s tendency in multimodal composing.

Instead of using multimodal resources, Jessica was able to construct her literate identities through the inquiry process itself. She recognized communities (e.g., church and MCS community center) as sources of inspiration, knowledge, and research for the composing process. During the interview, as Jessica heard about Lauren’s (Korean adoptee) identity struggles, she was able to understand the seemingly complicated identity issue, which was likely reviewing her own as well and may have been gaining additional and beneficial perspectives on the transitional process she was engaged in.
The interrelationship between multimodal composition and the development of literate identities was consistent with that found in other studies (Hull & Kats, 2006; Jocson, 2006; Nelson, 2006; Skinner & Hagood, 2008; Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010; Ware & Warschauer, 2005). In particular, my findings showed how the in-between perspectives of transitional students enabled them to explore social issues important to them and construct their literate identities within a multimodal composition. This study also suggests that implementation of multimodal literacies in educational settings lends itself to several tensions and may be a complicated issue. Going back to the overarching question, transitional Korean students engaged multimodal composition in another context, that is, the community context. This extending process of composing into the research participants’ heritage and identities allowed them to construct their identities as an engaged transitional writer.

4. How do they develop academic knowledge and English through multiliteracies processes and engagement?

Engaging in their multimodal projects, the participants developed certain kinds of academic knowledge. Through the pre-lesson activity (reading the book, Yankee Girl) of the multimodal project, they developed a sense of connection between the text and the reader. This allowed readers to make use of their transitional experiences, their language, and their culture in the interpretation, analysis, and discussion of the literature through oral discussion and validated their identities as diverse individuals in a multilingual, multicultural world. Likewise, this transaction enabled them to frame social issues, enacting their sense of agency in their own cultural worlds (Holland et al, 1998). For
example, Jessica and Inhee critically framed their transitional experiences or their own issues as transitional students according to research questions by directly posing questions, while John did so by telling his school peers’ story and his own story. Through the research, Jessica was perhaps vicariously looking at herself and her own answers to the questions she posed; Inhee organized and conceptualized her findings in language and culture; and John needed to think about how his multimodal choice fit the needs of his audience and the project. Also, they were required to arrange and display all of their research practices according to a standard academic format of introduction, body, and conclusion (academic discourses), which enabled them to learn and practice the notion of each (in case of Inhee, this was more effective) and organization. Through the research, they were able to act on the world by conveying an important social message and evoking social change. These critical engagements are essential elements of academic work. They also built skills—research, presentation, time management, ways of collecting and organizing digital media—and was able to draw on their resources (e.g., music, technology, social skills). In particular, the multimodal project enabled each research participant to draw on his or her different levels of knowledge and expertise in the contexts of their world that were embedded in their social and cultural practices. This helped them to represent an important part of their identity as a teenager, a boy or a girl, and a transitional Korean student as they were constructing academic knowledge. Moreover, the multimodal project helped them read their world and become critically literate. For example, Jessica and Inhee critically framed their transitional experiences or their own issues as transitional students according to research questions by directly posing questions, while John did so by telling his school
peers’ story and his own story. Through the research, Jessica was perhaps vicariously looking at herself and her own answers to the questions she posed; Inhee organized and conceptualized her findings in language and culture; and John needed to think about how his multimodal choice fit the needs of his audience and the project. Also, they were required to arrange and display all of their research practices according to a standard academic format of introduction, body, and conclusion (academic discourses), which enabled them to learn and practice the notion of each (in case of Inhee, this was more effective) and organization. Through the research, they were able to act on the world by conveying an important social message and evoking social change. These critical engagements are essential elements of academic work. In addition, multimodal composing allowed the participants to gain a more in-depth rhetorical function of texts, image, and sound in various modes. This enabled them have the opportunity to convey their meanings and persuade the audience. This way of developing understanding of rhetoric can enhance a sense of audience awareness while also building digital composing skills.

