

THE MEANINGS OF LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION: THE EXPERIENCES OF  
MIGRANT MOTHERS LIVING IN SASKATOON

A Thesis Submitted to the College of  
Graduate Studies and Research  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Psychology  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon

By

Raquel Sarmento Faria Chapdelaine

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## ABSTRACT

In this study, I explored the language transmission experiences of migrant mothers living in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Specifically, I examined the meanings and stakes of language transmission experiences, taking into account the migrant mothers' constructions of first languages and/or English transmission experiences with their children in the context of migration. Employing (a) Brunner's (1986) and Good's (1994) narrative approach to ethnography and critical phenomenology as well as (b) Kleinman's (1995, 1999) theory of moral experience and Godbout's (1998) formulations of social exchanges as my primary theoretical framework, I carried out in-depth, open-ended interviews with 13 mothers from nine different countries, namely, Afghanistan, Argentina, Chile, Japan, India, Iran, Russia, South Korea, and Ukraine. The resulting language transmission narratives were then organized into four distinct language transmission plots, which were formed—not on the basis of ethnicity—but on the basis of similar migration trajectories and background characteristics. Some of the most noteworthy findings were as follows: (1) portrayals of the objects of language transmission (e.g., first languages and English) and of language transmission experiences were not static as previous literature has suggested, but dynamic, varying across time and social context; (2) the stakes involved in the transmission of first languages were depicted as high as the stakes inherent in the transmission of English; and (3) the long-term language transmission goal of at least half of mothers in the sample was not simply bilingualism, but instead *multilingualism*. In the Conclusion of the thesis, I not only detailed how the present study contributed to the literature on language transmission, but I also elaborated on the following topics: (a) the role of subjunctivizing tactics on language transmission narratives, (b) language transmission as an intersubjective enterprise, (c) language transmission as a plural and dynamic process, and (d) language transmission as moral experience. The applications and limitations of the study as well as directions for future research were also presented in the concluding chapter.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the mothers who participated in this research: Your willingness to share your fascinating language transmission experiences with me were much appreciated! Each of your stories is worthy of a book! Thank you so very much. I have learned a lot from you!

To the Saskatoon Open Door Society, the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association, SIAST, and International Women in Saskatoon: Without your generous help during the recruitment process, this project would not have been possible. Many thanks!

To my committee members, Dr. Pamela Downe, Dr. Phil Carverhill, and Dr. Isobel Findlay: I gratefully acknowledge your guidance, genuine support, and invaluable feedback throughout this remarkable journey. What a privilege to have worked with each of you!

To my external examiner, Dr. Deirdre Meintel: The “grand-finale” would not have been so “grand” without your insightful feedback and questions! “Muito obrigada!”

To Dr. Michel Desjardins, whose Supervision must be written with a capital S: What a pleasure and privilege to have worked under your guidance and to have enjoyed your friendship! I feel like I have won the “lottery,” “the grand-prize,” of all supervision experiences! Your guidance has been a true gift! Thank you very much for your mentorship, support, friendship, and dedication to this project! “Merci beaucoup!”

To a dear friend and colleague, Dr. Vonda Plett Martens: I would not have been able to do this without your loyal friendship and encouragement throughout all of these years! I feel so grateful that I was able to share my journey with you.

To another dear friend and colleague, Dr. Louise Alexitch: Thank you for your friendship and for preparing me so well for the Ph.D. experience! I applied all of your teachings in this process!

To my mother, Dr. Maria Lúcia Sarmiento Faria, and my father, Dr. Carlos A. Franco Faria: Thank you for love and constant support! Thank you for showing me that I too could do this and for always nurturing my intellectual pursuits! You are the best role models that a daughter could have! Vovó Lúcia, thank you also for the “hands-on” help with the children and life!

To Isabelle and Ron Chapdelaine: Please know that your encouragement and help all these years have been very much appreciated by all of us! Thank you.

Finally, to my dearest husband Colin and to my precious children, Lucas and Sophia: You are my source of inspiration! Your contributions to this thesis go beyond words...Your enthusiasm, logistical help, and encouragement were invaluable! Colin, I think you have earned a Ph.D. in the process as well! I love you all!

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to those who have made an indelible mark on my life:

Colin Marc Chapdelaine, Lucas Faria Chapdelaine, Sophia Eloise Faria Chapdelaine,  
Maria Lúcia Morais Sarmento Faria, Carlos Alberto Franco Faria,  
Elisa Cristina Sarmento Faria, Josias Faria, Aracy Franco Faria,  
Maria Xavier de Morais Sarmento, Pedro de Morais Sarmento , and Nilza Rocha Féres.

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## PART I: INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

Part I of this dissertation is comprised of three chapters. In the first chapter, I will offer readers background information about the study and specify my research questions. In this chapter, I will also review and critique the literature on language transmission. In chapter 2, I will describe the primary theoretical framework that guided the study. Finally, in chapter 3, I will (a) specify the methodology, (b) offer demographic and contextual information about participants, and (c) situate the topic of non-official minority language transmission in relation to Canadian society.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

“He who does not know a foreign language is ignorant of his own,” wrote Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the birth of my son, Lucas, in Canada in 1999, six years after my migration from Brazil, Goethe’s quotation became particularly meaningful to me in the sense that I gained a new awareness of my relationship with my mother-tongue, Portuguese, and also with English, my second language and the language of my adopted country. Specifically, with the event of motherhood in migration, I found myself deeply drawn to questions revolving around the topic of language transmission, such as these ones: Was the task of mothering possible only in my own mother-tongue, Portuguese? What language or languages would I be speaking with my child and he with me? And what about my husband, Colin? What would be his language of “fathering”? More importantly, I began to think about what I should do to ensure that my son grew up in Canada with fluency not only in English, but also in Portuguese: the language of his Brazilian roots and heritage. In this context, Portuguese and English acquired new significance for me.

As my awareness of my language transmission experiences with my Canadian-born son grew over time, so did my academic interest in the topic. This interest was intensified by my observations of the language transmission exchanges between other migrant mothers and their children in the prairie community of Saskatoon.<sup>1</sup> At this point in time, I was conversing solely in Portuguese with my son and was both surprised and also a little shocked when I met other migrant mothers who seemed to communicate primarily in English with their children. Intrigued by my strong feelings about what I

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<sup>1</sup> More information about this community and its immigration profile will be presented in the Methodology section.

deemed to be the “appropriate” language transmission practices (at the time, I was of the view that all mothers should employ only their mother-tongues with their children) and puzzled by the diverse language transmission stances of other mothers, I decided to make the topic of language transmission the highlight of my doctoral studies.

The language transmission questions that were of particular interest to me included the following:

- How do migrant mothers<sup>2</sup> construct their relationship with their first languages and English?<sup>3</sup> For example, do they call their first languages their mother-tongue? Do they view English as their ‘foreign’ language or do they embrace it as their own?
- Why is it that some migrant mothers speak predominantly first languages with their children and others converse mainly in English?
- Do mothers change their envisioned language transmission paths across time?
- And, how do mothers negotiate language transmission matters with those whom they deem to be important in the language transmission process, such as their children, husbands, and those in the English-speaking environment?

In sum, I was interested in exploring the *meanings and stakes* in the language transmission process in the context of migration. Specifically, I wanted to examine how

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<sup>2</sup> I employ the term ‘migrant mothers’ as opposed to ‘immigrant mothers’ because the latter term is commonly ascribed to landed immigrants in Canada, but not to refugee claimants. Given the migration status of my participants were varied (some were landed immigrants, one was a refugee, and others were in the process of applying for landed immigrant status), I chose the former expression. Note that, for the sake of consistency, I also employ the term ‘migrant’ when referring to the literature. The only situations in which I keep the term ‘immigrant’ are as follows: (1) when referring to Census data from Statistics Canada as this government agency makes a distinction between refugees and immigrants to the country, (2) when participants in the study employ the term in their talk, and (3) if the word is used in a quotation or in titles of documents or studies.

<sup>3</sup> Note that throughout this study I employ the term ‘first languages’ when referring to participants’—but not their children’s—first languages. Also note that, in the literature, the term ‘first languages’ usually seems to relate to a migrant’s first language and the expression ‘second language’ usually refers to English.

language transmission experiences were constructed and negotiated by migrant mothers, taking into account the ‘intersubjective’ (Kleinman, 1999) nature of their experiences.<sup>4</sup> In this research, I examine all of the aforementioned questions.

After reviewing the literature, I learned that much research on the topic of language transmission and/or maintenance had been carried out in the fields of (a) child bilingualism (e.g., Bialystok, 1997; Bialystok, McBride-Chang, & Luk 2005; de Klerk, 2001; Cheuk, Wong, & Leung; 2005; Döpke, 1992; Lesaux & Siegel, 2003; Harding & Riley, 1986; Nicoladis, Mayberry, and Genesee, 1999; Saunders, 1986); (b) the social psychology of language or acculturation psychology (e.g., Banda, 2000; Gaudet & Clément, 2005; Grosjean, 1982; Hammers & Blanc, 2000; Hyltenstam & Obler, 1989; Romaine, 1989; Taylor, D. M., Osborne, E., & de la Sablonnière, R. 2008; Wright, Taylor, & Macarthur, 1999); (c) migrant and ethnic studies (e.g., Bahrack, Hall, Goggin, Bahrack, & Berger, 1994; Cheng, 2004; Chow, 2001; Massey, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990; Romero, Robinson, Haydel, Farish, Mendoza, & Killen, 2004; Tannenbaum, 2003; Zhou, 1997); and (d) language ideologies (e.g., Bloommaert, 1999; Burton, Kushari Dyson, & Arderner, 1994; MacPherson & Ghoso, 2008; Rampton, 1995; Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998). In the following sections, I will offer a summary and critique of the most relevant theories and findings in the literature on language transmission considering the following analytical angles:

- How does the literature portray the relationship between a migrant and his or her first and second languages?
- How has language transmission been previously studied and theorized?

