



## Sharing picturebooks translated by multicultural mothers

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**Abstract:** This study aims to encourage immigrant mothers in sharing picture books with their kids. Unfortunately, there are few picturebooks written in the mothers' own languages in Korea, which can impede the immigrant mothers to participate in sharing picturebooks with their kids. By this reason, six mothers in this study directly translated four Korean picturebooks into their own languages. After completing the translational work, they introduced and read each picturebook they translated to their kids, other mothers and children. The result showed that the translational work of the mothers helped them to realize their own strengths of having multicultural background and to improve interaction with their children by sharing picturebooks.

**Key words:** Sharing picturebook, Translation, Multicultural mother.

### **Background: More picturebooks for multicultural mother**

It has highly increased a number of multicultural families in Korea over the last decade. International marriage is one of the main reasons for this increasing, and women are largely migrating to Korea through international marriage. However, they have often reported that their multicultural background would be full of difficulties in various areas of their daily life such as language, food, health care services, cultural assumptions, family relationships, and so on (Ministry of Education, 2009). Their most challenge especially starts, after their delivering a baby, as a matter of child education.

According to the studies of children's literature and education, mothers' sharing picturebooks with their kids can provide an optimal environment for children's learning regardless of family background, and it is more influential in multicultural family (Kim & Shin, 2008). Particularly for the multicultural mothers, reading picturebooks with mother's own language is very essential to initiate sharing picturebooks with the kids. In other words, sharing picturebooks written in only Korean language is pedagogically as well as psychologically hard for both the immigrant mothers and their kids because the mothers generally have poor vocabulary and articulation of Korean written language. Instead, reading picturebooks written in the mother's own language can reduce the difficulty of sharing picturebooks in the multicultural mothers.

However, picture books have been rarely written in various languages, except English, in Korea so far. It is urgent for a large number of multicultural families in Korea to have more picturebooks written in the mother's own languages.

**Purpose: Let's look at the other side of the coin**

Concerning immigrant mothers' interaction with the kids and the issue of the children's education, we have mainly focused on the multicultural mothers' vulnerability due to their ethnic minority. However, this is only one side of the coin. It is time for us to look at the other side of the coin by changing our point of view regarding multicultural family. Immigrant mothers have multicultural background that can be their own speciality rather than vulnerability. Based on this, I hypothesize that making multicultural mothers translate picturebooks into their own language by themselves will play an important role for the mothers to change their viewpoint about themselves and to enhance their interaction with the children under the context of reading picturebooks.

**Method: Making picturebooks translated by themselves**

Six multicultural mothers were participated in this study. They are from Uzbekiston, Thai, Japanese, and China through international marriage, and have at least one child ranged from 5 years old to elementary schoolers. They have lived seven years in Korea on average, yet still have some difficulties on Korean written language such as low level of vocabulary and articulation. Their communication abilities in everyday life were sufficient.

For the translational work, four 'Easy-to-Read' Korean picturebooks were selected. 'Easy-to-Read' picturebooks refer to a sort of book with simple, rhythmical and repetitive sentences that can be a helpful consideration for the multicultural mothers to translate the original Korean text into their own language text. The titles of four picturebooks are *Butterfly Slumber* written by HyeEun Shin and illustrated by Ho Jang, *Did you see my Bellybutton*, *I like the Clean*, and *Hurry me Hurry up* all three written by HyeEun Shin and illustrated by BokTae Kim.

Each mother was given three times meeting, on average, for the translational work that was executed in cooperation with the author of the books. During the meeting, they were allowed to ask and note anything related to the stories such as gender of the main character, words, feelings, and others. All mothers completed their own documentation of the translational work. At each meeting, they repeatedly read and continuously refined the sentences of the text that they translated at the previous



meeting. Sometimes, they picked important pieces of advice up from their children at home.

After completing the translational work, the text written in each mother's own language was printed in a transparent sticker. Then the translated sticker text was put either above or behind the Korean text on the original Korean picture book. Finally, the mothers accomplished their own book by putting their name as a translator.

### **Results: It's my own translational picturebook! Yes, you did it. Mom!**

The first word from the mothers' mouths was "I did it." or "It's my own book!". It was in concurrence with their reports mentioning that they felt increased sense of confidence and pleasure over time on the process of the translational work. After making their own translational picturebooks, the mothers introduced and read each picturebook they translated to their kids. They heard the beautiful words, "Yes, you did it, Mom!" and "You are so fabulous, Mom!", from their kids.

In addition, the mothers showed the translational picturebooks to other mothers in a meeting of multicultural families. The mothers have also received good feedback from the other mothers. In the post-interview, the six mothers expressed what they did and felt and explained what they can do. The mothers reported that translating and sharing picture books they translated were wonderful experience for all of them, the mothers as well as the children.

### **Conclusion: They are now dreaming about the rising sun**

This study demonstrates that multicultural mothers can be characterized by having strengths rather than weaknesses in sharing picturebooks with the child. Throughout the translational work in this study, all six mothers did feel their self-confidence in translating Korean picture books; six mothers did experience deep pleasure by sharing the books they translated with their kid and others; and six mothers did get big applause and admiration from themselves as well as others. It indicates that sharing picturebooks directly translated by the multicultural mothers can not only increase better mother-child interaction but also enhance the mothers' empowerment by provoking their own strength. I assert that the mothers took a small but critical step for all of their families including the mothers and the kids as well as for changing their



lifestyle. This is a notable point that sharing picturebooks translated by the multicultural mothers can increase maternal empowerment in the multicultural family. The mothers who participated in this study are not setting a limit on their bilingual ability. Now they are setting to another work that each of themselves plans. I would like to close my conclusion by introducing short sentences of one of the mothers who participated in the study.

Whenever I read a Korean picturebook with my son, he used to take it away from me because there was no emotion that he would want to feel from the story within my voice. However, it did not happen in this Korean book I translated. I felt like I am a new mom. I am so happy to have such a wonderful experience.

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