In terms of learning English, the multimodal project practices may offer ELL students the possibility of challenging assumptions about dominant ideologies of English. The research participants were exposed to English throughout the composing process (e.g. interviewing and composing in English), but all of them were barely concerned about their English skills and more focused on their meaning making, since texts and language are used within everyday life to construct meaning (Beach & Myers, 2001). Moreover, interaction with people in communities in English through interviews (e.g., Jessica and Inhee) provided a window into social relations and learning opportunities (Norton &
Vanderheyden, 2004). For example, Jessica grounded the social issue she addressed in real-life practices in the community context through an interview with a Korean-American adoptee who struggled with an identity issue. Further, Wilson, Chavez, and Anders (2012) asserted that “language is a way for people to understand and to connect with each other, a medium of communication that is intimately linked with one’s personal and cultural history and sense of self” (p. 374). Hence, a language (English) is not simply a set of grammatical structures and words whose meaning must be learned. Therefore, the participants’ use of English for the multimodal project is notable in that they used (learned) English as they reflected on and recreated their transitional lives and identities via multimodal composing. In other words, English was a mode of learning rather than a mode of expression. This way of learning English through literacy is also aligned with Harklau’s (2002) contention that reading and writing, that is, literacy should be considered in secondary school classrooms as central to the second language acquisition process, which historically focused mainly on spoken language and spoken interaction approach (e.g., face to face interactions) rather than writing.

As the findings have revealed, the students used text for communicating, discovering, reflecting, and critiquing. They were literate in a multiliteracies sense, in that they drew on a range of knowledge and contexts from many disciplines, as well as on multiple modes of communication (The New London Group, 1996). In this respect, multimodal composing can be a powerful space for being multiliterate, linking academic literacy, multimodal literacies, and English learning (second language acquisition). This would also describe the overarching question- literacy engagement of transitional Korean adolescents as they
engaged multiltieracies in the community context. Previous studies (Danzak, 2011; Hagood, Skinner, Venters, & Yelm, 2009; Hepple, Sockhill, Tan, & Alford, 2014; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Wilson, Chavez, & Anders, 2012; Yang & Wu, 2012) similarly found that multimodal texts provide a context in which students build academic skills and their understanding of academic unit contents within a frame of multiliteracies. In these studies, digital storytelling, graphic stories, claymations, and podcasts were useful tools of building academic skills (e.g., speaking, listening, reading, writing, critical thinking) and academic contents. The current study, focusing on the multimodal project in an inquiry driven fashion revolving around social issues for transitional students, is unique and contributes to various understandings of what the new literacies classroom might look like. My study suggests that the multimodal modal project might be more effective for transitional students who struggle to reconcile different ways of knowing, doing, reading, writing, and talking with those that are privileged in their classrooms. Further, considering that they come to the classroom with their various repertoires and means of expressions, there are many creative ways of linking academic discourse and out of school.

What the answers to this research question, and to the other three discussed earlier, contribute to scholarship on the topic of this study is addressed at the end of this chapter in the section called “Closing Comments and Contributions of the Study.”