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<sup>4</sup> With respect to intersubjectivity of mothers’ language transmission experiences, I will employ Kleinman’s 1999 formulation of the concept, namely that, one’s experience is never a purely intrapsychic phenomenon, but rather a result of the individual’s direct and indirect interactions with others in their local worlds or communities. I will elaborate on the concept of intersubjectivity to a greater extent when presenting the “Theoretical Framework” that guided the study.



### 1.1. Portrayals of the First and Second Languages in the Literature

Not speaking one's mother tongue...that language of the past that withers without ever leaving you...You improve your ability with another instrument, as one expresses oneself with algebra or the violin. You can become a virtuoso with this new device...You have a feeling that the new language is a resurrection: new skin, new sex. But the illusion bursts when you hear, upon listening to a recording...that the melody of your voice comes back to you as a peculiar sound, out of nowhere...Your awkwardness has its charm, they say, it is even erotic, according to womanizers, not to be outdone. No one points out your mistakes, so as not to hurt your feelings, and then there are so many, and after all they don't give a damn. One nevertheless lets you know that it is irritating just the same. Occasionally, raising the eyebrows or saying "I beg your pardon?" in quick succession lead you to understand that you will "never be a part of it"...that there, at least, one is not "taken in." (Kristeva, 1991, p. 15)

Julia Kristeva's (1991) rich description of how a migrant may experience his or her first and second languages in her book Strangers to Ourselves highlights the complexities of the experience of bilingualism (or multilingualism) in the context of migration. Pavlenko (2006) has indicated that the primary literature exploring the experience of being bilingual<sup>5</sup> appears to be that of translingual writers (e.g., Beaujour, 1989; Hoffman, 1989; Todorov, 1994; all cited in Pavlenko, 2006) who have written memoirs, fictions, or personal reflections on their experiences of bilinguality or multilingualism. According to Pavlenko, common topics in this literature include those of whether or not one feels and/or behaves differently when speaking different languages as well as the implications of forging bilingual or multilingual identities.

The testimonial of Kushari Dyson (1994), a Bengali-English writer, offers a good illustration of the complexity of one's experience of bilinguality. Before her move to

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<sup>5</sup> In this study, I will employ Pavlenko's (2006) broad definition of bilingualism, when referring to bilingual individuals or to the experience of bilinguality. Specifically, bilingualism is defined by Pavlenko as the use of two languages in one's daily life in a simultaneous or consecutive manner, irrespective of the person's level of language proficiency in the languages in question. While the simultaneous use of two languages would relate to situations in which a person switches from one language to another when conversing with others, the consecutive use of languages regards those contexts in which a person employs one language at a time in distinct social spheres (e.g., first languages are used at home and English is used at work). In the recruitment criteria in the methodology section I will specify how the concept of bilingualism was operationalized in the study.

England from India, the author spoke of her first language, Bengali, as a language of poetry, cultural identity and family intimacy:

I would write...poems with a chalk on a wood-framed slate writing board...from the age 5 onwards...All this poetry was written in Bengali, the only language we spoke at home...My own name and that of my sister...were taken from Tagore's poetry, the names of his two favourite flowers. The bonding with Bengali was therefore very strong. The language expressed our cultural identity... (p. 172)

English, on the other hand, was described by the author as simply her "second language," a language that she was expected to learn, prior to her migration.

After the move, Kushari Dyson (1994) specified that as her cultural, emotional, and professional attachment to Bengali grew stronger, so did her relationship with English: a language that she had mastered academically and professionally during her years in England. The biggest challenge that she encountered, she explained, was that neither her English literary work nor her Bengali writing accomplishments were duly recognized by English-speaking others in the new country:

My bilingualism, instead of bringing me an extra honour, as in India, is an embarrassment here...One Oxford don, himself a scholar in other languages but suspicious of bilingualism in writing, thought that I was *very brave* trying to write poetry in English. The fact that I have written several books in Bengali does not really add to my status here. The only value of my Bengali books in this country is as physical objects, when I go into classrooms to work for multicultural educationists. They...demonstrate to the children that there are other languages and scripts in the world. (p. 179)

Thus, in this particular case, the author described both her first language and English as languages of social and professional delegitimization after her move.

Apart from the literature on translingual writers, it seems that the question of how migrants construct their relationship with their first and second languages has not been given much attention in the field of psychology, for example. In this literature, I found four sources that addressed the topic, albeit in an indirect manner. The first two sources were those of Santiago-Rivera and Altarriba's (2002) review of the role of bilingualism in the context of psychotherapy and of Foster's (2001) examination of narratives of distress

and trauma in bilingual clients. Even though the articles were not a direct examination of how bilinguals portray their relationships with their first and second languages (i.e., the authors did not ask their clients to elaborate on their relationships with their languages), the researchers posited that emotional experiences could be legitimately expressed in both languages, so long as individuals have sufficient fluency in the languages in question. "Each language has its own cognitive and emotional components, and individual memories are stored in the language that has the most meaning at the time of their occurrence," Santiago-Rivera and Altarriba argued (p. 38).

Foster (2001), however, warned that, even in cases of fluent bilingualism, more often than not, expression of emotive material in a second language can be associated with emotional coolness and distancing:

Especially for survivors of migration-related or other trauma, presenting the experience in a language foreign to the actual events can, at times, assist a patient in recounting it without feeling the full-force of its ego-disruptive charge. (p. 172)

Mirsky (1991), the third source, differed from the aforementioned authors in that she established clear correlations between how migrants perceive their first and second languages. The first language, Mirsky argued, is the language that one associates with feelings of dependency and loyalty towards one's familial roots and their countries of origin. The second language, she continued, symbolizes the new country as well as a sense of autonomy and separation derived from immigration. Thus, in Mirsky's view, migrants would often struggle with ambivalent feelings towards their first and second languages, given the potential incompatibility between migratory autonomy and loyalty towards familial roots.

Although not many sources were found, the aforementioned findings suggest that an individual's relationships with his or her first and second languages may be more complex than anticipated in the sense that they could change depending on the context.

Finally, a source that addressed the topic in an even more indirect manner was an overview of how *the children* of migrants perceived their parents' first languages. Specifically, a French study with bilingual adolescents carried out by Dabène and Billiez (1987) and summarized by Hamers and Blanc (2000), indicated that even though the adolescent children of migrants to France described their parents' heritage language as "their language," they rarely employed these languages in their daily context. Thus, it appeared that in this particular scenario the parents' first languages had more of a symbolic—as opposed to a functional—value for the adolescents in question.

In the remainder of the literature reviewed in this thesis, the question of how bilingual speakers experience first and second languages was not explored. Yet, these studies offered interesting insights in the sense that we can assess how these languages are often labelled in the literature. A sample of the most common portrayals of first and second languages is offered below.

A migrant's first language has been described as follows:

- first languages as minority languages (Dopke, 1992; Jedwab, 2006; Hogg & Rigoli, 1996; Leets & Giles, 1995)
- first languages as mother-tongues (Alba et. al., 2002; Banda, 2000; Schrauf, 1999)
- first languages as subordinate languages (Hammers & Blanc, 2000)
- first languages as a L1 (Henning-Lindblom & Liebkind, 2007)
- first languages as native languages (Kroskirty, 1998)
- first languages as ancestral languages (Imbens-Bailey, 1996)
- first languages as heritage languages (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Chow, 2001; Taylor, Wright, Ruggiero, & Aitchison, 1993)
- first languages as preferred languages (Lanca, Alksnis, Roese, & Gardner, 1994)
- first languages as "foreign" languages (Portes & Hao, 2002).

By contrast, a migrant's second language—usually English—has been depicted in the following ways:

- English as an official language (Edwards & Boivin, 1997; Mcpherson & Ghoso, 2008)
- English as a dominant language (Barker, Giles, Noels, Duck, Hecht, & Clément, 2002)
- English as a standard language (Lippi-Green, 1994)
- English as destination language skills (Chiswick & Miller, 2000)
- English as the language of the oppressive other (Foster, 2001)

These varied language portrayals seem to indicate that a migrant's first language tends to be viewed as an ethnic, symbolic, or dominated language, given the common labels of “heritage languages,” “ancestral languages,” and “subordinate languages,” respectively. These expressions suggest that, in general, first languages are (1) lower in status in relation to English, which is often depicted as a majority language and/or (2) more symbolic than functional as the adjectives “ancestral” and “heritage” imply. By comparison, in the case of English, the classifications appear to revolve around the ideas of (1) linguistic superiority, as the adjectives “dominant” and “official” suggest and/or (2) neutrality, as the expressions “standard language,” “second language,” and “destination language skills” imply.

The primary limitation of these pre-established first and second languages depictions in the literature is that, in spite of being varied, language characterizations are decontextualized. As I argued in the beginning of this section, one's experience of bilinguality may be more complex and multilayered than researchers' pre-established definitions for first and second languages. In this study, I will address this limitation by examining how migrant mothers living in Saskatoon portray their relationships with their

first and second languages, taking into account their social interactions in their local worlds.

