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Early Second Language Reading Development: An Extension of Home Literacy Model

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Abstract

There is "surprisingly" little evidence on the impact of language minority parents on their children and on the links between family literacy experience and literacy outcomes (August & Shanahan, 2008). This participant observation case study demonstrates a Chinese-American family's efforts in this regard. The detailed descriptions of how an ESL child quickly became able to read in English and receive grade-level reading instruction provide evidence of language minority parents' contributions to early second language (L2) reading acquisition. The depictions of when, what, and how this immigrant family became involved with and intervened in their child's L2 reading complement the quantitative design of Home Literacy Model and fill research gaps in L2 literacy by informing a minority child's complete process from "learning to read" to "reading to learn". Some insider's suggestions to language minority parents, schools, and home literacy practitioners regarding early L2 reading enhancement are also provided.

Keywords: Second language reading; Home literacy; ESL

1. Introduction

Since the shift of children's literacy theories from formal cognitive views to the sociocultural paradigm in 1980s, more and more researchers have set their sights on the informal settings of literacy development— the home literacy environment (Hess, Holloway, Price, & Dickson, 1982). Literacy practice as it occurs in the home is considered as a strong correlation with literacy and language development (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). Research results in home literacy demonstrate that children whose parents actively involve themselves in their children's literacy activities (e.g. storybook reading) or engage in direct teaching of literacy skills (e.g. sound-letter recognition) have higher scores in reading and writing and attain higher learning outcomes (Sénéchal & LeFervre, 2001, 2002; Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

Apart from the importance of home literacy environment and family literacy activities to children's early literacy development, researchers suggest that school teachers or communities provide training sessions for parents who do not know what to do at home to enhance their children's literacy skills (e.g. Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2001; Carlson, 1998; Pahl & Kelly, 2005). Other

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researchers embrace the sociocultural approach to family practice (e.g. Auerbach, 1989), trying to build family literacy practice on family strengths and incorporate native cultures in fostering multilingual parents' family literacy strategies. Faires, Nichols, and Rickelman's (2000) empirical study suggested that if parents are provided training and observe teachers' reading instruction and intervening strategies, their first-grade children's reading levels can be increased. They stated that while planning reading curriculum for students, teachers could design a training program for parents who were interested in learning reading instruction so that they themselves could use it at home to help their children learn. When parents learn these teaching strategies it is especially beneficial to children who are lower-level readers.

Additionally, one goal of schooling is to ensure that children become capable and fluent readers quickly. This calls for precise descriptions and an understanding of how literacy settings (e.g. school, day care, and home) produce/influence/optimize the development of young readers so that educators are able to design appropriate intervention programs targeting children at risk for reading difficulties or delays (Sénéchal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant & Colton, 2001). However, in respect to the home literacy experience itself, the crucial component of children's literacy development, little is known about the role of parent teaching as it occurs at home (August & Shanahan, 2008; Sénéchal et al., 2001). Although the oft-cited notions of reading to children or shared reading have long been studied, the significant contribution of parent tutoring (letter-sound knowledge) is comparatively less studied (Sénéchal, 2006). Even more scant is research on the language minority parents' role in second language (L2) literacy (August & Shanahan, 2008).

Echoing these research insights, our contention is that compared to the extensive studies of home literacy in first language acquisition and some descriptive studies in L2 family literacy, empirical evidence is required to better understand the contribution of immigrant parents to their children's early L2 reading development upon the onset of formal L2 schooling. The purpose of this paper is to describe a Chinese-American family's home literacy activities that enhanced their child's early L2 reading development. Their evidence-based home literacy practices are intended to (1) inform the audience of a new immigrant child's home literacy experiences and how she developed from a non-English reader to a competent one within a short period of time (i.e. impact of parental home literacy involvement), and (2) to verify the effects of Home Literacy Model (Sénéchal, 2006) in another language group (in this case, a Chinese-speaking family). Some of this family's practical strategies would be useful for newly arrived immigrant parents, school teachers, and L2 literacy practitioners.

2. Home Literacy Model

The Home Literacy Model developed from a five-year longitudinal study by Sénéchal and colleagues with white middle-class samples (Sénéchal, 2006; Sénéchal & LeFervre, 2001, 2002; Sénéchal et al., 2001; Sénéchal, LeFervre, Thomas & Colton, 1998). According to this model, the types and aspects of parents' home literacy involvement are positively related to the development of children's emergent literacy consisting of a) conceptual knowledge about literacy (e.g. learning to read), b) procedural knowledge about reading and writing (e.g. letter knowledge), c) vocabulary and narrative, and d) metalinguistic skills (e.g. phonological awareness). The effects of parental home literacy involvement are mediated through children's vocabulary development, emergent literacy skills, and written-language skills. Specifically, most parents engage children with two types of home literacy experiences: storybook reading and instructions about letter-sound correspondence. Storybook reading that focuses on the meaning contained in stories is an informal literacy experience whereas parents' explicit teaching of how to read and write

words and letters are formal literacy activities. Both types of early home literacy activities are beneficial to children's receptive language and emergent literacy and have bi-directional relations with phonological awareness. This increased phonological awareness will in turn facilitate the child's further learning in literacy, such as correct spelling and decoding of vocabulary in reading comprehension, etc.

