A Study on Korean Vocabulary Education for Multicultural Family Children

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Abstract. The term *multicultural family childen*(MFC) is used in South Korea to describe a child born to a native Korean father and a foreign mother. On the dimension of foreign affairs in Korea, it's an unusual situation but an important matter in Korean society and education, because these children often have deficiencies in Korean language acquisition and development. In particular, they have a lot of problems using advanced language, which in turn may cause the problems they experience with school learning in general. These academic problems have a lasting impact on these children's lives. One such issue is lack of Korean vocabulary competence, and the key to tackling this problem is basic concept vocabulary. On reading task, multicultural children often concentrate easily on surface information and are content to stay at a lower or more superficial level. Therefore, we should pay particular attention to low lexical competence as a cause of language acquisition difficulty. Korean vocabulary consists of three groups of words: native Korean words, words derived from Chinese and written with Chinese characters, and words from foreign languages other than Chinese. A distinctive feature of Korean vocabulary is that many abstract words and advanced academic vocabulary are written with Chinese characters. This may make these words the most difficult aspect of Korean vocabulary to learn for multicultural family children. Therefore, we suggest concrete measures to be implemented to help these children learn Korean vocabulary and achieve high-level language acquisition to the same degree as children from fully Korean families. This study was based on the theory of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP; Cummins, 1979).

1. Introduction

South Korea is facing an era of multiculturalism. By the end of the last century, the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s had been overcome, and since then, alongside a wave of globalization, the foreign population in Korea has increased with a rapidity unparalleled in history. In the early days of

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this expansion, most of the influx consisted of workers providing labor. In recent years, however, marriage to migrant women by Korean men also accounted for a large proportion of immigration to Korea. According to the statistics of the national Ministry of Gender, there are 148,498 "marriage migration women" in Korea[1] and this number is increasing by more than 20,000 per year. From the national statistics of the last few years, almost 10% of marriages in Korea are now international marriages with migrant women. So naturally, Korean society is grappling with the need to reform itself as a multicultural society as a result of the advent of families of this kind. In 2006, the Korean government and media began calling this kind of family a *multicultural family* (MF) and focusing on them both in terms of policy (almost every government department has a policy related to multicultural families) and special news programs (TV documentaries, special reports, etc.), respectively. Among these efforts, *multicultural family children* (MFC, the children of these marriages) and their education in Korean society have received perhaps the most attention. The number of these children has increased sharply since 2006, when official statistics on it were first collected, and there were almost 200,000 MFC in 2013. Particularly in the last five years, students from this background have been increasing in number by around 6,000 students per year.
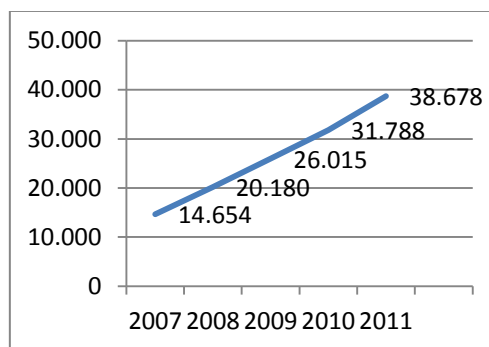

Figure 1. Growth of Multicultural Family Student in Korea

   Education is important as a foundation for personal, social, and career achievement across one's whole life. And more than innate ability, environment greatly affects children's learning, especially MFC. Multicultural families in Korea typically have the following features. First, Cho(2006) indicated that most multicultural families are low-income families, so they need social and financial support. Second, in these families, there are often communication problems because of language issues. Language competence has a high correlation with self-realization (and vice versa).[2] A child born from an MF in Korea can be provided public education the same as a fully Korean child, but still lack elements of language development, and that there have been concerns about their ability to use the Korean language.

   In practice, most studies have revealed that multicultural children learn everyday Korean fluently in daily life; however, academic language proficiency is another matter, requiring more education support. For instance, Song (2011) researched the Korean language competence of MFC using a teacher survey and interviews, and concluded that contrary to many people's fears, there was no big problem regarding interpersonal communicative language, a result that was statistically no different for children in urban and rural areas. However, with regard to academic Korean language competence, 80% of respondents said that MFC are below the general level. This result indicates that Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS; see below) do not necessarily lead to academic language

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[1] Korean Government statistics, 2012.

http://kosis.kr/statisticsList/statisticsList_01List.jsp?vwcd=MT_ZTITLE&parentId=A.

[2] Language competence is core abillity to self realization in society and especially monolingual country, like Korea has been emphasizing a language competence of Children.