## 1.2 Portrayals of Language Transmission in the Literature

Derived from the Latin *transmittere*, the verb “to transmit” means literally “to send something across.” Thus, the one who transmits is the one who passes something on or causes something to spread from one person to another. In this study, I will conceptualize language transmission as a form of social exchange in which individuals have much to gain and lose (i.e., a form of social exchange in which much is at stake). Thus, I will also embrace the premise that what is being transmitted goes beyond the sole transmission of the conventional speech patterns of a group with its diction, syntax, and grammar. In regards to the individuals involved in the giving and receiving end of the language transmission process, my examination of language transmission will include participants (the primary givers) and their children (the primary receivers), but will not be restricted to them. Specifically, I will also consider how mothers portrayed the role of significant others (e.g., fathers, grandparents, others in the English- and first language-speaking communities) in their language transmission experiences. These topics will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2, when I specify my theoretical framework<sup>6</sup>. For now, it will suffice to say that, in this study, language transmission—that is, the process of passing one or more languages—will encompass varied modalities. The most direct mode of language transmission would be that of a mother who is formally and/or informally teaching her child her first language and/or English. The less direct transmission modality would relate to situations in which the mothers do not speak the desired language(s), but actively encourage their children to learn it (them) nonetheless.

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<sup>6</sup> Two primary theories, Godbout’s (1998) theory of social exchanges and Kleinman’s (1999) conceptualization of moral experience will be useful in the conceptualization of language transmission.

Thus, for instance, if a mother in the study is not fluent in French, but enrolls her child in the French Immersion program, I will consider French to be a part of that participant's language transmission goals and practices.

The dynamics of the language transmission process seem to be complex and previous researchers have employed a variety of angles to study the phenomenon in migrant contexts or in bilingual and multilingual societies. In this review, I will describe four prominent ways in which language transmission has been examined in the literature. Specifically, I will talk about how language transmission has been conceptualized in the fields of (1) bilingual language acquisition, (2) linguistic acculturation, (3) linguistic assimilation, and (4) subtractive or additive bilingualism.

#### 1.2.1 Bilingual Language Acquisition

The topic of bilingual language acquisition has been widely studied in the disciplines of psychology, linguistics, and second language acquisition (SLA). Much theory and research in this area appear to be focused on bilingual children and seem to relate primarily to early bilingual development. Examples of common research questions in this literature included the following:

- What are the stages of bilingual language acquisition? (e.g., de Houwer, 1990; Genesee & Nicoladis, 2007; Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Seltzer, & Lyons, 1991; Leasux & Siegel, 2003; Nicoladis, Mayberry, & Genesee, 1999; Taeschner, 1983)
- What is the prevalence of, or factors associated with, code-mixing<sup>7</sup> in bilingual children? (e.g., Bernadini & Schyliter, 2004; Nicoladis & Genesee, 1998; Romaine, 1995)

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<sup>7</sup> Nicoladis and Genesee (1998) have defined the term "code-mixing" as "...the use of two languages within a single unit of discourse regardless of whether or not the use was deliberate..." (p.85).

- How do bilingual and monolingual children compare in relation to their oral and/or written language development? (Bialystok, 1988; Bialystock, Chang, & Luk, 2005; Hamers & Blanc, 2000)

Given that my research interest is centered on mothers' language transmission experiences in the context of migration, in this section, I will focus my review on the studies that addressed the question of parental involvement in the transmission of a first and second languages: the longitudinal case studies of childhood bilingualism. Note that many of these studies were carried out by the parents of the bilingual children in question. I consider these sources to be noteworthy because they illustrate how relevant and time-consuming the question of bilingualism can be for parents. The parent-researchers that I will refer to not only wrote books about their language transmission experiences, but they also spent years collecting detailed information and data about their children's bilingual language development.

In a review of the main longitudinal studies on childhood bilingualism, Taeschner (1983) placed the research of the French linguist Jules Ronjat (1913) and of the American linguist Leopold (1939-1949) among the first studies that addressed the topic of bilingual acquisition by children. According to Taeschner, Ronjat kept a meticulous diary of his son's French and German acquisition for the first five years of the child's life. Ronjat was also credited for being the first researcher to apply the principle of 'one person—one language' in the bilingual development of a child. The principle, which is now known as OPOL (i.e., one parent, one language) states that in order to establish bilingualism in a mixed-language household, each parent should exclusively speak his or her own mother tongue with their child. Thus, Ronjat, who lived in France, spoke only French, his first language, with his son Louis, whereas his wife addressed the child primarily in German. The primary preoccupation of Ronjat, as a parent-researcher, was to document in detail his son's bilingual acquisition of syntax, morphology, and



vocabulary, as well as his child's ability to discriminate between the two linguistic systems (Hammers & Blanc, 2000).

Similarly to Ronjat, Leopold (1939-1949, also cited in Taeschner) adhered to the OPOL method in his linguistic interactions with daughter Hildegard. The linguist, who lived in United States, but whose first language was German, was described as speaking primarily German with his daughter whereas his wife was depicted as addressing their child only in English. Leopold's work also centered on questions concerning his daughter's bilingual language acquisition, development, and preferences. What I found particularly noteworthy about his work was his devotion to the study of language transmission: He documented his daughter's bilingual language acquisition from her birth until age 12! His work in this respect is presented in four volumes.

Two more recent case studies that also caught my attention because of the parent-researcher "devotion" to the topic of language transmission were those of the Australian linguist Saunders (1986, 1988) and of German linguist Taeschner (1983). Taeschner's (1983) research focused on her daughters' bilingual acquisition of German and Italian for the first five years of their lives. Living in Italy, Taeschner also employed the OPOL method, speaking to her daughters in German, whereas her husband spoke to the children only in Italian. She centered much of her attention on the degree to which maximal exposure to a minority language determined fluent bilingualism. In her research, she describes the great lengths to which she went, to ensure that transmission of her own mother tongue: In addition to encouraging her daughters to develop friendships with German bilingual playmates and making sure that the girls had optimal contact with Germany and German relatives, the author went as far as hiring a private German kindergarten teacher to tutor her children. Taeschner also hired a German housekeeper to enrich the German linguistic input in the home environment. Even though she did not explore what language transmission meant for her, one is left

wondering what was at stake in the language transmission process for this very determined parent-researcher.

Saunders' work (1986, 1988) was also significant because it was one of the few studies in which the parents' dedicated language transmission efforts were focused not on the first language, but rather, on the second language. Specifically, Saunders set out to teach his children not English (his first language), but German—a language that he had learned from his stay in Germany during part of his doctoral studies. Note that the author's connection with German did not appear to be familial as his parents did not speak German and he had no German ancestry. The author detailed his sons' bilingual acquisition of German in Australia from their birth to their teens. Employing the OPOL method, he mainly addressed his children in German whereas his wife spoke to the children in English. Similar to the earlier work of Ronjat (1913) and Leopold (1939-49), Saunders also concerned himself with linguistic processes such as bilingual language transference and proficiency. However, in his work, language transmission was primarily conceptualized in terms of strategies required to establish bilingualism in the home, considering familial and societal attitudes towards minority and majority languages.

A common thread in the case-study research on childhood bilingual acquisition was that the literature seemed to have a very functional and/or pragmatic approach to the study of language transmission. Specifically, the typical questions addressed seem to be that of “How do children become bilinguals?” and/or (b) “What can parents do to help their children achieve what has been termed ‘balanced bilingual competence’ (Hamers & Blanc, 2000) or ‘productive bilingualism’ (Döpke, 1992)?”<sup>8</sup> For example, all the authors above seemed to agree that parents should purposefully engage their children in a variety of activities, such as reading, playing, and interacting with other

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<sup>8</sup> Both terms relate to one's ability to speak and understand first and second languages sufficiently well.

bilingual children in the target language to increase the likelihood of successful first language transmission.

While concrete advice on how to nurture the transmission of first languages can be very useful for migrant parents who want their children to speak both their first languages and the language of the new country, the focus on strategies to foster bilingualism in the case-study literature leads to an important theoretical criticism, namely that this literature is pragmatic in nature, primarily conceptualizing language transmission in terms of functional theories and advice. Specifically, there was strong emphasis on what transmission entailed in terms of linguistic processes (e.g., the focus on stages of bilingualism as well as on bilingual linguistic behaviour). Further, the studies also emphasized transmission strategies for establishing childhood bilingualism (e.g., the advice for dealing with potential problems, such as children's resistance to bilingualism). However, very little attention was paid to the *meanings* of language transmission. Specifically, there was no in-depth exploration on what the experience of transmission meant for parents, not only in those situations in which they transmit their first language—but also in the situations in which they forfeit the transmission of these languages and encourage the transmission of the dominant language.

Methodologically speaking, the focus of the studies was on children—and not on parents or, or more specifically, mothers. In one of the few studies in area of child bilingual development in which the sample consisted of parents (e.g., Mushi & Selina, 2002), the emphasis was once again on the roles parents played on the acquisition of bilingualism rather than on the meaning of the language transmission experience. Additional research exploring the *meanings* or stakes involved in the language transmission process is thus a welcome addition to the field.

### 1.2.2. Linguistic Acculturation

In the field of social psychology, Berry's (1980, 1990, 2003) model of acculturation has been one of the primary frameworks for research examining the relationship between acculturation and ethnic language (e.g., Jasinskajaw-Lahti & Liebkind, 2007; Damji, Clément, Noels, 1996; Noels, Pon, & Clément, 1996; Vedder & Virta, 2005). According to the model, acculturation is the process of change in beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours that result when at least two cultures come in prolonged contact with one another. Linguistic acculturation—that is, the degree of change in first or second language use and/or preference across social contexts—is an important part of the model in the sense that it is often used as a measure of acculturation changes in migrant populations (Jasinskajaw-Lahti & Liebkind, 2007).