The significance of the Home Literacy Model is that it may guide the design of interventions on the emergent conceptual knowledge (i.e. knowledge of functions of print or self-perception as readers) of children who have limited procedural knowledge (i.e., letter-sound knowledge) about literacy. Meanwhile, interventions targeting children's procedural knowledge about literacy may be helpful to enhance children's phonological awareness and reading acquisition, the key elements that impact alphabetic knowledge, reading fluency, reading comprehension and spelling in later grades (i.e. grade 1, grade 3, and grade 4).

One thing notable in the Home Literacy Model is that all the studies involved were quantitative in nature and were self-reported by Anglophone-speaking parents (i.e. monolingual English or bilingual French-English speaking). The measurements of the research designs have decided that they lack detailed descriptions of when, what, and how parents taught literacy skills to young children. Furthermore, their studies did not involve immigrant children who learn English as a second language (ESL) and have immediate second language literacy demands from their teachers. Regarding these cases, the current study aims to extend the Home Literacy Model to two new aspects: (1) extending the examination of home literacy practice to a member of different linguistic group, a Chinese-American family, and (2) Extending the research mode and settings of Home Literacy Model to a naturalistic qualitative case study. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study utilizing the Home Literacy Model to exanimate the effects of non-Anglophone parents' home literacy practices. It is also the first of this kind to explore a newly arrived ESL student's L2 home literacy experiences. The rich qualitative data (e.g. parents' journals, standardized scores, and pupil progress reports) of this study will document a young ESL student's early L2 reading development, through the lens of the Home Literacy Model. The complexities of second language acquisition and the cultures of L2 home literacy environment will be important extensions to the Home Literacy Model developed by Sénéchal and colleagues. The extended Home Literacy Model will inform ESL/reading teachers and practitioners of a new immigrant family's effective literacy interventions when their child started learning English as a second language. Based on the Home Literacy Model, our working definition for ESL children's Home Literacy Model is that immigrant parents support their child's second language acquisition at home and foster their children's second language reading skills by informal storybook reading and formal literacy activities that impart knowledge about L2 literacy.

3. The Study

This study spanned three semesters from the beginning of a second grade ESL student's English language education to the semester after she exited the ESL program and received grade-level instruction in all subjects. Data were collected through her reading logs, test scores, teacher comments, and parent journals. The focus was how the parents involved/intervened in their young child's early L2 reading development when they first came to America, and the effects of that intervention. Specifically, this study will address the following questions:

1. What and how did the parents actually do at home to facilitate their young child's second language reading development upon arriving at the U.S.?
2. What are the effects of parental home literacy involvement on early second language reading development?

3. What are the implications for immigrant parents, reading teachers and literacy practitioners of ESL students?

The home literacy activities of this particular Chinese-American family will be a supplement to existing literature because many American teachers have wondered about Asian children's home literacy learning (Xu, 1999). Although there are several narrative studies of Chinese-American family literacy activities (e.g. Jiang, 1997; Li, 1999; Liu 2006; Wan, 2000), this evidence-based case study is the first of its kind that sheds light on the theory-based Home Literacy Model. This theoretical orientation characterizes the current study with more detailed strategies that features a new immigrant family's situated home literacy practice in their child's early L2 literacy. The portrayal of this linguistic minority family's home literacy practice and its impact on literacy outcomes will offer empirical evidence on the influence of sociocultural variables (e.g. language minority parents' potential contribution) in L2 literacy, which is largely neglected and surprisingly "underestimated" and "underutilized" by schools (August & Shanahan, 2008, p.9).

3.1 Context and Participants

The participants were the father (the first author), the mother (the second author), and Lingling (a pseudonym for the daughter). Like many educated Chinese parents, we read Chinese rhymes and picture books several times a day to Lingling even before she could talk. When Lingling was three years old, we brought her with us to Thailand after a job change. In Thailand, Lingling attended a PreK-6 private school run by Chinese-Thais. In this school, kindergarteners were immersed in Thai language all day. After first grade, every student received 2-hour Chinese instruction daily. When we left Thailand for America, Lingling was seven and half years old and had finished the first semester of second grade. She was able to write shopping lists in Hanyu Pinyin, the Romanized Chinese pronunciation and read all kinds of children's books (e.g. picture books or translated world famous children's literature) printed with Hanyu Pinyin. However, her ability to read Chinese characters was minimal since her first grade schooling was mainly in the Thai language. Her level of Thai proficiency, a shallow orthographic language, was near-native in spoken and first-grade level in reading and writing. Her knowledge of English was limited to the 26 letters of the English alphabet and certain associated words such as a-apple, b-boy, etc. She also knew a couple of English formulaic expressions such as "Good Morning!" "How are you?" "Goodbye!" and "Thank you!"

After we moved to America, we preferred to use our English names, Robert (the first author), Lisa (the second author), and Cathy (also a pseudonym) to communicate with English speaking interlocutors for the sake of smooth communication. In this article, we would also use these English names to refer to each person whenever involved. By the time of this study, Robert was a Ph.D. student in TESOL at an East Coast American university. Lisa held an MA in English and planned to pursue a Ph.D. in the same field after Robert finished his doctoral studies.