**Pedagogical Implications**

The findings in this study suggest pedagogical implications for ESL teachers, ESL policy makers, and ESL or literacy researchers. First, this study demonstrated that these transitional students used their literacy practices outside school to identify, represent, and
construct their multiple group identities and individual identities, to express their worlds, to cope with their realities and emotions, to shift their positioning and enhance their circumstances, to create ties between the old and new world, to retain links to their Korean heritage and identity, and to improve their English. As for transitional Korean adolescents, their out of school literacy practices were tools of power that allowed them to construct a particular social space for themselves between two cultures. As Ortmeier-Hooper and Enright (2011) argued, they, as adolescent L2 writers, do not see themselves as solely defined by their academic writing experiences. Literacy-rich activities and ever-expanding uses of reading and writing for varied audiences can shape their identities as writers. Valuing and understanding how they create meaning from their everyday literacy practices can be used to engage them in the classroom. In particular, reading and writing could be a way for them to express their thoughts, vent their emotions, to forge their multiple identities, and to understand their new position and relationship with others. We need to consider ways to acknowledge and use such practices in pedagogy and curricula and support students to construct and hold on to enduring literate identities and to become powerful readers and writers while they are in school and beyond. For example, although the participants in my study were informed of the writing competition by the school bilingual aide, school was not directly involved in this activity. However, this out of school literacy event would be a good resource for ESL teacher to make a more meaningful activity for transitional students. The students can read Korean folktales in English in ESL resource class and have a discussion about them with the teacher and peers. This would be an opportunity to navigate their own understanding of the story and relationships between the
folk tales and their lives. Also, this would capture their moments of life and extend beyond the cultural domain into questions about coming of age, fear, loneliness, relationships, and love. In this process, they can articulate their own unique perspectives. Next, they can write a reflective journal and apply it to various genres such as poems and essays. This enables them to use writing as a form of expression of one’s knowledge and subjectivities. In this way, their out of school literacy practices can serve as a bridge to school learning.

Another example is the use of multiliteracies, such as multimodal and hybrid forms of literacy, for writers transitioning from L1 to L2. The participants used various literate genres such as comics, song lyrics, bible verses, essays, and diaries (in the case of Jessica) and various multimodal forms such as video blogs and an animated cartoon website (in case of John) and produced enriched cultural forms mixed with languages and cultures (e.g., online discussion on a Korean celebrity and Korean family related words with Korean Romanization for Inhee, and a hybrid form of Facebook name for John). Fu (2007) argued that “if we don’t value what and how ELLs write in their transitional stages-and only aim at teaching them to write correctly or learn standard English-these students won’t develop into writers with depth of thinking and voices of their own” (p. 231). In this respect, the multiple forms of communication can be developed into various writings at school such as journal writing, creative writing, and writing for project. This helps ELLs to develop positive affective and epistemic stances toward writing, thus contributing to authorial agency.

Second, the repertoires of transitional students such as L1, L1 cultural knowledge, and border crossing experiences, should be reframed. In an age of globalization and extensive
transborder relations, the research participants had various transborder and cross-cultural experiences and were significantly exposed to multimodality and hybrid cultures through online literacy practices. Likewise, Luke (2003) argues “literacy is as part of students’ tool kits for understanding, critiquing, and engaging with the global flows of images and texts that they confront daily” (p.20). That is, the constant flow between the global and local requires a more dynamic, multiple, and flexible lens on literacy. Accordingly, the research participants’ L1 and L1 cultural knowledge should be understood from a global citizenship perspective as multilingual and multiliterate. In this study, their L1 and L1 culture were essential foundations for their literacy development in L2 and new productions of culture via online literacy practices. Their home background should be treated “not as a deficit but as affecting deep levels of identity and epistemology, and thereby the stance that learners take with respect to the ‘new’ literacy practices of the educational setting” (Street, 2005, p.4).

Third, we may reconsider ESL pedagogy to better address the realities of ELLs. For the participants in this study, the apparently somewhat tightly defined notion of language and literacy in school, such as focusing solely on language practices and discrete skills and a linear view of literacy development, did not provide them with enough opportunities to engage in a wide range of productive literacy practices as active learners. The danger of viewing literacy from such a view was that it might look at and evaluate ELLs from a limited view (Enright, 2011) and as a result may influence their stigmatization. The ESL curriculum designed to develop basic academic and language skills may not be very helpful to ELLs in certain contexts. More various, effective instructional approaches designed
specifically to accommodate the unique needs of this population are necessary. One of the suggestions would be reading and writing in connection to learning of content knowledge with the use of multiliteracies pedagogy. Wilcox and Jeffrey (2015) pointed out in the study of high school ELL students that source-based writing tasks with self-selected topics, historical documents, or research reports that were cognitively demanding and on topics of interest were affectively engaging and provided opportunities to express understanding of content” (p. 54). These suggestions can be more effective along with the pedagogy of multiliteracies for ELLs. Furthermore, the integration of ELLs’ academic essays into multimodal composition and the use of multimodal composition for ELL beginner level students, who have a great gap between their knowledge and English proficiency, would be effective.