According to Berry (1980, 1990, 2003), there are four different levels of acculturation: (a) integration, (b) assimilation, (c) separation, and (d) marginalization. Integration would occur when individuals from minority groups embrace the values, beliefs, and behaviours of *both* their ethnic group and the dominant society. In linguistic terms, integration would mean that individuals would strive to maintain their first languages and master the language of the new country. Assimilation would take place in the instances in which individuals show greater preference for the beliefs, behaviours, and values of the new society than of their ethnic group. With respect to language then, this would be the instance in which individuals would forfeit to a great extent the use of their first languages and embrace the language of the majority society. Separation relates to rejection of the values, beliefs, behaviours of the host society but not of ethnic group. Thus, linguistic separation would reflect the preservation of one's first language but resistance towards the language of the dominant group. Finally, marginalization refers to the rejection of values, beliefs, and behaviours of both the new society and

ethnic groups. In theory, this would imply the rejection of both first and second languages.

Findings from previous studies examining acculturation outcomes of migrant groups suggest that cultural and/or linguistic integration is the preferred mode of acculturation for migrants. Research with migrants of Portuguese, French and Italian descent in Canada indicated that, in general, integration was the most common acculturative mode (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1989; Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1987). Likewise, in a study with potential Russian-migrants to Finland, Yijala and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2010) found support for their hypothesis that cultural and linguistic integration would be the chosen mode of acculturation of prospective migrants. Finally, in a study with migrant parents<sup>9</sup> in the U.S., Mushi (2002) argued that the transmission of English was as important as the transmission of first languages in the context of migration:

Parents who come from other countries perceive the English language as a tool for upward mobility in society and therefore they want their children to learn it and use it proficiently...however, parents find it difficult to let go of their mother tongue...According to the immigrant families studied, there was a clear-cut division between the language of the home (mother tongue) and the language of the school/success (English). The families wanted their children to be able to succeed within the American society and also live fulfilling lives within their culture mirrored through their languages. (p. 526)

In my review of the literature, I also found research that offered a more nuanced examination of the linguistic acculturation process in the context of migration. For example, in a study with migrant adolescents from the former Soviet Union living in Germany, Titzmann and Silbereisen (2009) posited that while participants were willing to keep their first languages after arriving in the new country, they eventually assimilated to the dominant language. Likewise, in a study with a sample of first- and second-

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<sup>9</sup> Mushi's (2002) sample consisted of migrant parents from different nationalities. These nationalities were not specified in her article.

generation Japanese migrants in the U.S., Usita and Blieszner (2002) found that while the first generation of migrants tended to favour linguistic separation in the family realm (parents preferred to communicate with the children in first languages, especially if they lack fluency in the majority language), the second-generation preferred assimilation to the dominant language, as they lost their fluency in their mothers' first languages over time. Finally, Vedder and Virta (2005) argued that preferred acculturation strategies are context dependent. Specifically, their findings suggested that while second-generation migrant Turkish adolescents in the Netherlands—a country that favours cultural assimilation—tended to choose linguistic assimilation (i.e., they preferred Dutch to first languages), their counterparts in Sweden—a country that initially favoured multiculturalism but which has been favouring cultural assimilation of late—chose linguistic separation (i.e., they preferred to speak their first languages than the dominant language) as their preferred acculturative mode.

One of the valuable aspects of the acculturation literature for the topic of language transmission in migration is that it provides a framework for understanding migrant mothers' language transmission practices in light of their own acculturation experiences. For example, one could hypothesize that a mother for whom assimilation into Canadian society is the primary migration goal may favour the transmission of English rather than the maintenance of her first language to a greater extent. Conversely, it is also possible that the nurturing of a first language may be associated with a desire to separate from the new country.

In addition, this literature also offers a useful theoretical typology that can be employed in the interpretation of research findings. Specifically, with the acculturation model in mind, one could identify general commonalities and differences concerning the language transmission goals of migrant mothers for their children. For example, how will mothers in my sample depict their long-term language transmission goals? Will they aim

for linguistic integration, separation, assimilation for their children? Or, will they talk about a combination of different language transmission goals across time such as linguistic separation in the present (e.g., preservation of first language only when the children are young) and linguistic integration in the future (e.g., maintenance of both first languages and English)?

One relevant limitation of the acculturation model is its underlying assumption that linguistic acculturation outcomes are matters of “personal preference,” or instrumental motivation to (a) maintain or not maintain one’s cultural characteristics such as language or (b) establish or not establish contact with the members of the new country. Specifically, the model neglects the important roles that ethnicity, racism, class, and gender, for example, may play in one’s linguistic experiences. As Pavlenko (2002) has put it:

The key weakness of the sociopsychological approaches is...the idealized and decontextualized nature attributed to language learning, which is presented as an individual endeavour, prompted by motivation and positive attitudes, and hindered by negative attitudes and perceptions...In reality, however, no amount of motivation can counteract racism and discrimination, just as no amount of positive attitude can substitute for access to linguistic resources such as educational establishments, work places, or programmes and services especially designed for immigrants and other potential L2<sup>10</sup> users. (p. 281)

Another shortcoming is that a monocultural bias seems to be inherent in the theory of acculturation, given that the model espouses a dichotomized view of culture and group membership (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). By positing a clear demarcation between one’s host culture and native culture as well as between in-groups and out-groups, the model assumed cultural homogeneity, in the sense that individuals could move in and out of static in-groups and out-groups. This view does not take into account the dynamic, fluid, and multidirectional nature of the culture, namely that, in interethnic

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<sup>10</sup> L2 refers to one’s second language, which will be primarily English in this review. The term L1 is generally employed to refer to first languages or to the other labels given to one’s first language such as minority languages or heritage languages, for example.

contact, not only does the new society transform migrants (who re-construct and reframe their traditions and worldviews in migration)—but also that migrants change the cultural landscape and practices of their new world. Furthermore, as some authors have argued (e.g., Noels, Pon, Clément, 1996; Pavlenko, 2002), in a globalized and multilingual world, individuals are more likely to espouse multiple ethnic, social, and cultural memberships rather than being simply part of a single in-group and out-group.

Finally, in the literature reviewed above, linguistic acculturation was primarily examined quantitatively through the Acculturation Measure Scale (Berry et. al., 1987) or through surveys (Killian & Hegtvedt, 2003). Therefore, in-depth qualitative analyses of language transmission experiences in respect to linguistic acculturation seem to be missing from the literature. Although Usita and Blieszner (2002) did examine linguistic acculturation qualitatively through post-positivistic content analysis, their goal was not to provide an in-depth analysis of transmission experiences but, rather, to find parsimonious and general themes that would reflect the acculturation experiences of the mothers.

### 1.2.3. Linguistic Assimilation

In the field of immigration and ethnic studies and also in the area of language and social psychology, the topic of language transmission has been examined in terms of linguistic assimilation. The notion of language assimilation in this research field appears to center on the following topics: (a) the intergenerational survival or demise of minority languages in the context of migration and/or (b) the role of minority language retention in the socio-economic well-being of migrant populations. There are two important theoretical models in this area: (1) the three-generation model of linguistic assimilation, which was derived from the work of sociolinguists Joshua Fishman and Calvin Veltman (both cited in Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stultz, 2002) and (2) the model of segmented assimilation developed by the sociologists Portes and Rumbaut (1990).



The three-generation model of linguistic assimilation was based primarily on linguistic data from the 1940, 1970, and 1990 censuses carried out in the United States (Alba et. al., 2002). The model posited that a migrant's first language will have disappeared by the third-generation. Specifically, it was hypothesized that monolingual or bilingual first-generation migrants generally transmit their first language to their children. The second-generation would be bilingual, speaking their parents' first languages at home—but speaking the second language (in this case, English) outside the family realm. By the time the second generation had children, transmission of first languages would be halted and third-generation descendants would become English monolinguals. The findings from previous studies (e.g., Alba et. al, 2002; Stevens, 1992) provided supportive evidence for the model, indicating that, by the third generation, the rate of Anglicization was fairly high for a variety of ethnic groups such as Cuban-Americans, Mexican-Americans—and especially Chinese-Americans—living in the United States.

Some sociological analyses of linguistic assimilation in the Canadian context in the last decade painted a similar picture. Li (2001), for example, has argued that in spite of Canada's high levels of multiculturalism and multilingualism because of immigration, the majority of native-born Canadians, including the Canadian-born children of first-generation migrants, do not speak non-official languages:

Findings from previous Canadian censuses indicated that (1) linguistic diversity in Canada has increased in more recent censuses largely as a result of immigration; and that (2) the pull towards adopting English as mother tongue and home language has been strong...Data from 1996 Census reveal that there is substantial linguistic diversity among foreign-born Canadians...but the linguistic diversity declines dramatically among native-born Canadians...only 6.2 per cent of native-born Canadians speak a non-official language mother tongue...(p. 14)

The directions of these intergenerational language shifts in the Canadian context according to Chow (2001) are as follows: "Shifts in the heartland of Quebec were

generally towards French, towards English in the rest of Canada and...in both directions...in Montreal.” (p. 8)

Thus, according to the perspective on linguistic assimilation described above, there is a low likelihood of minority language survival across generations in the North American context.

The model of segmented assimilation (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996) was developed to examine the relationship between language transmission and socio-economic mobility of migrants and their descendants in the United States. The model was developed to counter the assumptions of previous socio-economic theories positing that full linguistic assimilation into English and abandonment of the mother tongue were requirements for upward socio-economic mobility and access into the American mainstream (Alba et. al., 2002). It modified the previous theory in the sense that it rejected the condition that individuals should forfeit their mother tongue to succeed in the new society. It hypothesized, instead, that equal or greater socio-economic benefits would derive—not from English monolingualism (i.e., full linguistic assimilation)—but rather from the maintenance and transmission of bilingualism across generations of migrant descent (i.e., segmented assimilation). The authors presented evidence that, for certain ethnic groups such as Cuban refugees in the U.S., for example, maintenance of the mother tongue was among the factors that enabled these groups to participate actively in their ethnic economy, leading them to achieve household earnings on par with the American national median approximately six years after their arrival (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990).