Lisa and Cathy joined Robert once Cathy had finished the first semester of second grade in Thailand (right before the Winter Break in America). After the New Year, Cathy entered a highly diverse public school as a second grader. Since Cathy was a nonnative English speaking student, she was designated as an ESL student and received ESL service in school in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002). After the placement test administered by the county's International Student Guidance Office, the coordinator told us: "she speaks no English" and therefore placed Cathy at ESL level one (the lowest possible) of the elementary school's ESL program. Like all ESL students in this school, Cathy received a pull-out ESL service, three times a

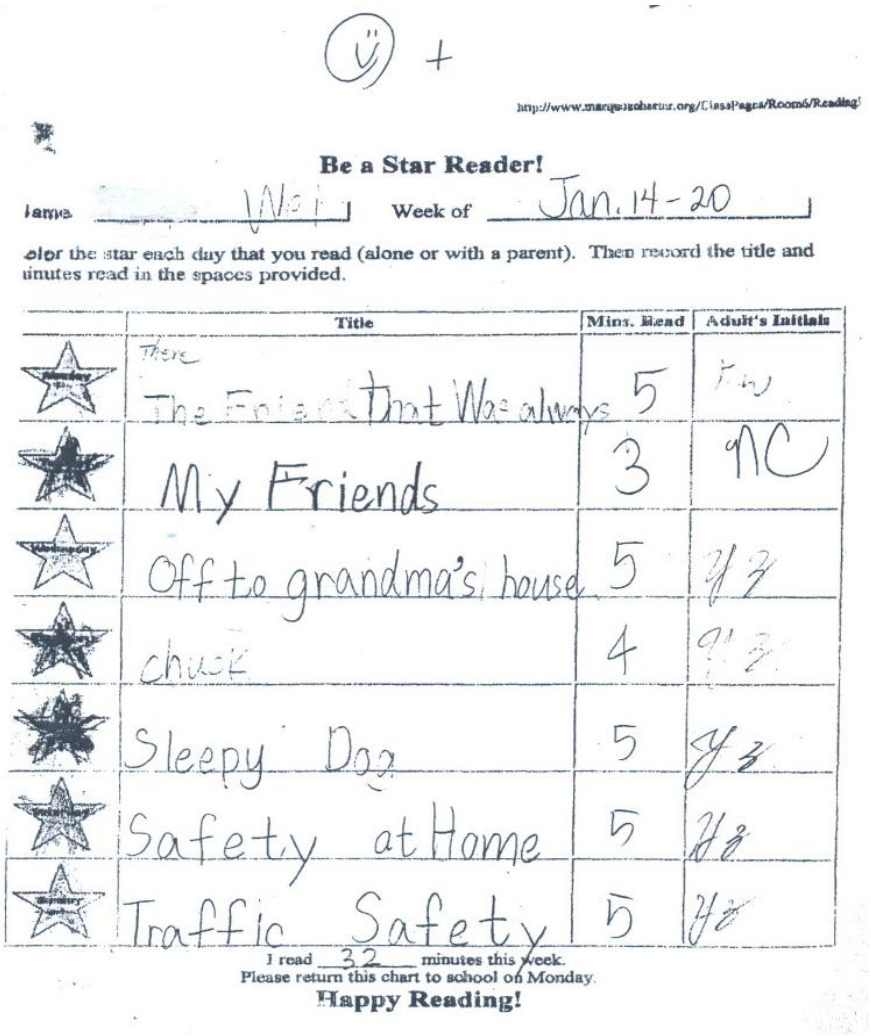
week, one hour each session. During the summer, Cathy attended the county-wide summer school for immigrant students who require English reinforcement. In the following fall semester, Cathy moved to a new elementary school due to a school district boundary change. At this new school, due to the English performance gap between Cathy and her ESL peers, the ESL program teachers categorized Cathy as an "Independent" ESL student, meaning no more routine pull-out ESL service for Cathy. Her ESL teachers saw her twice a month to examine her English progress. This Independent Study (i.e. also unofficial mainstreaming) did not last long. Three months later, after Cathy reached the competent level in the Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) for ESL students, she officially exited the ESL program. Since then, Cathy's reading skills developed dramatically and she achieved all *A*'s in the second and third semester.

In the whole process of Cathy's early English acquisition: exiting ESL in 10 months and achieving in grade-level subject learning within one year, we started with assisting her in reading English - partially because it was one of the mainstream classroom teachers' homework requirements, and partially because we believed reading was essential to her second language acquisition. In the following sessions, we will report with first-hand data how we accommodated Cathy's early L2 reading development under the framework of the Home Literacy Model, i.e. parents' informal and formal home literacy involvement at home.

3.2 L2 Home Literacy Activities

Before we came to the U.S., we read to or read together with Cathy Chinese storybooks every day, and Cathy read Thai storybooks alone. When Cathy started her formal English education, we felt that English acquisition was our family's first priority and continued with Chinese language book reading for only one semester.

Cathy's English reading started on the second week of American schooling when she needed to fulfill the reading homework. Cathy's Language Arts teacher distributed a weekly reading log form each Monday for students to record the readings they had over the week and required them to return the form on the next Monday. To help Cathy complete this homework, we consulted Cathy's Language Arts teacher, ESL teacher, and librarians as to what kind of books she should read. The teachers suggested borrowing some picture/story books for young children, not necessarily for second graders. The librarians in the public libraries suggested that we start from books with sight words. So, the first week of Cathy's reading log included simple books for kindergarteners, such as "*Safety at Home*" and "*Traffic Safety*"
(See Figure 1. Reading Log, Jan.14-20).



Be a Star Reader!

