



**Interaction and Identity
in an Asian American Cram School
in New York City**

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Cram schools

- Private, educational institutions offering additional academic instruction during non-school hours (Nishino and Larson 2003)
- Role and structure of cram schools vary across cultural contexts
- Associated with Asian countries: *juku* in Japan; *hagwon* in Korea; *buxiban* in Taiwan




Asian cram schools

- Parallel educational system
 - Associated with rote memorization
 - For students to keep up with regular school curriculum and prepare for entrance examinations
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American cram schools

- Kaplan, Sylvan Learning, Princeton Review, etc.
 - Assisting students in the short-term
 - For students struggling in a particular subject or preparing for a particular exam
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Asian American cram schools


- Asian cram schools in the U.S. are reinvented, not replicated
 - New contexts and conditions produce new purposes, goals, practices
 - For example, many Asian American cram schools are designed to help immigrant ethnic population
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Criticisms of cram schools

- For-profit enterprises more concerned with money than with sound educational practice
- Cram schools introduce another level of social inequality, contributing to education gap along class lines
- Rote memorization instead of development of critical thinking skills
- But recent research beginning to challenge this monolithic image (Roesgaard 2006)

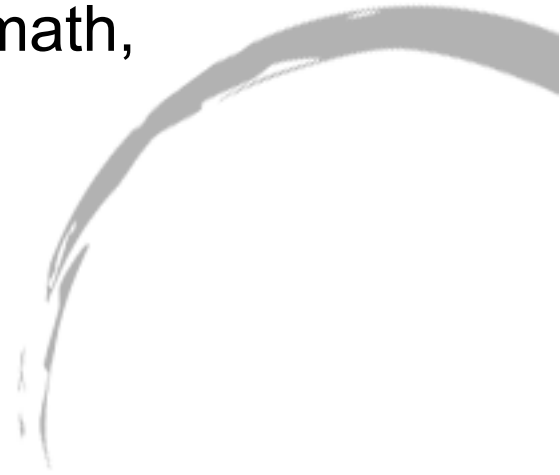


Research methods

- Research site: Apex, an Asian American cram school
 - Research methods: participant observation, fieldnotes, interviews, recordings of classroom interaction in a fifth grade English language arts class
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Apex

- Located in Queens
 - First generation Korean American director: Dr. Park
 - Apex is *hagwon*; “after-school,” not “cram school”
 - Classes for grades 2 to 11
 - 100 students per semester; 10 students per class
 - Subject areas: English language arts, math, science, exam preparation
 - Dr. Park designs entire curriculum
 - Teachers have minimal preparation
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Apex, cont'd

- Mainly serves second generation Korean American students
 - Parents enroll children because: 1) behavioral problems; 2) accentuate academic abilities; 3) child care
 - Develops close relationships with clients
 - Concerned with best educational practices
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Asian American cram school trends

- Non-Asian students increasingly enrolling in Asian American cram schools (Dunn 1995; Luo 2003)
- But Apex had almost all Korean American students
- Asian-run/American-taught is desired structure
- Although Apex mostly followed this model, Dr. Park was critical of ideas about “American” and “native speaker”
- Cross-racial dynamic between non-Asian teacher and Asian American students