In the Canadian context, some researchers have argued that knowledge of a non-official minority language brings financial *penalties*, and not benefits as the model of segmented assimilation suggests. In his review of Census data from 1991 and 1996, Li (2001) concluded that while English monolingualism was associated with positive

financial returns for male and female Canadians,<sup>11</sup> knowledge of French alone<sup>12</sup> or of most non-official minority languages was correlated with financial penalties:

When variations in schooling, experience, job characteristics, nativity, years of residence in Canada and labour market features are taken into account...the effect of mother tongue on earnings is unequivocal...those who speak English as a mother tongue have a definite earning advantage and this advantage is maintained...even after controlling for other variables...whereas speakers of most non-official mother tongue<sup>13</sup> suffer a net income penalty. (p.16)

Likewise, in their economic analysis of migrant earnings in Canada, Chiswick and Miller (2000) not only asserted that knowledge of English (and/or French) was a key determinant in earnings, but also argued that use of a non-official language at home was financially detrimental for migrants:

This study shows that...(i)immigrants who cannot conduct a conversation in an official language and those who, while being able to conduct a conversation in an official language, usually speak a non-official language at home, have earnings around 10 to 12 percent lower than immigrants who usually speak an official language at home, when other variables are the same.

Portes and Hao (2002) also employed the model of segmented assimilation to examine the relationship between transmission of mother tongue and the affective relationships between migrants and their children living in the United States. Employing the data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study, the authors examined whether fluent bilingualism, which was taken as evidence of segmented assimilation, was positively correlated with measures of family solidarity and negatively correlated with measures of family conflict. Limited bilingualism (i.e., failure to transmit one's mother tongue) and English monolingualism were expected to be negatively correlated with family solidarity and positively correlated with family conflict. The sample consisted

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<sup>11</sup> Note that the earnings of female Canadians are depicted as lower than those of male Canadians.

<sup>12</sup> However, Li (2001) specified that knowledge of both French and English brought a definite income advantage for male and female Canadians.

<sup>13</sup> Li (2001) specified that the non-official languages that brought the most financial penalties were Greek, Chinese, Ukrainian, and Indo-Iranian languages.

of second generation U.S. born adolescents of varied ethnic origins (e.g., Cubans, Jamaicans, Mexican, Chinese, Vietnamese) residing in Miami and San Diego. Results supported the hypotheses indicating fluent bilingualism significantly predicted higher levels of solidarity between children and parents as well as lower levels of family conflict. The authors concluded that early transmission of the mother tongue was associated with subsequent positive inter-generational outcomes.

Likewise, in a thorough review of the psychological impact of biculturalism on migrant populations, LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) argued that those migrants who were able to establish a bicultural and bilingual identity had better physical and psychological health than those who did not. And, Romero, Robinson, Haydel, Mendoza, and Killen (2004) specified that in families of Mexican descent, the children's ability to communicate in both English and Spanish was associated with high levels of "familism" (p. 35), which was operationalized in terms of positive interpersonal familial relationships, social support, and family intimacy, for example. In summary, these studies offered support for the proposition that retention of a first language was beneficial for the migrant's general well-being in the U.S. context.

Research in the European and the Canadian contexts has also established a positive correlation in regards to the role of first language retention and socio-psychological well-being of minority populations. In their study with adolescents of Russian-descent in Germany, for example, Jasinskaja-Lahti and Liebkind (2007) found that loss of first language was negatively associated with psychological well-being. And, in a review of Canadian studies examining the benefits of minority language retention, Chow (2001) argued that heritage language<sup>14</sup> maintenance not only promotes group-cohesion within ethnic-identifying groups, but that it also facilitates "ethnic rediscovery"

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<sup>14</sup> In the Canadian context, the term "heritage language" usually refers to languages other than English and French.

(p. 5); that is, one's ability to reconnect with their ethnicity in the context of migration.

Finally, in the context of Indigenous languages in Canada, Wright, Taylor, and Macarthur (2000) posited that loss of one's heritage language is not only disastrous for the individual and his or her community, but also for the cultural existence of a people:

There are serious potential cognitive and emotional risks for individual children that arise...from the loss of their heritage language...replacement of their heritage language with the socially dominant language (English) also spells the end, the death, of the heritage language itself and by extension represents a serious threat to...an entire people. (p. 64)

The literature on linguistic assimilation is very important to the present study in the sense that it illustrates the importance of the macro-social context with respect to migrants' experiences of language transmission. First, the literature identified a challenging aspect of language transmission, namely that a migrant's first language may not survive across generations and that it may be devalued in the market of the new country. Second, it pointed to evidence that the maintenance of one's first language may be critical to the social and emotional well-being of migrant families living in North America. This literature also offered a glimpse into the potential language transmission dilemmas that some migrant mothers may face such as this one: How can a migrant parent ensure the transmission of a first language in social context that does not appear to value or favour minority languages?

One of the limitations of the linguistic assimilation approach was that while the literature seems to support the first language transmission in the context of migration, it overlooks the situations in which migrant parents choose, or feel compelled, to focus their efforts on the transmission of the dominant language. Although the recommendations for nurturing one's first language may be useful for many migrant families, they are limited because they neglect the complex dynamics of language transmission in particular cases. Specifically, previous research has shown that, for some migrant mothers, forfeiting the transmission of a first language and embracing the

transmission of a second language can be a legitimate language transmission option (Okita, 2001). In this research, I not only want to explore the cases in which the transmission of a first language was deemed to be critical, but I also want to examine situations in which the transmission of English was legitimately and understandably emphasized.

Finally, much like the studies in the field of linguistic acculturation, linguistic assimilation was primarily examined through surveys or archival data. In some studies (e.g., Alba et. al, 2002) the phenomenon was assessed through simple open-ended questions asking individuals to report the language spoken at home during childhood and the current language use and preferences of individuals. In addition, phenomena associated with linguistic assimilation such as family solidarity and conflict, which are of interest for this research project, were solely assessed through categorical items such as “feeling close to family members,” or “arguing with parents because of different goals.” A more in-depth and qualitative exploration of these topics will be presented here.

#### 1.2.4 Subtractive and Additive Bilingualism

The phenomenon of first language maintenance/use has also been examined in terms of subtractive and additive bilingualism by various researchers (e.g., Henning-Lindblom & Liebkind; 2007; Landry, Allard, & Deveau, 2007; Wright, Taylor, & Macarthur, 2000). Whereas additive bilingualism refers to the instances in which linguistic minorities are able to retain their first languages while acquiring a second language, subtractive bilingualism relates to those cases in which there is progressive loss of the first language as the second language is mastered (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The model of ethnolinguistic vitality<sup>15</sup> seems to be one of the primary theoretical

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<sup>15</sup> Landry and Bourhis (1997) defined ethnolinguistic vitality as “...the sociostructural factors that affect a group’s ability to behave and survive as a distinct and active collective entity within multicultural settings.” (p. 30)

frameworks with respect to the topic of additive and subtractive bilingualism.<sup>16</sup> This model, which was developed by Landry and Allard (1990, cited in Landry & Bourhis, 1997), differs from the literature that has been described thus far in that it attempts to explain the reasons for, or the 'determinants' of, additive and subtractive bilingualism. More specifically, while the literature has focused on matters such as (a) the stages of bilingualism (as the literature on child bilingualism), (b) the typology of linguistic outcomes (as the literature on language acculturation), and (c) the rate of language transmission across generations and its relationship to migrant well-being (as in the three-generation model of linguistic assimilation and the model of segmented assimilation described above), the model of ethnolinguistic vitality aims to specify the types of socio-psychological variables that are at play role in the maintenance or loss of minority languages.

In the model, Landry and Bourhis' (1997) described three different categories of variables that are posited to influence the viability of a minority language in the dominant society. The first category is comprised of sociological variables, which are purported to measure the demographic, political, economic, and cultural status of the minority language in the dominant society. In these respects, additive bilingualism would be determined by the following conditions:

- The degree of concentration of minority group members within a territory was high (i.e., 'demographic language capital').
- The minority language was employed in the commercial sector (e.g., in commercial signs) of the territory of the linguistic minority (i.e., 'economic language capital').

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<sup>16</sup> In Canada, the notions of ethnolinguistic vitality, additive, and subtractive bilingualism appear to be commonly employed in research that examines the vitality and/or viability of the French (e.g., Landry, Allard, & Deveau, 2007) and Inuktitut (e.g., Wright, Taylor, & Macarthur, 2000) languages in the country.

- The minority language was visible in government buildings and services (i.e., ‘political language capital’).
- The minority language was a prominent part of the educational and cultural institutions of the language community in question (i.e., ‘cultural language capital’.)

The second category consists of the socio-psychological variables. These variables were described in relation to the rates of exposure of and/or use of minority languages in social networks, in the media, at school, for example. In this regard, additive bilingualism would result from (a) high levels of first language interactions in social networks, (b) ability to receive formal instruction in first languages in academic settings, and/or (c) high levels of exposure to minority languages through the media.

Finally, the last category is comprised of psychological variables. At this level, aptitude (i.e., one’s ability to learn a language) and competence (i.e., one’s ability to use a language) are hypothesized to affect minority language outcomes in the following manner: The higher the language aptitude and the higher the language competence, the greater the likelihood of additive bilingualism.