Name Wei Week of Jan. 14-20

Color the star each day that you read (alone or with a parent). Then record the title and minutes read in the spaces provided.

	Title	Mins. Read	Adult's Initials
	There The Friends That We always	5	Fw
	My Friends	3	MC
	Off to grandma's house	5	yz
	chuck	4	yz
	Sleepy Dog	5	yz
	Safety at Home	5	yz
	Traffic Safety	5	yz

I read 32 minutes this week.
Please return this chart to school on Monday.
Happy Reading!

Figure 1. *Reading Log, January 14-20*

For most of the time, the pictures illustrated in the picture books or storybooks did not make any sense to Cathy since she barely knew any of the words in the books and the pictures contained too much information about the new culture that she had had few chances to experience before. Cathy's English book "reading" in the very first weeks actually consisted of "listening" to our translation of the books. The focus was the meaning and cultures contained in the picture books. We translated every page of the books to Cathy and explained the culture embedded in the pictures to her. One month later, we felt Chinese should only serve as a transitional tool for Cathy to get a sense of reading English books. We needed to find a way to start her English reading. However, we encountered a dilemma here. To keep Cathy's spoken Chinese and to avoid influencing her spoken English with our Chinese accents (which we both retained in spite of the fact that we were English majors), we tried not to speak English with her at all unless it was absolutely necessary. How, then, could we have Cathy read English books without being influenced by our accents? We went to the public library for help. One librarian suggested borrowing picture books with audio tapes. She thought that in this way Cathy could develop the habit of reading while being exposed to authentic English pronunciation by native speakers at the same time. We were very excited to discover the existence of audio-books, a mode of reading instruction that we had never known before.

In February, we had Cathy listen to the first audio picture book. Before listening, we explained briefly in Chinese the content of each book and played the recordings together. We, however, learned a lesson as soon as we played the audio-books. Cathy did not know where the page was read and when to turn a page. She could not even catch the sentence "Please turn the page when you hear bell ring." We started teaching her the key words, "please", "page", and "bell". Gradually Cathy learned where to follow the story being read by the narrator and smiled at her parents whenever she heard the bell ring. She started making some sense of the cassettes! With the familiarity of audio-books, after March, when Cathy read/listened to these books, we required her to figure out the meaning of at least one word, one phrase, or one sentence by the time she finished a book. If she could not do so, then she read/listened to it again. Only when she still could not understand the meaning by reading for two times, could she ask for our help.

This form of storybook reading, explaining contents in Chinese and listening to the cassettes alone or together with parents, lasted for three months. After April, Cathy's English listening skills developed a little and she became interested in TV and video tapes. We stopped borrowing audio-books for Cathy but still had enough books to read together with her. Table 1 highlights some sample books Cathy read over the 16 weeks of the first semester and the total minutes of weekly reading recorded in her reading logs:

Table 1. *Summary of Reading Logs in the First Semester*

Week	Titles of books	Minutes Read
Jan.21-27	Komobo; The Cream and the cat; The name jar; Arthur writes a story; Tacky the penguin; Something wonderful; What will the weather be?	103
Feb.4-10	The mystery…; Wally Walrus; The Wednesday…; Arthur's new…; The little red hen; the Elves and …; Arthur goes to…	145
Mar.11-17	How to be a friend; Fire fighters; Garbage collectors; Arthur's birthday; Pig, pig grows up; Christmas surprise; Homework! Oh, homework	121
April15-21	Who lives here? My first Halloween; Arthur makes…; The magic school bus…; The magic school bus taking…; Franklin fibs; Franklin and Harriet	145
May6-12	Anansi's narrow waist; Flash, crash, rumble and roll…; Each orange had 8 slices; Snow day; Sun up, sun down; We come the ice	123

Such weekly reading logs were recorded through out the semester as part of Cathy's homework. The minutes recorded were only the first time when Cathy started a new book. The actual reading was five to seven times more since we required Cathy to listen to the books as many times as she liked within the week.

Cathy entered third grade in the fall and moved to a new elementary school due to another school district boundary change. In her new school, there were more ESL students and less ESL teachers. Therefore, the ESL teachers informed us of their decision to designate Cathy as an "Independent" ESL student. One ESL teacher said: '[Cathy] felt bored here [in ESL class] because she finished her assignment [sic] much faster than the rest [sic] students. I felt guilty to have her here" (the ESL teacher's email communication with parents concerning their decision of placing Cathy "Independent Status"). This decision meant more grade-level instructions for Cathy and more challenges for her in academic learning. Most daunting was the daily "DEAR Time" in Language Arts class. DEAR means "Drop Everything and Read". Each student was supposed to read his/her own *chapter* book during DEAR Time when they finished their class assignments. This was a great motivation for Cathy to read more difficult books rather than those targeted

towards younger children. She decided to bring something she knew from other sources to school with her. She started with *Arthur* and *Magic School Bus* series since she had watched them before in both Chinese and English on TV and video tapes. To accommodate this new learning situation and new challenge in reading, we helped her in four ways: (1) read chapter books together at home before and after she read alone during the DEAR Time, (2) combine translation/explanation with listening to audio books at home, (3) record annotated reading logs of the chapter books she read, and (4) we had her tell-back the stories to us and to her stuffed animals at bedtime.