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competence. Yoon (2007) mentioned the need for academic Korean competence and thus for MFC to receive education in academic Korean use. The core of academic competence is lexical competence(Cho, 2006;Kwon, 2007;Cho, 2008). Won (2013) conducted a preliminary survey and found that to develop language competence in MFC, it would be necessary to enhance content sequences within the school curriculum and employ vocabulary covering the core academic concepts. Most of these studies used word lists to instruct and test children; however, a word list giving vocabulary items only and no information on structure and usage may not be educationally adequate. Therefore, more research is needed to evaluate the lexical competence of multicultural children and exploring the best way to teach them Korean words, especially academic Korean words and usages that reflect academic subject demands. Therefore, to develop the lexical competence of MFC, we first have to clarify two terms: *academic Korean* and *lexical competence* for multicultural learners.

2. Theoretical background

The human cognitive system does not acquire lexical competence naturally, but instead as a result of intentional teaching and learning processes. Academic Korean as a topic is intended to instill in students the background for school learning and knowledge in specific fields that are constantly changing.

2.1 Purpose and aspects of academic Korean

2.1.1 Purpose
Academic Korean (in Korean, *Hakseup hangukeo*) refers to the competence in the Korean language needed for schooling in Korea. Due to the language issues of MFCs, this term has been applied in the multicultural context in particular. Yoon (2007) suggested in a multicultural education policy report that a textbook of Korean language teaching for MFCs be researched and developed. In the Korean school system, the language competence required by the National Curriculum varies by grade and it is divided into two aspects: *communication skills* and (academic) *language competence*.
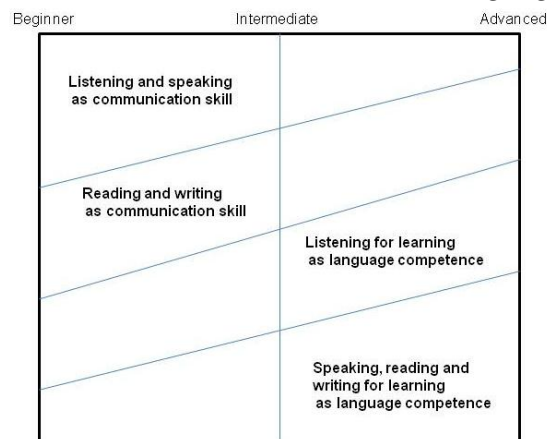
Fig. 2. Language skill construction by language level for multicultural child

As set forth in the National Curriculum for Korean language arts, students have to perform adequately in both these aspects. Lee (2010) also emphasizes academic Korean ability for multicultural children as part of quantitative research on Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP; Cummins, 1979; see below), and suggests three principles for learning academic Korean: it should be *process based*, *contextual*, and *multicultural*. And in 2011 ministry of Education plan to make a national curriculum of Korean as a Second Language, KSL for MFC of CALP. In that report Won (2013) considered academic Korean to be the same as CALP and asserted that MF students need to study it to actively participate in learning; on this basis, Won argued that the Korean as a second language (KSL)

curriculum should contain the essentials of academic Korean. Table 1 describes CALP (academic Korean) in the KSL curriculum.

Table 2. CALP (academic Korean) for KSL curriculum.

Contents	- Promote a learning motivation of students by considering ability of cognitive and academic language - Help to understand of communication skills and utilization by cognitive and academic learning experience. - Considering the topics, situation and task of each subject. - For understanding and applying the theme of the unit.
Skills	- Communication skills as using learning process like as Ordering, classifying, make a question, describing, comparing, suggest an example, and inference.
Strategies	- Learning strategies to learn an academic subject through Korean language like as clarifying question, request for advice, planning for research, review, adjusting

To learn academic content (knowledge and vocabulary) using meta-cognitive strategies to consider cognitive development is the core of academic Korean. These goals relate to BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency), concepts connected to Cummins's (1979) argument regarding diagnosis of English problems in immigrant children in Canada. Unlike BICS, CALP is acquired through explicit instruction, not naturally, and is required to handle academic matters. Cummins's follow-up research (1980) indicated that the cognitive skills revealed in academic achievement are closely connected to language performance across the realms of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, and are related to immigrant children's entry into a society.