Fourth, although most of the research has shown successful cases of the use of multimodal literacies, implementing them in the classroom may be conflicting, as shown in this study as well as several studies (e.g., Matthewman, Blight, & Davie, 2004; Moss, 2006; Shin, & Cimasko, 2008; Tan & McWilliam, 2009). Since the classroom is tied to traditional teaching objectives and traditional values, pedagogic challenges and continuous empirical study should be necessary. In particular, the studies on English language learners and multimodal pedagogy have indicated that multimodal pedagogy can be a powerful tool to integrate ESL students’ perspectives, prior learning experiences, and identities and to promote alternative ways of reading, interpreting, and text composing. Despite this view, there has been a dearth of research and of pedagogical endeavors in designing and implementing as well as testing a multimodal literacies curriculum for ELLs. Designing
and implementing various pedagogical models and practices associated with information and multimedia technologies should be developed in a culturally relevant way. Also, the application of the theory of the New Literacy Studies to diverse ESL educational contexts is necessary. It is equally important to develop the new models of assessment associated with new literacies.

Fifth, the gender issue should be considered. As Inhee and Jessica demonstrated, girls are likely to be inclined to write when they receive emotional support and express themselves and reinforce their gender identities, especially by sharing their writing with the same gender. This lends insights into ways to draw adolescent girls into literacy and instructional activities for literate development and expression. For example, in the ESL classroom, they should be allowed to target their audience and their topics of importance to adolescent girls and write about their concerns and take up in their writing the social issues and problems that impact young women. Small groups formed by gender can create safe spaces for adolescent girls to participate in the writing process and share and appreciate each other’s writing. Equally important are literacy practices of adolescent boys. As John showed, boys tend to read and write when they feel accomplished. For example, creating contexts that encourage problem solving, such as inquiry based approach—the process of gathering and developing information analyzing it, and organizing it in an effort to figure out (as this study showed), could be effective.

Limitations of the Study

First, this study examined transitional students’ literacy practices in three contexts: school, home, and a community center. I collected the data relative to out of school
activities by visiting their homes regularly and working on their project with them at the community center. However, to collect the data relative to school based literacy activities, I only used their artifacts and interviews rather than observing actual classroom sessions. Therefore, I depended on their subjective views for an understanding of their school literacy practices, even though I attempted to triangulate data with their school artifacts. If I had access to their schools, observe them, and interview their ESL teachers, my research could have produced richer data.

Second, as for selecting research participants, I was able to collect various language proficiency levels of ELL students and various genders (two females and one male). However, all of them were motivated to obtain good grades (over 3.5) and strongly recognized the influence of their school work on their future, even though there were somewhat individual differences. All of their mothers put high value on education and pressured their children on school work. In this respect, my research might not be generalized to all of the transitional Korean adolescents in the U.S. However, I do not attempt to generalize several transitional Korean adolescents as a representative of all transitional Korean adolescents in the U.S., but instead provide rich descriptions of each adolescent. Therefore, readers recognize that the findings can be used to challenge researchers and educators to think differently about literacy theory, classroom teaching, and ESL pedagogy.

Another limitation of the study is its focus on key literacy events rather than the entire range of activities experienced by the participants. The focus on key literacy events created certain important benefits for the study by allowing for a very close inspection of
them, but this also meant ignoring other events that, while minor in nature, were nevertheless part of the participants’ literacy experiences.