These four types of reading in semester two and semester three were different from the readings in semester one that focused solely on meaning and translation. The focus of reading at home in this stage was the print and comprehension of the print. We sometimes read together and sometimes read by turns. When reading together, we tried to raise her awareness of the vocabulary as it appeared on her spelling list, and explained the different uses of words in different sentences. When we took turns reading the paragraphs, Cathy adopted a game called "Pop Corn" to ask questions. Whenever the listener had questions, she/he should say "Pop Corn" and the one who was reading should stop for questions. The questions Cathy had for us were mainly reading comprehension or cultural orientations. Ours for Cathy were checking the meaning of certain words she had learned in school, or requests for her to reread the words she mispronounced (e.g. evergreen as "every**y**green") or the phonemes she omitted (e.g., "*-s*", "*-ed*', or "*-ing*") in the sentence. To reinforce the letter-sound knowledge and eye-brain coordination, we asked Cathy to follow the lines with her index finger—a traditional strategy of Chinese teachers when they teach young children reading. Sometimes it was the parent who pointed to the lines. If Cathy missed something in the sentences, the parent would not move the finger, indicating "Wrong! Read again!"

The second method by which we helped to develop Cathy's reading skills in semester two was the combination of explanation/translation and listening to audio books. With her improved reading skills, we started borrowing audio books for Cathy in November. The audio books borrowed were much more difficult and longer than the ones from the first semester. We usually explained the meaning of the whole book to her first, and then asked her to listen to the tapes alone, all the while encouraging her to ask questions when she had them. A parent journal entry on Nov.25 revealed how we practiced:

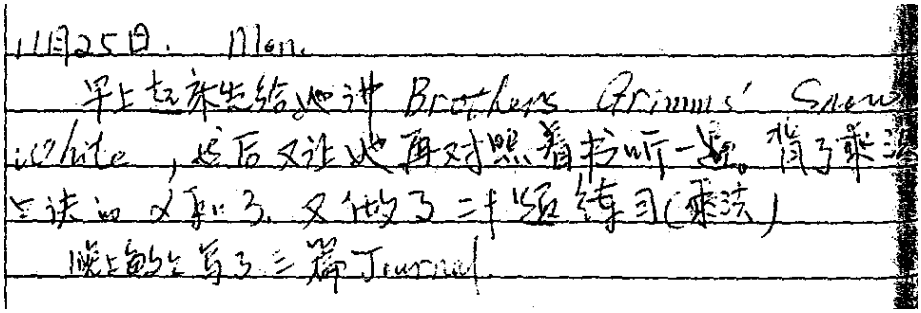


Figure 2. *Lisa Journal, Nov.25*

The literal English translation of the entry is as follows:

> 11/25, Mon.
>
> Explained *Brothers Grimms' Snow White* after getting up in the morning, and then had her listen to the tape along with the book. Recite timetable from 2 to 3. After that, finish 20 multiplication problems.
>
> At night, Cathy wrote three journal entries.

The third way we helped Cathy build up her reading comprehension skills was with an annotated reading log, which was an extension of the school reading log assignment. In addition to completing the school reading log that contained title, author, characters, and minutes read, we asked Cathy to include setting, beginning, middle, and ending of the book in the annotated reading log. This enabled Cathy to recall the main ideas of the book and work on reading comprehension independently. We continued to assign this extra homework even after the teacher stopped collecting reading logs. We thought it was an effective way to train Cathy to read effectively.

Tell-back is the fourth way that we involved Cathy in reading at home. We learned this method from a two-week Summer Reading Skills Program for Children held at Georgetown University during Cathy's first summer in America. The only homework the reading teachers gave to the young children was to tell-back the story they learned during the day. We found that this was a good substitute for a bedtime story and usually asked her to retell the story she chose – either to us or to her many stuffed animals on the bed. The conscious processes of retelling the stories made Cathy read attentively and try to be responsible for the story she was going to tell. She usually asked how many minutes she was allowed retell the story. Since she had to alter the length of her tell-back story according to the availability of time, she had to consider the degree of detail to include. This largely enhanced her capability to comprehend the chapter books she read. One audio recording of her tell-back in December revealed that she was able to retell the story for more than 45 minutes in English.

To fulfill such requirements, Cathy had to acquire vocabulary as much and as soon as possible. Since she had only been learning English for a short time, we gave her three choices when she encountered new vocabulary in chapter books. First was asking us, the parents. Second was looking the words up in dictionaries. Third was guessing from the context of the sentence. Most of time, we encouraged her to use the last choice. With such systematic parental literacy involvement and intervention, Cathy learned to read rapidly and developed a passion for reading. She routinely checked out 7-10 books every week from the public libraries and eagerly checked with librarians about the availability of new arrivals in the chapter book series. Her reading skills and competency were dramatically improved, according to school assessments.