Meanwhile, Chamot and O'Malley (1987) suggested the Cognitive Academic Languages Learning Approach (CALLA) for students learning English as a second language. Based largely on findings from studies on cognition, the model integrates academic language development, content area instruction, and explicit instruction in learning strategies for both content and language acquisition. The model is formed from two multicultural language programs—the Bilingual Program and the ESL Program of U.S.. This approach aims to mediate between special language programs and mainstream education and allow transition between them by introducing vocabulary, structures, and functions in the target language expressing concepts drawn from the relevant content areas.
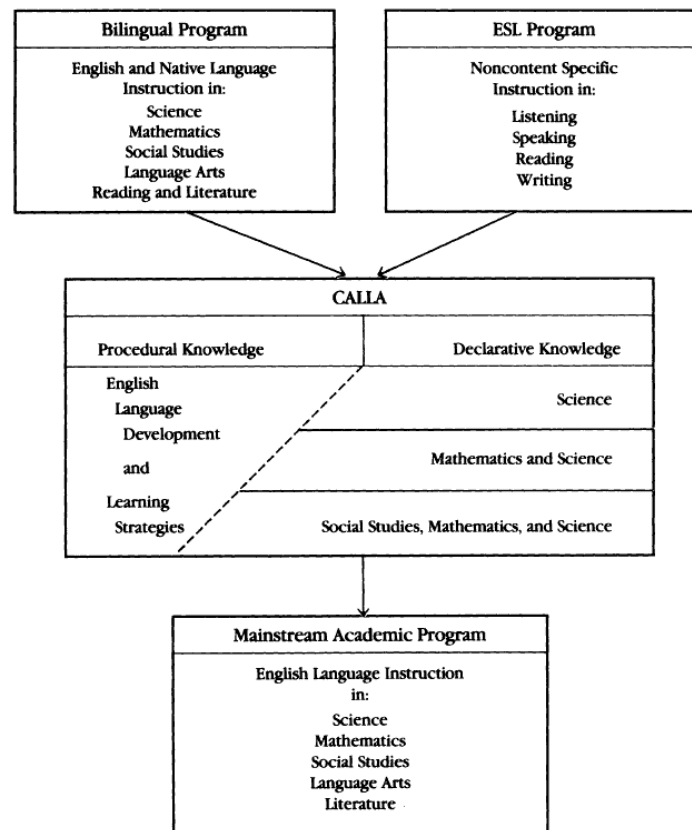
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Fig. 3. CALLA Model, Bridge to the mainstream

2.2. Concept of lexical competence

The aim of vocabulary education is lexical competence development. Therefore, the concept of lexical competence as an object and an educational aim should be defined carefully. Although lexical competence involves knowing words, it means conceptual expansion rather than expansion of numbers of words learned.[3] Thus, personal lexical competence is a criterion privileging depth of concept and thought over the simple role of the word as a tool. The relevant meaning information for lexical competence is knowledge of *word structure*, *word form*, and *pragmatics*. Knowledge of word structure includes knowledge about the morphology and word class (part of speech). The reason structure information is very important is so that we can understand the subtleties of a word when we encounter it and can produce new words creatively. Word form information implies information on both spelling and is pronunciation. These elements are also essential but are not emphasized in vocabulary education; knowing the linguistic rules establishing spelling and pronunciation is important so that learners will not misunderstand the meaning or which word is meant (for example in the cases of homonyms). Finally, pragmatics are syntactic or word choice limitations on the use of a word in a sentence. This means that the concept includes the dimension of meaning, not only that of sentence. In addition, external knowledge about vocabulary should be considered, such as synonymy, antonymy, sub-words, word systems, and word history. That is the theoretical content of lexicology.

Lexical competence is thus an intellectual activity and ability more than knowledge. We use the term *skills* to represent such activities. Skills can be divided into four section: *discrimination*, *inference*, *definition*, and *creative ability*. These are complementary and utilized at the same time to understand and/or use a word. In practice, human lexical competence is expressed with *knowledge*, skills, and attitude. Without knowledge, we cannot choose or distinguish words in a sentence, a task

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[3] Acquisition of a vocabulary item is the same as acquisition of a concept. Concepts structure one's thinking, and so vocabulary acquisition is not a simple process based on pronunciation and spelling only, but a very complex process related to many aspects of cognition (Jung, 1995).

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that requires the last component of lexical competence, *attitude*, which exerts a strong influence on the choice. In addition, in mother tongue education, attitudes about the importance of vocabulary lead learners to improve lexical competence or otherwise. In short, individual attitude has an important role in improving lexical competence by allowing learners to check and reflect on their own word use. Based on the above discussion, the details of lexical competence can be summarized as follows.