In a test of the model of ethnolinguistic vitality with over two thousand Francophone high-school students across Canada, Landry and Bourhis (1997) found empirical support for the model’s proposition that the linguistic landscape of a region—which they defined as “the visibility and salience of (minority) languages on public and commercial signs” (p. 23)—was positively correlated with minority language use:

The presence or absence of the in-group language<sup>17</sup> in the linguistic landscape is related to how much speakers use their in-group language with family members, friends, neighbors, and store clerks; in social gatherings, in cultural activities; and as consumers of in-group language television, radio, and print media. Results of this study suggest that the presence of private and government signs written in the in-group language may act as a stimulus for promoting the use of one’s own language in a broad range of language use domains. (p. 45)

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<sup>17</sup> The term ‘in-group language’ is used here to refer to minority languages.



Likewise, employing a sample of second-generation Italian Australians living in Brisbane, Hogg and Rigoli (1996) also found support for proposition that educational and media support for the minority language (Italian in this instance) was positively correlated with higher levels of minority language use. Finally, in a review of studies with 11 different migrant groups in the U.S. and Canada, Schrauf (1999) specified that (a) residence in geographically bounded ethnic communities and (b) native religious practices were critical for first language transmission and use:

...coresidence in a language community simply increases the frequency of the opportunity to use and reinforce the mother tongue. In the same way, celebration of religious ritual...provides the context in which both the language and the original cultural symbol system with which it is associated are enunciated and enacted again. (pp. 186, 187)

The contributions of the model of ethnolinguistic vitality to the topic of first language transmission are significant not only in the sense that the model offers researchers a very useful framework for classifying the variables that may be at work in the survival or demise of minority languages across time, but also in that it depicts language transmission as a phenomenon that goes beyond the personal realm. For example, the finding that the linguistic landscape may play a critical role in the use of first languages underscores the role of the social environment in the language transmission process and dispels the notion that language transmission is a mostly dyadic process between a parent and child.

The primary shortcomings of the model, however, are similar to the limitations of the literature of linguistic acculturation. First, the model of ethnolinguistic vitality espouses a dichotomized view of culture and group membership as it separates between linguistic in-groups and out-groups. As I argued earlier, in a globalized and multilingual world, individuals are more likely to espouse multiple ethnic, social, and cultural memberships rather than being simply part of a single in-group and out-group. Second, the model leaves out of its theorizing the question of how a linguistic minority's

interactions with *majority language speakers* may affect the outcomes of additive or subtractive bilingualism. In the context of Canadian society, for example, it is possible that a migrant's willingness to employ his or her first language in the dominant society may not only be affected by his language competence or the linguistic landscape of his or her community, but also by whether or not the first language is a language that is socially valued or devalued by English- and/or French-speaking others.

In this study, I will examine how migrant mothers perceive the status of their first languages in relation to others in their local worlds, including English speakers. I will also attempt to examine how these interactions in the English-speaking world may shape language transmission practices.

### 1.3 Summary and Critique of the Literature Review

In this section, I will summarize the literature reviewed to this point taking into account epistemological, theoretical, and methodological considerations. Because much confusion still seems to reign regarding the bases of social research (Crotty, 1998; Morse, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Rossman & Wilson, 1985), I will first clarify my understanding of the aforementioned terms before offering a summary and critique of the literature reviewed. In addition, this clarification is important because I want to make my readers aware of the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological assumptions underlying both the critique of the reviewed literature and the present study.

The discussion below was based on Crotty's (1998) framework for understanding social research (see Appendix A).

#### Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge, that is, the study of the types of meanings that are attached to reality. In addition to studying the structure of knowledge, epistemology also examines the types of valuational judgments attributed to scientific knowledge by researchers (Burr, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999). Crotty

(1998) indicated that three major epistemological stances shape the nature of the research inquiry: objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism. For the purposes of this critique and of this study, I will focus on two of these stances, namely, objectivism and constructionism.

Objectivism. Objectivism is the epistemological stance congruent with the notion of ontological realism; that is, the notion that reality can exist without any human consciousness of it and that the world and its objects exist regardless of our awareness of them. The objectivist stance not only agrees that there is a reality independent of human consciousness—but it also posits that this reality carries within it intrinsic meaning (Crotty, 1998; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001). In other words, objectivism holds that the world out there is a world full of meaning, waiting to be discovered. This position assumes that the researcher is capable of decoding the underlying meaning or structure of reality, including the meaning of its social and physical objects (Burr, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999; Cook, 1985; Schlenker, 1974; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001). The valuational judgment ascribed to the produced knowledge is that phenomenological meaning is objective, truthfully approximating reality.

Constructionism. Similar to objectivism, constructionism is also congruent with the notion of ontological realism. That is, constructionism agrees that reality, the world, and its objects can exist independently of the mind. However, one key difference sets the objectivist and constructionist stances apart. Whereas objectivism relies on the assumption that out there is a world full of meaning, constructionism holds that, a priori, the world lacks meaning. That is, whereas objectivism perceives meaning to be intrinsic, constructionism posits it to be extrinsic. Rather than being *discovered*, the truth about phenomena is posited to be *co-constructed* by the researcher and the research object. Phenomenological meaning thus emerges out of the interaction between researchers

and their objects of study (Burr, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999). In this regard, Crotty (1998) indicated the following:

According to constructionism, we do not create meaning. We construct meaning. We have something to work with. What we have to work with is the world and objects in the world. ...The world and objects in the world may be in themselves meaningless, yet they are our partners in the generation of meaning and need to be taken seriously. ...Objectivity and subjectivity need to be brought together and held together indissolubly. Constructionism does precisely that. (pp. 43, 44)

Thus, constructionism is realist but also relativist, in the sense that the meanings of all realities—social or natural—are embedded in social, cultural, and historical contexts (Burr, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Kvale, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and never merely descriptive. Finally, the valuational judgment attributed to constructionist knowledge is that meaning is both subjective *and* objective given the critical interdependence between subjects and objects in the meaning-making process.

### Research Theoretical Basis

The theoretical bases of the research are the perspectives and assumptions about the world and social life that justify and guide the use of specific methodologies. To date, there are a variety of theoretical perspectives guiding methodological choices (see examples in Appendix A). I will briefly describe the underlying assumptions of the theoretical perspectives that are relevant to the critique and to this study, namely, postpositivism and postmodernism.

Postpositivism. Postpositivism is a theoretical framework congruent with the notions of ontological realism and epistemological objectivism. However, this theoretical perspective reflects an attenuated form of objectivism as it acknowledges the impossibility of scientific neutrality and objectivity (Cook, 1985; Crotty, 1998). As such, postpositivism posits that researchers achieve a higher degree of phenomenological truth if they employ a multiplist approach (e.g., multiple operationalism, multiple methods, multiple rival hypothesis) to *triangulate* research findings (Cook, 1985), and if

they suppress as much as possible valuational commitments (Chelimsky, 1995; Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002). Within this theoretical tradition, the research object is assumed to be factual, knowable, and amenable to discovery. The research task is to capture as much as possible the essence the phenomenon so as to obtain a higher degree of isomorphism between the research findings and phenomenological truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The produced knowledge is viewed as a fairly unbiased and objective representation of reality, immune to socio-political impurities and valuational commitments (Richer, 1999; Gergen, 1999).

Postmodernism. Consistent with the notions of ontological realism and epistemological constructionism, postmodernism is a theoretical perspective which opposes postpositivism in a variety of ways. Whereas in the postpositivist tradition the task is to capture the essence of the phenomenon, in the postmodern tradition, the order of the day is to describe the multiple, variable, ambiguous, and even contradictory *versions* of the phenomenon (Kvale, 1999; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wood & Kroger, 2001). The produced knowledge is perceived to be both objective and subjective in the sense that it reflects a co-construction of meaning between researchers and research participants. As such, knowledge is no longer viewed as an accurate representation of reality, but rather as a socially accepted view of the world that has received the stamp of truth (Burr, 1995). Knowledge is thus context-bound, being thus embedded in social, political, and personal valuational commitments.

### Methodology

The methodological basis of the research consists of methodology and methods (Crotty, 1998; see Appendix A for examples). Whereas methodology refers to the rationale for the choice of methods (e.g., survey research, ethnography), methods refer

to the specific techniques and procedures employed in both data collection and analysis (e.g., sampling, questionnaires, interviews).

Although in the previous research on language transmission many authors did not specify directly what their epistemological and theoretical stances were, one could argue, that objectivism and post-positivism appeared to be the most prevalent standpoints in the studies reviewed. In the case-study literature on bilingual acquisition, for example, the knowledge produced tended to be acontextual and normative as researchers tried to search and establish general rules and guidelines for bilingual development and bilingual acquisition at home. Likewise, the much of the literature on linguistic acculturation, linguistic assimilation, and subtractive bilingualism also appeared to be focused on the goal of explanatory parsimony in matters of language transmission: The objective was to generate broad and decontextualized theoretical frameworks with respect to language transmission that could be employed across situations.

Thus, the reigning principle at work appeared to be theoretical abstraction. This stance was reflected in the researchers' methodological choices: In the search for parsimony, theoretical abstraction, and generalizable themes, they relied heavily on survey research methodologies as well as on research methods such as rating scales, for example.

The previous epistemological, theoretical, and methodological stances have provided us with an important but general account of language transmission phenomena. In this research, I would like to contribute to this literature by treating language transmission not as a fixed phenomenon, whose essence can be captured, but by positing it to be variable, co-constructed, and dependent on the social context. Thus, I will employ constructionism and postmodernism as my epistemological and theoretical standpoints, respectively.

Before proceeding, however, a clarification about which version of “postmodernism” I will employ in the study is in order. This is important because, as Docherty (1993) and Ward (2004) have argued, as an intellectual movement, postmodernism is not a unified school of thought. Because postmodernism has been adopted across varied disciplines, such as philosophy, art history, cultural studies, and architecture to mention a few (Ward, 2004), it has become “a loosely constituted and quarrelsome political party” (Butler 2002, p. 2). Thus, to a large extent, the term lacks a consistent and unified definition. In this study, readers should know that I am employing the version of postmodernism described by psychologists such as Gergen (1999).