4. Results

The methods described above have greatly supported Cathy's early L2 reading development and have answered our first research question: *What and how did the parents actually do at home to facilitate their young child's second language reading development upon arriving at the U.S.?* The implicit and explicit reading interventions of parents have provided invaluable assistance for her to academically succeed in the new learning environment. In the process of Cathy's early L2 reading development, the intensive parental literacy involvement, in addition to formal instruction at school, is an invaluable contribution. In this regard, the teacher's comments and diagnostic test scores may help us answer our second research question: *What are the effects of parental home literacy involvement on the early L2 reading development?* Here are the Language Arts teacher's comments over the first semester of Cathy's schooling:

Table 2. Reading Growth in First Semester

Quarter	Teacher's Comments
2nd Quarter	It will be difficult to make an accurate evaluation of [Cathy's] work since she has not been with us long. Although her English is limited she has been very determined to complete her work with the help of a Chinese translation.
3rd Quarter	Wow! [Cathy] has made so many wonderful improvements. Although she is reading below grade level, she quickly went from being a non-reader to reading at a first grade level…It is obvious that [Cathy] gets a lot of support from home ☺
4th Quarter	I have really enjoyed watching [Cathy's] growth throughout the year. She has been an inspiration to her classmates as well as her teachers. Please encourage [Cathy] to keep reading throughout the summer. Enjoy 3rd Grade, [Cathy!] ☺

Note: The teachers' comments were all taken from Cathy's School Report Card

In each quarter, while we tried hard to help Cathy cope with the Language Arts teacher's reading homework, the teacher's comments inspired both parent and child alike to carry on our L2 Home Literacy Model. The results of the Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) conducted by ESL specialists at Cathy's two schools have provided more authoritative evidence about Cathy's rapid reading progress within ten months:

Table 3. *IPT Reading Scores from Placement to Exit in ESL Programs*

Time of Testing	Reading
Jan. (placement)	NA
May	25/51
Nov.	41/51 (competent level)

Note: starting date of ESL service: Jan.8

Within ten months, Cathy went from being unable to perform any English literacy activities to being able to competently fulfill her scholastic expectations. The exit note from the head of the ESL program in Cathy's second elementary school explained how:

> We are pleased to tell you that [Cathy] has completed the IPT State battery successfully. Based on your child's ability to use English and on the most recent test scores, she has placed out of ESOL program. She will remain at the status of independent level. As I explained to you, this means she will be monitored twice a month to see her growth. Here are her test results…. On the reading test, she scored 41 points out of 51 placing herself in the Competent Reader Category. This test is made up of five parts: vocabulary, vocabulary in context, reading for understanding, reading for life skills, and language usage. In the same order, these were the results: 9 out of 10 items, 8 out of 10 items, 8 out of 12 items, 7 out of 9 items and 9 out of 10 items. These are her reading test scores... According to the Grades 2, 4, 5 Chart to determine ESOL Levels based on the IPT… [Cathy] exited the ESOL program!
>
> (Email message of the Head of ESL Program, Nov.20)

This note, along with the teacher's comments and IPT diagnosis scores, is an indirect proof of the effects of early L2 reading development. It affirms that language minority parents are able to contribute to their child's academic success (August & Shanahan, 2008). The effects of parental

home literacy involvement are mediated through children's vocabulary development and emergent literacy skills (Sénéchal, 2006; Sénéchal & LeFervre, 2001, 2002). If we say parental literacy involvement (i.e. implicit and explicit home literacy activities identified by the Home Literacy Model) is crucial in learning to read, the continuous home literacy support after the ESL student is mainstreamed is even more important for the realization of reading to learn, a factor that the original Home Literacy Model did not touch upon. With the continued supplementary reading activities at home (as described above): explaining chapter books in home language before reading at school, telling back stories, "popcorn" reading, and keeping annotated reading logs, Cathy's reading achievement was striking in the second semester after she exited from the ESOL program:

Table 4. *Student Summary (all assignments) for 'Reading', 1/30*

Name: Cathy ID: XXX Grade: A (95.6%) Class Rank: 3	Score	Grade	Date
Test (40%, 300)		**97.3% A**	
"When Lo Louis Won" (33.3%, 100)	100	100%A	11/23
The Titanic: Lost…and Found (33.3%, 100)	96	96%A	1/9
Pompeii (33.3%, 100)	96	96%A	1/23
Quiz (15%, 400)		**92.5% A**	
Verbs in Present (25%, 100)	100	100% A	
Fact and Opinion (25%, 100)	100	100%A	12/19
Verbs in the Past (25%, 100)	70	70%A	
Verb to be (25%, 100)	100	100%A	
Participation (15%, 900)		**93.3%A**	
Week of Nov 4 (11.1%, 100)	90	90% A	11/4
Week of Nov15 (11.1%, 100)	90	90%A	11/15
Week of Nov 18 (11.1%, 100)	90	90%A	11/18
Week of Nov 22 (11.1%, 100)	100	100%A	11/22
Week of Dec 1 (11.1%, 100)	90	90%A	12/1
Week of Dec 8 (11.1%, 100)	100	100%A	12/13
Week of Dec 12 (11.1%, 100)			
Week of Jan 5 (11.1%, 100)			
Week of Jan 12 (11.1%, 100)			
Class work (15%, 700)		**92.1% A**	
Fact and Opinion (14.3%, 100)	100	100%A	1/2
Vocabulary (14.3%, 100)	100	100%A	11/20
Nouns and Verbs (14.3%, 100)	100	100%A	1/2
Fact or opinion (14.3%, 100)	93	93%A	1/9
Nouns (14.3%, 100)	96	96%A	1/9
Main idea (14.3%, 100)	56	56%A	1/17
Fact and Opinion (14.3%, 100)	100	100%A	1/3
Homework (15%, 200)		**100%A**	
Vocabulary Pompeii (50%, 100)	100	100%A	1/14
Writing Story (50%, 100)	100	100%A	1/15

Note. We acknowledge the help of Ms. Johnson, Cathy's reading teacher in second/third semester