Table 2. Structure and details of Lexical competence

Structure				Details
Knowledge	Inner area knowledge of vocabulary	meaning	Lexical meaning	Knowing about lexical-semantic meaning.
			Encyclopedic meaning	Knowing about encyclopedic meaning
		Structure	Morpheme	Knowing about morphologic information(etymology, Chinese characters)
			Word class and category information	Knowing about the word class and category information
		Form	Pronunciation	Knowing about accurate pronunciation.
			Spelling	Knowing about right spelling
		Pragmatic		Knowing about syntactic restriction or word choice limitation.
	Outer area knowledge of vocabulary			Knowing about theoretical knowledge.
Skill	Discrimination			Can distinguish the difference between two of more words.
	Inference			Can infer the word meaning from the context
	Definition			Can choice a word by defying the word meaning correctly
	Creative ability			Can create a new word or understand a new word meaning using word component
Attitude	About using vocabulary			Having attitude as a linguistic subject.
	About lexical competence			Knowing about the value of Korean vocabulary and want to have rich and sophisticated vocabulary skills.

On the basis of the above discussion, we proceed to discuss vocabulary development of MFC. Unlike phonology and grammar, vocabulary is not implicit knowledge; it is part of lifelong learning and knowing, and continued steady expansion of one's vocabulary is important (Schmitt, 2000: 157). Thus, comprehensive education in attitude, knowledge, and skills is really essential for the development of MFCs' lexical competence.

3. Vocabulary education for MFC

A recent five-year longitudinal study on vocabulary education for MFCs and follow-up studies basically proceed by comparing fully Korean and MFC. Kang (2009) analyzed and compared the lexical competence of first- and second-grade students between MFC and fully Korean children. The

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results showed that MFC lacked lexical competence compared to native children but that the gap decreased as students advanced through school, until easier and more spoken vocabulary was acquired at native-like level. Similarly, Seong (2009) produced and carried out a lexical competence test between MFC and children with two Korean parents and between rural and urban students by selecting 100 vocabulary items included in an elementary school Korean language textbook. While the overall lexical competence of the rural student group was weaker than that of the urban student group, the vocabulary understanding of MFC and fully Korean children was about the same. Thus, it appears that the lexical competence gap in the lower grades in elementary school is wide, but narrows as students advance through their education.

Hong (2010) carried out a writing skill test among MF second-graders. The results showed that the Korean writing skill of learners depends on their mother's Korean language competence, which differs significantly by mother's culture. This study suggested the necessity of addressing the vocabulary needed for specific situations, which various students found difficult, and of teaching students to use correct grammar in short-answer questions. Therefore, the research suggested the need for a core word list by student level. Lee (2010) conducted quantitative research on Korean CALP among MFC. The results showed that problem students tended to ostensibly understand vocabulary information but not to have much understanding of questions or to be able to provide answers that did not rely on their own context.

4. Vocabulary education in academic Korean
4.1 Method of vocabulary education

The emphasis on academic Korean requires a corresponding emphasis on academic content and suitable curriculum emphasizing key ideas. When learners are faced with this type of vocabulary, they observe and explore using their prerequisite empirical knowledge and learning skills. The first step is to identify the learner's current level of lexical competence. Currently, no standard assessment measurement for lexical competence in MFC has been developed in Korea, but this can be done in an ad hoc manner using textbook vocabulary items. However, a national KSL textbook for them was produced in 2012, reflecting the purpose, method, and philosophy of education for MFC described above. In this section, we seek direction for vocabulary education for lexical competence through a critical survey of that textbook.
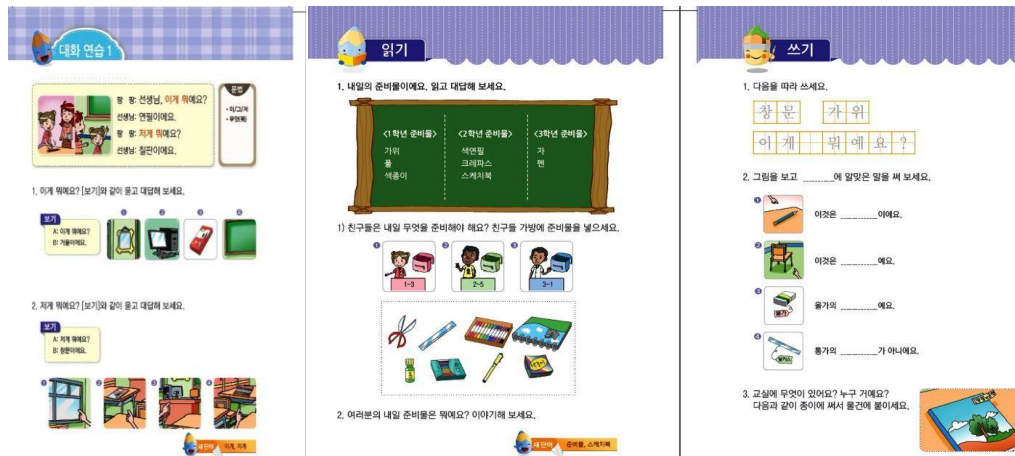
4.1.1 Analysis of KSL textbook