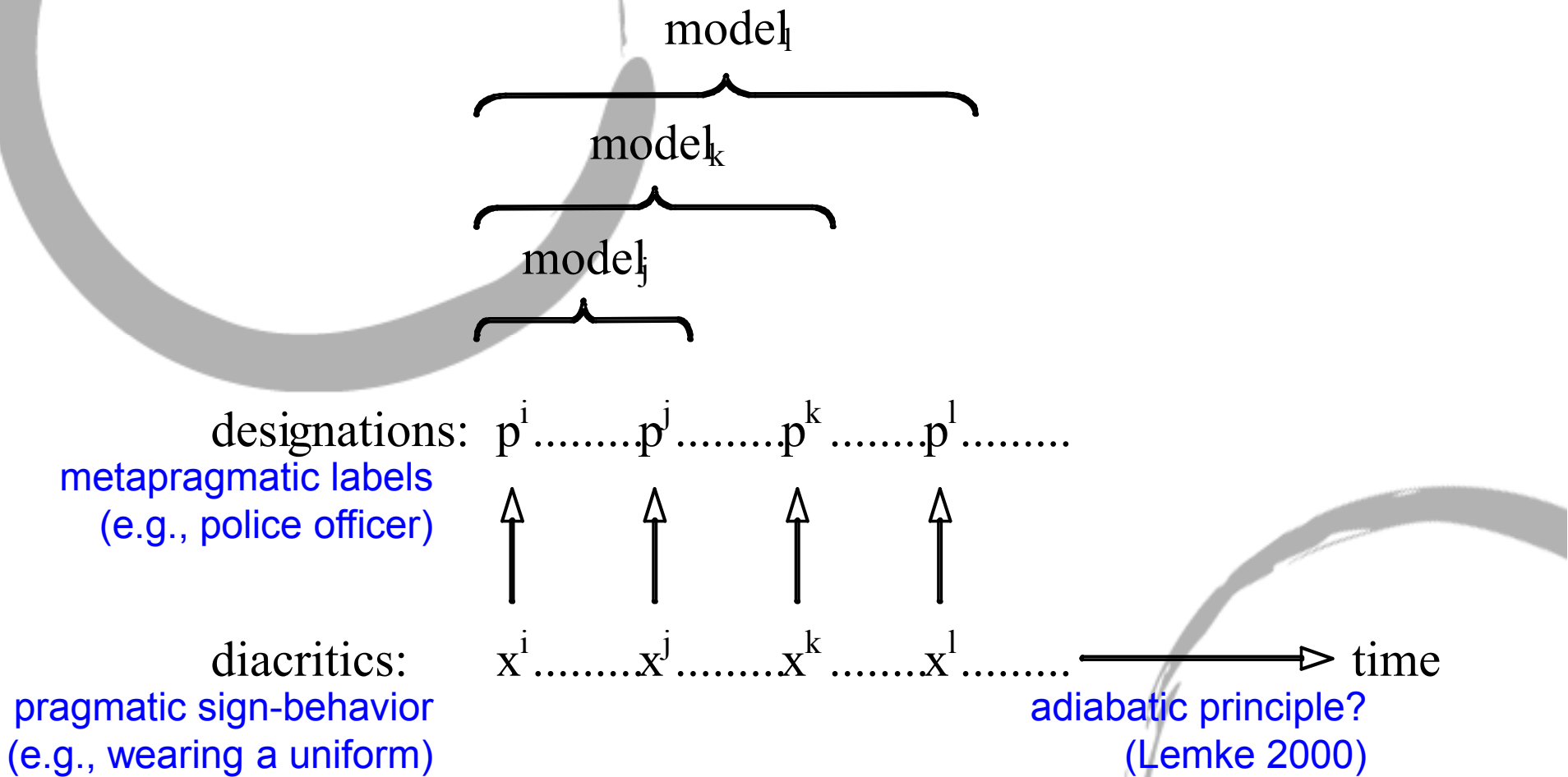
Discourse analysis of nicknaming

- Names of three corporations used as nicknames for two students
- Linguistic anthropological approach to discourse analysis
- “Language as lens” (Rymes 2001): close analysis of interaction provides detailed understanding of how people construct social reality
- Focus on contexts and effects of talk; not on surface value of utterances or intentions of speakers

Timescales and trajectories

- “The formation of identity ... cannot take place on short timescales. Even if short-term events contribute toward such changes, it is only the fact that they are *not* soon erased, do not quickly fade—that subsequent events do not reverse the change—that makes it count. It is the longer-term process, including the effects of subsequent events, that determines for us the reality of basic human social development” (Lemke 2000:282).
- Trajectories of participation (Wortham 2006)


Textually cumulative models of personhood



(Agha 2007:252)



Nicknaming

- Social practice that varies across cultural contexts
 - Nicknames can be given in serial “baptismal events” (Putnam 1975)
 - One motivation for nicknaming: means of differentiating between two people with the same name
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Corporate names as student nicknames

- Korean American fifth graders at Apex
- European American teacher: Mrs. Turner
- Focal students: Daniel Ku and Dan Lee

<i>Name</i>	<i>Nickname</i>
Daniel Ku	Danko (Korean electronics corporation)
Dan Lee	LG (Korean electronics corporation)
Dan Lee	Dan's Mart (American wholesale corporation)

Perspectives on nicknaming

- Mrs. Turner: nicknaming wouldn't happen in regular school; nicknames liven things up in after-school; "I'm like a comedian with an audience."
- Daniel Ku: "I don't really care. ... People used to call me Danko a lot."; Danko used "in a funny way. Fun."