The continued, step-by-step home literacy activities that we facilitated motivated Cathy to read extensively (she had read over 240 books in the first year). Her rapid development of reading competency in turn sustained her reading interests and enabled her to be mainstreamed quickly. Consequently, Cathy's reading instructional level jumped from ***ESL*** (Quarter 2) to ***Below Grade Level*** (Quarter 3 and 4) in the first semester and ***On Grade Level*** in the second semester. This rapid transition from learning to read to reading to learn largely assisted her overall academic achievements, a shorter route for an ESL student compared to the average years of most ESL students (e.g. Cummins, 1986; Thomas & Collier, 2001). Below is a summary of Cathy's progress based on school report card in the first three semesters:

Table 5. *Summary of Annual School Performance*

School Year 2001-2002 Grade Level: 2		School Year 2002-2003 Grade Level: 3	
Report Card Indicators		Report Card Indicators	
Social Skills	NA	Social Skills	A
Work Habits	NA	Work Habits	A
Reading	NA	Reading	A
(Instruction Level)	Below Grade Level	(Instruction Level)	On Grade Level
Oral & Written Communication	NA	Oral & Written Communication	A
Health	NA	Health	A
Mathematics	A	Mathematics	A
Science	NA	Science	A
Social Studies	NA	Social Studies	A
Art	NA	Art	A
Music	NA	Music	A
Physical Education	NA	Physical Education	A
ESOL	✓		

5. Discussion

Cathy's growth in reading competency demonstrated that the Home Literacy Model that features informal (i.e. storybook reading, translation of picture books, and tell-back) and explicit formal home literacy activities (i.e. teaching of letter-sound knowledge or correcting miscue of phonemes during reading together or listening to tapes) are equally crucial for young ESL learners who need to survive linguistically and academically. Although the Home Literacy Model does not touch on the dimension of immigrant children's L2 reading development, Cathy's case reveals that for newcomer ESL students, our refined L2 Home Literacy Model not only quickens early second language reading development but also necessitates immigrant parents to accommodate and further intervene in their child's interests in L2 reading. It echoes research finding (e.g. August, Snow, Carlo, Proctor, San Francisco, Duursma et al., 2006) that while children in general need good, explicit instruction on at least certain aspects of reading, parent involvement is equally important in learning to read in a second language (LeFevre & Sénéchal, 2002). To some extent, developing a love and capability for L2 reading is even more crucial than the intent of original Home Literacy Model that focused on the readiness of formal literacy instruction. Rapid mainstreaming is nevertheless the most important condition for ESL students to succeed in

content area learning. The concurrent requirements of learning to read and reading to learn for immigrant children go beyond that of reading readiness for English speaking children. Our modified L2 Home Literacy Model for Cathy (i.e. parents supporting their child's second language acquisition at home and fostering their children's second language reading skills by informal storybook reading and formal literacy activities that impart knowledge about reading and writing of English), worked effectively on the child's overall linguistic and academic development during her early years of American schooling. The process of Cathy's reading development, i.e. from learning to read to reading to learn, as well as the impact of parental home literacy involvement, reveals that when ESL students leave schools, structured parental literacy interventions are necessary supplements to enhance L2 reading. Parents are responsible for accommodating or enriching literacy activities. Even more critical is parents' sustained home literacy support after their child has been mainstreamed, whereas teachers' attention to the ESL child is in content learning. The post-mainstream reading needs of ESL students require their parents' greater efforts and more involvement.

5.1 Implications and Suggestions

In the previous sections, we have described in detail how we involved/intervened in Cathy's early L2 reading development through informal and formal literacy activities and what the effects of these techniques were. The strategies we used to facilitate her reading at home underscore the importance of home-language literacy instruction outlined by August et al. (2006) for bilingual ESL students. These strategies accelerated Cathy's early L2 reading acquisition before she exited the ESL program and maintained academic achievements after she received grade level instructions. Our firsthand accounts also answer research questions one and two with first-hand data and formal evidence. In this section, we discuss the third research question: *What can Cathy's home literacy experiences and parental literacy involvement suggest for immigrant parents, school teachers, and home literacy practitioners?*

(1) *For immigrant parents*: In contrast to the Home Literacy Model that assumes parents' home literacy involvement began before the onset of formal literacy instruction, newly arrived immigrant parents have to deal with their child's L2 literacy acquisition and subject knowledge learning simultaneously immediately upon their arrival. That is to say, immigrant parents' L2 home literacy involvement happened concurrently or after the onset of formal L2 literacy instruction at school. In this case, Cathy's successful L2 reading development and rapid academic achievement revealed that, apart from the commonly recommended parental involvement in education (e.g. Epstein, 1986), a structured literacy experience at home is crucial (Anderson, 1995). Our L2 Home Literacy Model reveals that immigrant parents can and are able to plan home literacy experiences that support their child's second literacy development. Even if they do not speak English, it is still possible for parents to nurture their child's reading habits and comprehension ability if they strategically use the home-language and make use of audio books and video tapes. Our implicit and explicit literacy activities such as monitoring the child's daily reading log, borrowing audio storybooks for the child to read alone or with us, and explaining the pictures in their native language are applicable for all immigrant parents, regardless of their educational and linguistic backgrounds.