The vocabulary section of this elementary school textbook first presents vocabulary items with images and then focuses on teaching the vocabulary items using the four linguistic skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
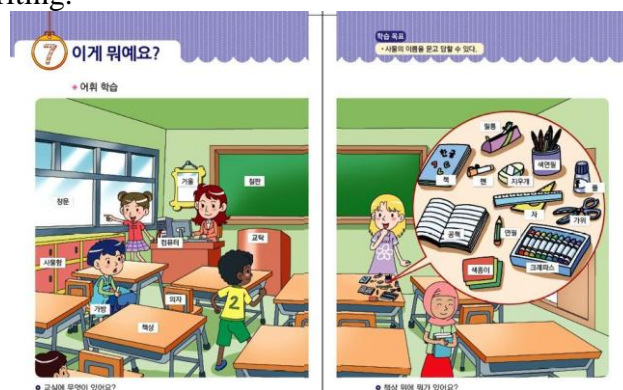
<picture1> vocabulary learning part of KSL textbook

In the picture, the MFCs are studying together with fully Korean children in the classroom. Though the subject is apparent, named and depicted, learners who cannot see that subject will not understand its essence. Also, it is possible that the learners will be misled due to inadequate explanation.

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<picture2> vocabulary using part of KSL textbook

Vocabulary practice part is composed of speaking, listening, reading, and writing using vocabulary that the student has already learned. In this common activity, while practicing a basic sentence pattern over and over, learners should switch vocabulary items in and out. These activities are easy to complete if learners have some idea about the meaning of the school items; however, the difficulty level has to be appropriate. Thus, questions in the textbook should consider the vocabulary level and cognitive development of the learner, and provide tasks from simple activity practice to leading stage to intense study. At the end of this unit, the activity matching learned vocabulary with images appears again, as it is helpful. However, it may be probable that objects similar in shape will be confused if situational contexts are not given.

4.2 Reflection on vocabulary selection for the KSL Textbook

The process of selecting educational vocabulary for MFC is basically as follows. The first method is to adopt frequently used words in situations to which the students may be exposed. The second is to pick out items students should know from their studies and require for their work; this vocabulary covers a wide range and may be very important for students' academic progress. However, it may be that vocabulary items selected on the basis of teachers' understanding of students' needs may be difficult to learn.

Also, according to experimental group, it may be selected vocabulary items whether they are essential to learn or not. Though, students learn lots of words through numerous texts in daily lives, it is direct study and thought activity with vocabularies that meaningfully increase delicacy and elaboration of concept. This activity is not about communication such as listening, speaking, reading and writng, it is thought activity about vocabularies such as meaning differentitating between words or defining mean precisely. And these cognition activity is disclose an intrinsic attribute of lexical competence. Furthermore, in the basis of perspective that language is not a value neutral symbol but a subject reflected cultural value (Kim, 2000: 4), cultural traits in vocabulary should considered when examine lexical competence. On the basis of tha above discussion, it is likely to require considering familarity to clarify vocabulary quality and distinguishing Korean, Chinese character basis and loanword of vocabulary quality at the same time, also, systemetic educating of Chinese character vocabulary which have a large percentage of academic vocabulary. Moreover, effective activities are required to study vocabulary, which need to be researched and developed for these activities are easy to get tired as they are usally mechanical repetition. It should be done along with vocabulary study and development of a game for vocabulary learning and interesting reading meterial and so on.

5. Summary

Vocabulary education for MFC in Korea has complex dimensions related to their needs and status in society. To develop strong academic Korean skills in these students, that is, to propose ways of

instilling in them cognitive academic language competence, we critically considered the present situation of multicultural language education for them on the basis of a review of multicultural child language education and the KSL Curriculum and textbook. Especially to consider academic language for MFC, lexical competence had been emphasized for their language development in academic learning since 2006. But learning method of vocabulary doesn't considered MFC's academic context and structure of words by knowledge, skill and attitude of these items. So based on the above discussion, to teach a vocabulary for MFC, teacher, researcher and text-book developer have to remind the character of words would be helpful for their academic performance.

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