Corporate nickname baptismal events



(1) Danko baptism chat [2/9/04:04pm]

Mrs. Turr Daniel, what is your last name?

Jeff: Ku

Daniel Ku ~~K-U~~

Mrs. Turr I asked adm

Daniel Ku ~~K-U~~

Mrs. Turr OK they wrote down Danko

[Harry, Chul, Bill laugh; Daniemi Kas.

Chul: ha ha ha Danko

Daniel Ku yeah, people used to call me ~~tharty in~~
school

Chul: Danko

Daniel Ku Danko!

Bill: Danko? uh Danko, oh it's supposed to

Daniel Ku yeah

Bill: Dan Ku

Daniel Ku it's just one ~~reference~~

(2) LG baptism [3/16/07] [2:22]

Dan Lee: my evil twin is um Danko electronic

Bill: why are you pointing to me
[Jeff, Chul laugh]

Mrs. Tur: ok he's not

Mark: Danko's evil twin is LG

Mrs. Tur: yes LG electronics

Jeff: L- LG is Dan [pointing to Dan Lee]

(3) Dan's Mart Baptism concept/16/5714.mh

Mrs. Tur: who would like to begin reading? ok

Dan Lee: ok

Daniel K: [looks up] huh? Daniel's me

Mrs. Tur: I don't know, you're Danko, that's

Dan Lee: Dan

Mrs. Tur: Dan's Mart. Danko, Dan's Mart. go a



Trajectories of corporate nickname acceptance



(4) [2/9/07:28pm] Mrs. Turnband group papers

Mrs. Turn Daniel

Daniel Ku me?

Chul: Danko [laughs]

Bill: Danko

Daniel Ku Danko [smiles, waves hands in air]

Mark: Danko

Mrs. Turn Dan Ku, not Danko

Daniel Ku but I prefer Danko

Mrs. Turn well

Mark: Danko

Daniel Ku I used to let people in my school call

Bill: Danko?

Daniel Ku yeah Danko

(5) [2/9/04:32pm] MrsTurnbandgroup

Mrs. Turn Danko

Chul: Danko [laughs]

Daniel Ku whoo! [smiles, raises arms in victory]

Bill: Danko

(6) [2/9/07:35pm] Mrs. Turn asks question to class

Daniel Ku ooh, know I know [hand raised]

Mrs. Turn OK Danko

[Chul, Bill, Harry laugh]

Daniel Ku a sentence is made up of at least one r

(7)2/9/04:36pm Mrs. Turnask question to class

Daniel Ku [hand raised]

Mrs. Turn OK Danko

Daniel Ku um, I think this ~~is~~ ~~do~~ght know ...

(8) 3/16/07 1:18 pm

Mrs. Turr all right. we're still missing two p
Danko and Mi

Dan Lee: electronics

Mrs. Turr yes and Mike. Danko probably went to
he's not here today

Mark: Sony's there to complain

(9/4/20/472pm)

Jeff: where's Dan Ku

Mark: Danko went out of business

Mrs. Tur. [laughs] he went bankrupt

(10/5/18/07:07pm)