Fourth, as a researcher, the multimodal project at MCS was an experimental implementation of a multiliteracies curriculum as demanded by literacy scholars in an attempt to connect in and out of school practices and the global and local for the digital world of the 21st century. The context of MCS was where youth were supported in their experimentation with multimodal practices without the testing and curricular imperatives of schools. However, if the multimodal project had been implemented at school, the results may have been different. For example, in the case of Jessica, who seriously considered school grades, if the use of multimodality had been assessed and reflected in school grades, her investment in it could have been different.

Fifth, the interpretation of the multimodal project data can raise an issue related to reliability, particularly since I was the creator of the project, the teacher for the course in which it was completed, and the sole analyst of what the students produced. Hence, I was deeply invested in that project, and so my relationship with that source of data was especially complex. It is possible that another researcher would analyze the students’ projects differently.

Finally, another limitation is related to the truthfulness of data. The interview data is limited by the participants' ability to verbalize and to access information from memories. There may be discrepancies between the participants’ attitudes and behavior; reported attitudes and behaviors may differ from actual attitudes and behaviors. Memories of the narrators might not tell the truth so much as try to justify their own actions to an audience.
The narrators tend to tell the truth as they see it in the present tense. That is, the truth they see in the present tense might not correspond to the truth they felt in the past. The perceptions of events are framed in terms of the participant's present time perceptions. However, I attempted to resolve the discrepancies by triangulating the data through interviews, observations, and relevant documents and artifacts. Also, when I interviewed Jessica’s mother, her mother seemed to be afraid that her family’s negative aspects might be exposed in the research. For example, her mother’s academic pressure on Jessica was not conveyed through the interview, which was different from what Jessica sometimes said about her mother. In addition, her mother knew the research method because she had an experience with producing a thesis in graduate school. While I was interviewing her, she asked me about the research method and was reluctant to talk about many of my questions and replied to them only with short answers. The interview with her mother played a role in the triangulation of my other data to ensure trustworthiness, but did not directly influence my understanding of Jessica. This might affect my research to some extent.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

This study provides several helpful recommendations for further research. First, collecting data related to multimodal projects, I noticed potential benefits of digital storytelling, which was used by one of my students: a shift in focus from form to meaning, an expanded understanding and appreciation of the writing process, high levels of engagement and emotional investment, and a strong authorial voice. Due to the limited length of the dissertation, I did not explore this issue. This is an area which merits for
further inquiry. Similarly, it would be worthwhile to explore how technology changes adolescents’ L2 composing processes and how L2 writers use multimodalities to compensate for gaps in language proficiency. Another suggestion is related to teachers’ professional development concerning technology use. For example, it would be worthwhile to investigate how teachers’ underlying theoretical perspectives of language learning are intertwined with their use of multimodal technologies in the classroom.

Also, quantitative research method should be necessary for multimodal studies. Most of the multimodal studies have been conducted through case studies. In fact, case studies provide a rich portrait of the multimodal composing process and have been a dominant research method in multimodal literacies research. In particular, identity issues and transformative learning related to multimodal literacies can be powerfully explored through case studies. On the other hand, the studies through a quantitative research approach can show the effect of multimodal literacies on academic skills, such as message comprehension, writing, and critical thinking skills, and the understanding of academic unit content. For example, Yan and Wu (2012) studied the impact of digital storytelling on the academic achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation of senior high school EFL students through the use of a year-long experimental study. The results of the study can quantitate the improvement of academic skills and the understanding of academic unit content. By combining the quantitative and qualitative methods, we can have a more complete composite of students’ learning with multimodal literacies.

Third, as this study showed, as literacy practices moved to another setting with the participants, they showed a complex picture regarding mobility. There is a need for a
further examination of various cases of literacies on the move within the relations of power that grant or withhold value. More specifically, a study centering on cross-cultural movement between spaces and languages, how social structure influences ELL students’ literacy practices, and how to negotiate them is worthwhile in order to understand ELL students and their literacy.