(2) For school teachers: Cathy's early L2 reading development and outcomes of literacy learning suggest that school teachers encourage language minority parents' active involvement in their child's L2 literacy. Parents still count in L2 literacy (LeFevre & Sénéchal, 2002). However, "[f]or

various reasons, schools underestimate and underutilize parents' potential contributions" (August & Shanahan, 2008, p.9). Cathy's rapid L2 reading development indicates that teachers should encourage parents to contribute actively to their children's development in L2 literacy. The impact and effects of parental literacy involvement are far reaching in ESL students' learning to read and reading to learn.

The use of home language in early L2 literacy that we have demonstrated is noteworthy. If school teachers know the ESL students' native language, our refined L2 Home Literacy Model is practical for beginner ESL students. For those students whose teachers do not know their native language, at least the teachers can make an effort to familiarize themselves with these students' home literacy information and direct their parents to properly support L2 reading with their home language. They can also inform the immigrant parents that learning to read in L2 is not only for entertainment but also a long-term investment in their child's overall literacy development, a prerequisite to master the target language sooner and a gateway to learn other subjects well (August et al., 2006).

(3) *For home literacy practitioners*: "Family must be a part of the solution in closing the achievement gap" (Darling, 2008, p.245). Some ESL students' failures in reading and spelling result from the differences between the language of instruction in the classroom and the one they speak at home (Chiappe & Siegel, 1999; Lesaux & Siegel, 2003). Making efforts to involve parents in ESL students' reading and writing achievement is just as important as other types of parental involvement (e.g. parent-teacher conference). As stated earlier, the Home Literacy Model is significant in that it may guide the design of interventions pertaining to the emergent conceptual knowledge (i.e. knowledge of functions of print or self-perception as readers) of children who have limited procedural knowledge (i.e., letter-sound knowledge) about literacy. If home literacy practitioners can design parent education programs to teach specific home literacy intervention strategies regarding informal and formal home literacy activities to immigrant parents, and they in turn involve in their child's L2 home literacy experiences, the effects of school literacy instruction could be largely augmented. Some of the strategies described in this paper, such as translating storybooks at the initial stage of reading, facilitating early L2 reading from easy to difficult levels, and making use of books with both language versions, etc., can go a long way to support newly-arrived immigrant children's linguistic development and as a consequence promote the overall educational outcomes of this group of students.

6. Conclusion

Research in family literacy practice in the 21st century should find culturally responsive ways to affect children's language development (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004). This descriptive case study portrayed a Chinese-American family's home literacy practices in the first years of their immigration and linked these activities to the learning outcomes of the child. The qualitative nature of this study may not be suitable for generalization but has filled the gap of existing home literacy research in Chinese-American families and extended the Home Literacy Model to include language minority families. This naturalistic design complements the limitations of the original quantitative design of Home Literacy Model which lacks detailed information on when, what, and how parents teach (Sénéchal, 2006; Sénéchal et al., 1998). The results line up with the original Home Literacy Model in that exposure to books and parent teaching in reading can enhance young readers' literacy skills and enrich their educational experiences. The types of parental literacy involvement have provided plausible evidence that both informal and formal home literacy activities theorized by the Home Literacy Model can have plausible effects on L2 early

literacy. The firsthand data and detailed description of our home literacy involvement/intervention in our daughter Cathy's early L2 reading acquisition has opened up a window for immigrant parents, school teachers, and home literacy practitioners to look into a new ESL student's home literacy experiences. While it is true that educators need to promote ESL students' L2 literacy for later years' content area learning success (August et al. 2006), to a certain extent, immigrant parents' home literacy activities, utilizing the native language are more relevant than lessons taught in the child's second language. The positive results of Cathy's home literacy activities demonstrate that early parental involvement at home is more important than that at school to a child's academic achievement (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007). Cathy's situation as an L2 learner makes this notion more imperative. In addition to the general parental involvement activities in their child's education, immigrant parents have to place their child's second literacy acquisition as a priority at home since it is the foundation of all academic success in the family's new cultural and linguistic environment. In addition, the specificity and particularity of our linguistic and educational background has demonstrated that some of our strategies, such as using the phonics approach and tell-back method in Cathy's reading development, are insightful for Language Arts and ESL teachers as well as home literacy practitioners to develop linguistically and culturally relevant intervention programs or parent education programs to help all ESL students who are in need of effective second language instruction.

Due to the necessarily specific home literacy activities outlined by our theoretical frame work (i.e. Home Literacy Model), we have only focused on parental literacy involvement and intervention in early L2 reading development; we have left the importance of other aspects of parental involvement in home literacy activities, for instance, writing development, parent-teacher connections and cooperation for the overall literacy development of ESL students, for future articles. Cathy's success in learning the English language as well as overall academic learning within such a short time period reveals that our extended Home Literacy Model, featuring the use of the home language and formal/informal literacy activities in L2, has the same positive effects on newcomer ESL students who do not have any English language background. Similarly, Cathy's rapid catching up to grade-level reading instruction indicates that parental involvement in immigrant families is not limited to the common patterns identified by researchers (e.g. Epstein 1986; 1995) nor to the oft-cited shared storybook reading. It requires sustained parental support that involves implicit and explicit reading intervention (Sénéchal, 2006). Although research findings indicate that the minimum length of time an ESL student takes to reach grade-level performance in L2 is 4-6 years (e.g. Cummins, 1986; Thomas & Collier, 2001), if parents are willing and able to provide both implicit and explicit literacy experiences at home, it will largely speed up the exit process of ESL students and furthermore, promote the content area reading.

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