Mark: what happened to Danko

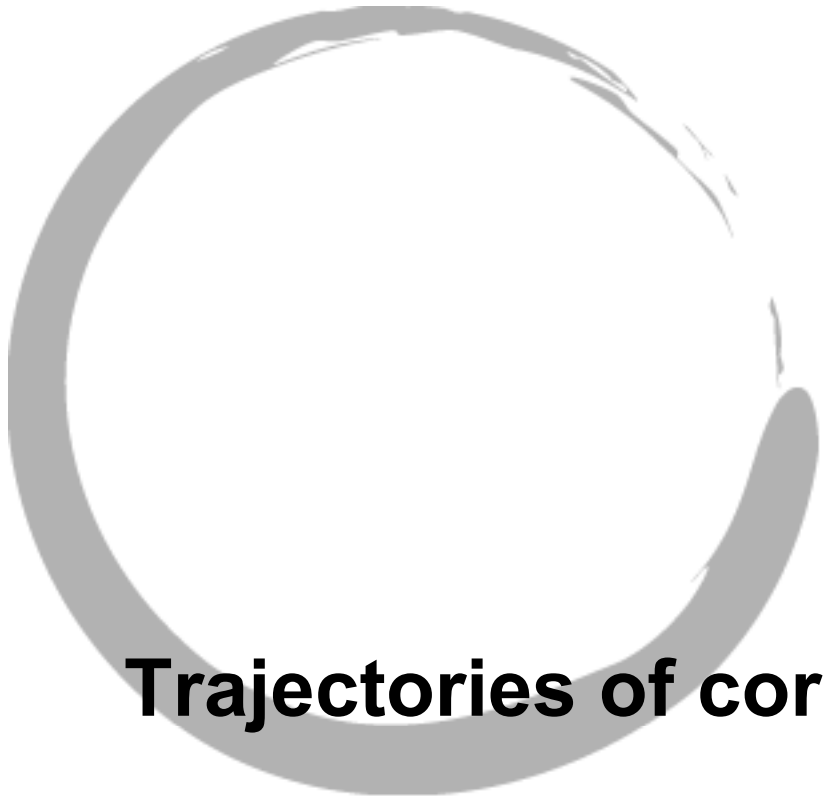
Min: yeah he never comes anymore

Mrs. Turner: he he is he went abroad to Hitachi [laughing]

Chul: Hitachi

[Mrs. Turner laughs]

Chul: Hitachi yeah



Trajectories of corporate nickname rejection



(11/9/04:33pm) Mr. Turner asks if samples

Mrs. Tur: yes?

Daniel K: from now on I'm Dan, he's Dan L.

Mrs. Tur: you're Danko.

Dan Lee: electronics

Mrs. Tur: Danko

Dan Lee: electronics

Mrs. Tur: in your case it [Daniel Ku's senten

Dan my circuit breakers" are g

Dan Lee: electronics

[Dan Lee, Chul laugh]

(12/13/07) Dan Leenters room

Mrs. Turlok Dan's Mart is back

Mark: what?

Harry: why do you call him Dan's Mart

Mrs. Tur: well the other one is Danko, so thi

Dane: no I'm LG

(13/5/18/07:24pm)

Mrs. Turr you like being called Dan's Mart?

Harry: no:::

Dan Lee: I like it a little- but then
[Min laughs]

Jane: who cares if you like it or not

Daniel K: he likes Amy [Dan Lee's other nicknam

Dan Lee: there's no ~~point~~ there's no point of sayin

Mrs. Turr why not

Dan Lee: I don't have a mart

Mrs. Turr there is a store called Dan's Mart

Jane: what about LG, what about LG

Dan Lee: yeah but then it's a poor mart ~~other~~ ~~are~~

Min: what?

Mrs. Turr it's not poor. people go there to buy

Models of naming

student-controlled
model of naming_l

teacher-controlled
model of naming_k

student-controlled
model of naming_j

designations: Dankoⁱ Danko^j Danko^k Dan^l

diacritics: xⁱ x^j x^k x^l → time

∩Dan KuÓ
is spelled
∩Dan KoÓ

∩Daniel Ku
∩Iprefer
∩DankoÓ

∩Mrs. Turner
recontextualizes
∩Danko

∩Daniel Ku:
from now on
∩on IÓmDanÓ



Conclusions

- Asian American cram schools are important sites
 - Asian-proprietor/American-teacher/Asian-student structure creates interesting cross-racial dynamic
 - Conflict over a name may not be about a name
 - Establishing or rejecting a nickname was also about constructing an oppositional identity
 - Timescales and trajectories are critical to examining how different contextualizations and entextualizations are achieved
 - Move beyond the level of names to consider metapragmatic models
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