For Gergen (1999), postmodernism offers an alternative to the logical empiricist modernist philosophy that has dominated the field of psychology for over four or five decades. According to Gergen, the primary objectivist principles that postmodern psychology counters include the following: (1) that only observable and measurable behaviour should be the focal concern of psychologists; (2) that psychological phenomena are guided by general principles, laws, or universal properties that are amenable to “discovery;” (3) that the empirical method, particularly the controlled experiment, can yield “real” and apolitical truths about the nature of the subject matter; and (4) that research is progressive in the sense that the scientific method can help with “the establishment of reliable, value-neutral truths” (p. 20) that will eventually replace false assumptions about the phenomenon in question.

From a postmodern perspective, Gergen (1999) argued, the object of scientific inquiry in psychology no longer needs to be observable, measurable, and invariable. In this study, for example, my interest was not in the accurate and reliable measurement of bilingualism among participants in my sample, but rather on how each mother constructed theirs and their children’s experience of bilinguality in the context of

migration across social contexts and time. In addition, in postmodern psychology, the “truths” derived from the research enterprise are posited to be—not neutral—but saturated with personal and socio-political biases:

As demonstrated in a multitude of ingenious ways, traditional scientific accounts—long championed for their value neutrality—are saturated with androcentric biases. Such biases are detected in the metaphors scientists use to organize their findings, their interpretation of factual data, their topics of study, the methods selected for research and, indeed, their conception of knowledge...These critiques demonstrate that neither rational justification of science nor reliance on empirical methodology enables the scientist to rise above moral, ethical and ideological considerations. All perspectives...have consequences, for good or ill, for some cherished way of life. (pp. 21, 22)

Therefore, Gergen asserted, from a postmodern perspective, the psychologist can no longer be treated a “polisher or mirrors” (p. 27). The psychology scholar, he stated, should instead be viewed as an active participant in the construction of realities. Finally, Gergen concluded, in postmodernism, the goal of the research enterprise is not to pursue an ultimate phenomenological truth, but rather to de-objectify reality, by pointing to the context-dependent and dynamic nature of the phenomena in question.

Thus, Gergen’s (1999) version of postmodernism resonates well not only with the constructionist and postmodern assumptions described earlier in this section, but it is also consistent with the methodology that was employed in the study (which will be described in detail in chapter 3).



## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: CONCEPTUALIZING EXPERIENCE AND LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION

In the next two sections, I will specify two theoretical frameworks that will guide this study and help me define the two primary concepts that will be employed in this research, namely, those of experience and language transmission. Whereas experience will be defined according to Kleinman's (1995, 1999) theory of moral experience, language transmission will be conceptualized according to Godbout's (1998) theory of social exchanges regarding the gift and the market. These theories, which are consistent with both social constructionism and postmodernism, will enable me to examine language transmission experiences from an angle that has been neglected in previous studies. In the end of this section, I will discuss how these two theoretical frameworks will be combined in this research.

### 2.1. Experience as Moral Experience

What is experience? And, more precisely, why is experience posited to be 'moral'? In order to illustrate the definition, boundaries, and primary characteristics of the notion of experience, I will use an excerpt of a mother's experience of language transmission that was posted on a Bilingual Family bulletin board on the internet. This mother was born in the U.S. and grew up bilingual since her parents were Cuban and spoke only Spanish to her while she was growing up. At the time of the posting (July 04, 2001), she was concerned about which language to teach her son. She wrote the following:

I am new to (this) list but I find everyone's situation fascinating and am much more encouraged to speak to my son in Spanish in front of everyone now (though I know there will be times when I will speak English in front of friends). My main concern was that I felt I could not possibly do a good job of teaching my

son Spanish since English is my better language (being US born) but I have a real emotional connection to Spanish because of my family. I would be devastated if Ryan could not converse with my parents in their language...I know I went through phases of not wanting to speak Spanish to my mom as a child because I did not want to “stand out” but my mother kept at it and I am happy to say that I never address my parents in English.

Before employing the above testimonial as an illustration, let us establish first what experience is *not*. According to Bruner (1996a), experience is not the same as individuals’ actual lived reality or as their telling of how they experience their lives. Rather, experience relates to how reality presents itself to one’s consciousness; that is, it concerns how one feels, thinks, perceives, and understands the flow of one’s life. Thus, to define the concept, Bruner posited that, a priori, one must be able to distinguish between “life as lived” (reality), “life as experienced” (experience), and “life as told” (expression of experience). This distinction indicates that, ultimately, the gaps between reality, experiences, and expressions are unbridgeable. This means that experiences do not perfectly reflect reality, and that expressions do not flawlessly represent experiences. Nonetheless, reality, experiences, and expressions are intrinsically linked to each other. First, the only ways to access one’s own and others’ experiences are through expressions; that is, we need to have narrative, symbols, or performative resources to articulate or narrate experiences. Second, as Bruner indicated, the relationship between experience and expression is dialogical and dialectic in the sense that experience and expressions are constitutive of each other: Not only will experience form and shape expressions, but, expressions will also, in turn, inform and structure one’s lived experience.

The mother’s testimonial above illustrates well Bruner’s (1986a) distinctions. The mother’s writing is an *expression* of her experience, that is, it is her life as told. Although her testimonial refers to language transmission, it cannot be taken as accurate reflection of her actual experience, and let alone reality, whatever that may be for her. As

Kleinman (1995) has indicated “we know much more than we can say or understand ... (and) we are awash in the meanings of experience” (p. 99). Although symbolic apparatuses are insufficient to capture the whole of the experience, they are nevertheless the only tools available for its apprehension. When individuals make use of these symbolic tools, they are not only representing their experiences, but also construing and shaping them in particular ways. The words, the plot, and the players chosen for inclusion in the mother’s story give us only one of many possible versions of her language transmission experiences.

Having established what experience is not, a more specific definition of the concept is in order. Kleinman (1999) has defined experience as “...the felt flow of *interpersonal* communication and engagements... (taking) place in a local world” (Kleinman, 1999). By indicating that experience is “the felt flow of interpersonal communication and engagements,” Kleinman (1999) considers experience to be first and foremost *intersubjective*. This means that one’s experience is never purely intrapsychic phenomenon, but that experience is always influenced by individuals’ direct and indirect interactions with others and with the symbolic world of their community. More precisely, experience is intersubjective because it results from the fusion of both individual and collective processes (Good, 1994; Kleinman, 1995, 1999). Whereas individual processes relate to one’s psychophysiological make-up or personal idiosyncrasies, collective processes refer to the situational, cultural, societal, and historical particularities that inform and structure one’s life. As Kleinman (1999) has indicated:

Our felt experience of the flow of lived time and space is both part of the intersubjective stream of cultural practices and social engagements and part of our inner being. Symbolic forms—language, music, cultural images—belong to both the social world of values and the interior world of feelings. (p. 378)

Thus, according to Kleinman, experience is always intersubjective because it relies on “words, gestures, meanings, images, feelings, (and) engagements” (pp. 377-378) that are ultimately part of the shared symbolic and social world into which we are born.

The mother’s excerpt provides a good illustration of the intersubjectivity of experience. Specifically, this mother’s experience is congruent with the following criteria that can be derived from Kleinman’s (1999) work:

*1. Intersubjective experience requires practical engagements within individuals’ networks.*

In the excerpt above, there are three different types of interpersonal interactions that play a role in the mother’s overall experience of language transmission; in particular, in her decision to teach her son Spanish. These three distinct social networks include (a) those in the bulletin board where she posted her message, (b) those in her more immediate English-speaking networks of friends, and (c) those in her family network (including her son, mother, and father). Her language transmission experience, including her feelings of hesitation and encouragement regarding Spanish, are intrinsically linked to her social engagements with these different groups. Thus, intersubjective experience is interactive.

*2. Intersubjective experience breaks the sharp dichotomy between public (social) and private (personal) spaces.*

According to Kleinman (1999), experience is situated neither at the level of the most macro-social processes (such as the realm of governmental bilingual support in the U.S. in this case, for example), nor at the level of the most intra-psychic or private processes (such as the mother’s unconscious reasons for transmitting or not Spanish). Rather, experience occurs in the intersection of these private and public realms, where social and cultural meanings from the public space merge with subjective feelings from the private or inner space to shape one’s experience. The fusion of the private and the

public realms is illustrated in the mother's reluctance to speak Spanish with her own mother when growing up. That is, her fear of "standing out" if she spoke Spanish belongs as much to the realm of the private as it does to the realm of the public.

*3. Intersubjective experience implies awareness of social consequences.*

This criterion is illustrated in the mother's testimony when she described at least two different social consequences that could arise from her language transmission experiences. Specifically, not only was she concerned that she wouldn't be able to teach her son proper Spanish, but she also feared emotional "devastation" if her son could not communicate with her parents in Spanish.

The second part of the definition indicates that experiences are situated in a *local world*. According to Kleinman (1999), local worlds are the particular micro-contexts in which individuals live and socialize, such as families, neighborhoods, social networks, and institutions. Local worlds are posited to be dynamic, organized, and constitutive of the lived flow of experience. They are dynamic because they are affected by the particular historical time, place, and socio-cultural aspects that influence individuals' daily situations. As such, they are bound to change with the progression of time and with changes in general socio-cultural values and practices. Local worlds are also organized because they have particular ways of reworking and redefining general symbolic apparatuses from the global world (e.g., language, aesthetic preferences, common sense reasoning) to fit their specific contexts. Finally, local worlds are constitutive of the lived flow of experience because they provide the grounds for social life. In the excerpt provided, the mother's experience would be shaped, in part, by how those individuals in her local world (e.g., her friend and family networks) reworked the broader cultural and social expectations and values concerning bilingual language transmission, for example.