**Closing Comments on the Study’s Contributions**

This study has expanded the notions of literacy as one envisioning the connections among literacy, culture, identity, and power and developed a more comprehensive understanding of transitional students. First, through social approaches to literacy practices in school, home, and community, this study demonstrates that academic literacy is only one aspect of an individual’s repertoire of literacy practices, and their various literacy practices outside of school inform their understanding of text and the world and their potential to be competent in their ways of using their literacy practices from the perspective of their own unique language and literacy backgrounds. As this research showed, the participants’ out of school context was where their various literacy practices flourished, their identities were mostly constructed, and their learning occurred in a way somewhat different from school. Moreover, recognizing the importance of multiliteracies in this era, this study examined multiliteracies practices in the community center and demonstrated the possibility for implementing them in an educational setting, exploring the connections between their in and out of school literacy practices. This suggests a new way of understanding transitional adolescents’ literate lives both within and outside of school and
the local and global contexts in this era and provides a new direction toward how to implement new literacy in the classroom.

Second, my research sheds new light on transitional students. In the era of globalization, they have more chances to move across geographical borders with various purposes. Their relationship with their home country is stronger than that of the other populations, and they are involved with both their home country and host country to various extents. In particular, informal online communication such as social networking sites may afford them opportunities to navigate across language varieties, invoke and display multiple identities, assert agency, and highlight their cultural values” (Chang & Sperling, 2014). Experiencing changes as they participate in literacy practices in different contexts and transnational borders, they juggled two cultures (in and out of school cultures and Korean and American cultures), sometimes with discomfort and frustration, other times with exhilaration. This enabled me to re-conceptualize transitional students in this era of globalization.
REFERENCES


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Moje, E.B. (2000). To be part of the story: The literacy practices of gangsta adolescents. Teachers College Record, 10, 651-690.


APPENDIX A:

John’s I-log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>The Black Pearl</td>
<td>Scott O’Dell</td>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>When I was young, I liked to go to the beach and play there. Because I could swim there and make a sand castle. But now I like put more in the beach because summer is here.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
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<td>Day 3</td>
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<td>Day 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Connection: I have never got to the beach. But I tried to fish but it was too hard to catch a fish. I didn’t even get one so I gave up and it wasn’t even the day.

*Connection: Revisited the beach and asked how did you get to the beach? Him and his mom go to America and that not to be 20*
APPENDIX B:

John’s Favorite Webtoon Site, The Sound of Mind
APPENDIX C:

Inhee’s Worksheet in ESL Class

1. Choose the correct word.
   Which ant is the worker ant?
   O Which  O Witch

2. Rewrite the sentence in the past tense.
   The ant carries a heavy crumb.
   The ant carried a heavy crumb

3. Edit the sentence for punctuation.
   I can’t said the ant

4. Read and predict what will happen next.
   Tomas and his friends spread the picnic cloth
   on the ground. They organized the picnic that
   Mom had sent. There were sandwiches, chips,
   and yummy cookies. Just as the boys sat down
   to eat a lone ant struggled across the cloth and
   then hustled through the grass to its ant hill.
   The ants of ants will coming to their picnic

5. Study the web.
   Using some of the information on the web,
   write a sentence personifying an ant.
   Ant took care their child carefully
APPENDIX D:

Inhee’s I-log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date H/DD</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Wonder</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Background Knowledge</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Text to Self</th>
<th>Text to Text</th>
<th>Text to World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DAY 1 H/3</td>
<td>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Adventure (Fiction)</td>
<td>Summary: Tom is shot from Aunt Polly. When Aunt Polly found Tom, he blamed Aunt Polly. Aunt Polly is so disappointed and is in tears. Because she knows Tom needs her more than ever. But she always suffers from Tom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/16/2010</td>
<td>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Adventure (F.)</td>
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<td>DAY 2 H/3</td>
<td>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Adventure (F.)</td>
<td>Tom likes adventures. However, Aunt Polly doesn’t like Tom. Tom is smart and he tricks people very well. Tom knows what is the deal.</td>
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<td>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Adventure (F.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAY 3 H/5</td>
<td>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Adventure (F.)</td>
<td>Usually Tom the kid in the church school. His name is Becky. New chapter: Tom and Becky go to find themselves and they end up going out with each other.</td>
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<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Adventure (F.)</td>
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<td>DAY 4 H/6</td>
<td>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Adventure (F.)</td>
<td>Tom try to memorized bible verse, but he gave up. Because he knows that memorized bible verse is hard for Tom.</td>
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<td>2/19/2010</td>
<td>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Adventure (F.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAY 5/DAY 6</td>
<td>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Adventure (F.)</td>
<td>Questions: When they have service Tom’s pinch bug is pinch Tom’s hand. And run away from Tom. The bug went to puppy then again you see him because of that happen service over earth. Why? Tom was...</td>
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APPENDIX E:

The Flyer of Sejong Writing Competition

2010 Sejong Writing Competition
(in collaboration with the Harvard University Korea Institute)

1. Mission: The goals of the Sejong Writing Competition are to discover children and young adults talented in writing and to encourage them to learn and write about Korea and its culture. Through this writing competition we hope to increase the awareness and understanding of Korea's cultural heritage amongst the younger generations growing up in the United States so as to promote harmony among people of various ethnic backgrounds and bridge Asian and Western cultures.

2. Eligibility: This competition is open to all pre-college students residing in the US regardless of ethnic background.

3. Essay competition: Korean folk tales
   Korea has a rich tradition of storytelling, and its folk tales reflect important aspects of its history and culture. Many of the old historical texts are full of local legends and myths. Folk tales can be entertaining and educational, but they can also strike a deep chord in our personal lives, and many Korean folk tales demonstrate the universal tragedies and triumphs of daily life in the family.
   Divisions: Senior – grades 9-12
   Junior – up to grade 8
   Topics: Each topic refers to the list of Korean folk tales found on our website at www.SejongCulturalSociety.org
   When writing your essay, please be sure to include specific references to the tale(s) you chose to write about. In your analysis or interpretation of the stories, you may also want to make references to your own life experiences.
   A. Select one folk tale from the list and explain your interpretation of the story. What do you think it means?
   B. If you could change one of these folk tales, what would you change and why? Do you disagree with something the tale is trying to convey?
   C. Which Korean folk tale character do you relate to best? Why? Would you make the same decisions as that character?

4. Poetry competition: Sijo writing (in collaboration with the Harvard University Korea Institute)
   Sijo is a traditional Korean form of poetry, similar to haiku. Using the sijo form, write one poem in English on a topic of your choice. For examples and more information about sijo, please visit our website.
   One entry per student is permitted.
   Divisions: One division open to students in grade 12 or younger

5. Prizes: The winners' works may be published in the Korea Times Chicago and the Korean Quarterly and "Azelea: A Journal of Korean Literature and Culture" published by the Korea Institute at Harvard University.
   - Essay senior division: First ($500), Second ($400), Third ($300)
   - Essay junior division: First ($300), Second ($200), Third ($100)
   - Sijo category: First ($300), Second ($200), Third ($100)
   - Friends of Pacific Rim Award for selected essays and sijo ($50 each)

6. Basic guidelines: (please visit our website for details)
   - Both essay and sijo must be written in English.
   - The contestant's entry and application must be sent as email attachments to writing@SejongCulturalSociety.org.
   - The contestant's name cannot be written in the document (i.e., it must be written anonymously).

* Submission deadline: April 30th, 2016. Entries must arrive on or before midnight (CST) by mail.
* The application form and additional information can be found at www.SejongCulturalSociety.org.

Any questions should be emailed to writing@SejongCulturalSociety.org.

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