In addition to defining experience as the felt flow of interpersonal communication and engagements, which take place in a local world, Kleinman (1999) has indicated that

experiences are *moral*. To help clarify the term moral experience, it is useful to examine Turner's (1986) discussion regarding the distinction between a 'mere experience' and 'an experience.' According to Turner, a mere experience relates to the felt flow of interpersonal interactions and engagements which do not stand out in any particular way in our daily lives. A mere experience is usually a fairly ordinary, non-disruptive, or routinized interactive event that does not urge any expression. For example, daily routines that would require only brief interactions with others and a minimal amount of emotional investment could be classified as 'mere experiences.' Conversely, what Turner defined as 'an experience' refers to socially interactive events that "stand out like a rock in a Zen sand garden" (p. 35). These events are usually formative and transformative, initiating people into new ways of life. In addition, they may sharply disrupt individuals' daily lives, leading them to experience strong emotional responses. But, most importantly, this type of experience urges individuals to search for meaning and to express it. Thus, 'an experience' refers to those interactive events in which something must be *at stake* for individuals. Examples of 'an experience' could include the experiences of birth and death of loved ones as well as experiences of immigration, or parenthood, so long as these events urge expression.

Kleinman's (1999) conceptualization of a 'moral experience' parallels Turner's (1986) notion of 'an experience' in many regards. As Kleinman indicated, "Experience is *moral*, as I define it, because it is the medium of engagement in everyday life in which things are at stake and in which ordinary people are deeply engaged stake-holders who have important things to lose, to gain, and to preserve" (p.362). Similar to 'an experience,' a 'moral experience' consists of interactive events that matter greatly, and that have personal or collective significance.<sup>18</sup> Unlike a 'mere experience,' a moral

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<sup>18</sup> I will establish a differentiation between the moral and ethical views on human experience in the conclusion of the thesis.

experience holds a place of prominence in people's lives because it can potentially change or threaten cherished relationships as well as their life plans and expectations, for example. Although the testimonial provided is only a brief snapshot of a complex language transmission experience, it has the potential to fit nicely with the notion of a 'moral experience' in the sense that the mother's experience required expression and that cherished family relations were at stake in her language transmission task. Finally, note that Kleinman's conceptualization of 'moral experience' builds on Turner's (1986) notion of 'an experience' in the sense that the former theoretical premise brings to the forefront the proposition that the meaningful experiences that stand out in one's life are not simply intra-psychic, but rather, *intersubjective* (i.e., they result from the fusion of social and individual processes).

## 2.2. Language Transmission and the Theory of Social Exchanges

In the book The World of the Gift, Godbout (1998) reworked Marcel Mauss' (1990 cited in Godbout, 1998) theory of the archaic gift to counter a frequent sociological argument that social exchanges in contemporary society are primarily dominated—not by generosity—but, rather, by calculated personal interest. To counter the argument that social interactions are purely dominated by selfish motivations, Godbout postulated a theory of social exchanges that examines interactions between individuals according to two different logics: the logic of the gift and the logic of the market. Godbout's (1998) theory is relevant for this study for the following reasons. First, language transmission can also be conceptualized in terms of *social exchanges* between mothers and their children. Second, Godbout's formulations of the logic of the gift and the logic of the market may be used to explore the dynamics of language transmission according to different forms of social exchanges. Before establishing possible links between language transmission experiences and the theory of social exchanges, I would like to present first

Godbout's (1998) theorization of social exchanges according to the logic of the gift and the logic of the market.

### 2.2.1 Social Exchanges and the Logic of the Gift

What is a gift and what role does it play in the social interactions and exchanges between individuals? According to the dictionary definition, a gift is something that is bestowed upon others voluntarily and without compensation; that is, it is something that is given freely. The meanings of a gift, however, can be further elaborated if we take into account the etymological origins of the word and its verb. According to the Chambers Dictionary of Etymology (2003), the Germanic bases of the verb "to give" are both *\*geban* and *\*ghebh*. Whereas *\*geban* relates to the Latin *habere* or "to hold, to possess, or to have," *\*ghebh* is associated with acts of giving and receiving. Thus, etymologically, notions of possessing, giving, and receiving are all implied in the idea of the gift. The Germanic and Greek origins of the noun "gift," *\*giftz* and *dosis*, respectively, also offer an interesting interpretation of the word: In these languages, the noun gift was employed to denote both gift *and* poison (Godbout, 1998).

The notion of a gift as a social interaction that involves the acts of possessing, giving, and receiving seems to fit nicely with Godbout's (1998) conceptualization. Specifically, Godbout indicated that "any exchange of goods or services with no guarantee of recompense in order to create, nourish, or recreate social bonds between people is a gift" (p. 20). Thus, the gift is the site where strictly social relationships are established. And, of all the social relationships, Godbout has indicated that, in modern society, the family can be one the primary sites of the gift. That is, the family sphere could be characterized by the strongest social ties. In order to understand how the gift as a system of social exchange contributes to the establishment of primary social bonds, it is necessary to examine what Godbout's description of the social trajectory and the underlying logic of the gift:



### Stage 1: Superficial Interpersonal Contact

Godbout (1998) has specified that, in the first stage of the trajectory, the giver and receiver are engaged, not in a relationship per se, but in some type of interpersonal contact devoid of personal bonds or history: "In the beginning, nothing exists but isolated individuals who, as such, are concerned only with their own interests" (p. 10). That is, at first, the interpersonal interaction between giver and receiver is devoid of emotional risks, benefits, and obligations inherent in relationships.

### Stage 2: Giving and Receiving of the Gift

The second stage is characterized by the entry and the reception of the gift in the system of social interactions. At the entry point, the giver attempts to dissolve the superficiality of the interpersonal contact and to transform social strangeness into familiarity, by offering the gift. The intended receiver may respond to the gift offering in one of three ways. First, the receiver can simply refuse the gift, denying once and for all the possibility of a more meaningful relationship. Second, the receiver may take a quasi-mercantile approach to the gift. In this scenario, the receiver would immediately offer a counter-gift of similar monetary equivalence to settle scores with the giver, thereby interrupting the trajectory of the gift. Finally, by accepting the gift, the receiver tacitly endorses the beginning of a social relationship with the giver, which may bring multidimensional benefits such as the pleasure of receiving, the experience of gratitude, and the establishment of a social bond, for example. However, as Godbout (1998) pointed out, the word 'bond' indicates that the acceptance of the gift implies a *social obligation* on the part of the receiver, which is exemplified by the words employed to express one's gratitude for a gift. For instance, the French and Portuguese expressions for the English "thank you," are respectively "merci" (i.e., at your mercy) and "obrigado" (I am obliged). Thus, Godbout (1998) has argued that, in the context of acceptance, the gift is never free:

...the gift serves above all to establish relations, and a relationship with no hope of return (from the individual receiving the gift or his substitute), a one-way relationship, disinterested and motiveless, would be no relationship at all. (p. 7)

Thus, the context of the gift is a paradoxical one, characterized by an obligatory freedom: From the giver's perspective, the gift must be free of constraints, although the giver is not a disinterested party. From the receiver's point of view, the gift is free, but be reciprocated if the social relationship is to be sustained.

### Stage 3: Reciprocating the Gift

"The gift abhors equality." (Godbout, 1998, p. 33)

Derived from the Latin *reciprocare* indicating "to move back and forth," the notion of reciprocity plays an important role in the trajectory of the gift. Specifically, it is through reciprocity that social bonds are established. When the receiver decides to give back to giver, what matters mostly is, not the counter-gift that is being offered and its monetary value, but, rather, the receiver's willingness to reciprocate according to principles of alternance and reversibility. The principle of alternance indicates that, in the reciprocation process, individuals should agree to be alternatively indebted to one another without resorting to mercantilism or exploitation. Whereas mercantilism relates to a situation in which reciprocation consists of a monetarily equivalent counter-gift (too much gift equivalence), exploitation refers to the context in which counter-gift being reciprocated is much too inferior monetarily or symbolically (too little gift equivalence).

The reversibility principle relates to when individuals decide to exchange gift-giving roles. According to Godbout (1998), after the receiving of a gift, individuals should not immediately switch gift-giving roles, but instead, only "flirt" with reciprocation:

To reciprocate immediately means that you strip yourself of the weight of the debt, that you fear not being able to assume it, that you are trying to avoid obligation and that kindness that binds, and that you give up on forging social ties because you fear you will not be able to be as generous in your turn. (p.105)

Therefore, according to the reversibility principle, reciprocation should take place only at a later time, perhaps with a gift of even higher quality. It is by bringing a surplus to the economy of the gift and by creating a voluntary indebtedness that individuals will create greater, tighter, and more enduring social bonds.

To summarize, the logic of the gift in social exchanges can be characterized by principles of anti-equivalence, anti-accumulation, and anti-utilitarianism (Godbout, 1998). Specifically, the gift is anti-equivalent because it creates a symbolic debt in social interactions which must not be settled or paid off. If the debt is settled, the continuous cycle of social exchanges ends, threatening the survival of the gift relationship. The gift is anti-accumulative because social bonds circulate in the gift system. As such, these bonds must be nourished and shared by individuals. Finally, the gift is anti-utilitarian because the social bond established is not characterized primarily by practicality or usefulness, but, rather, by a desire to be connected to the others.

### 2.2.2. Social Exchanges and the Logic of the Market

What is the market and what role does it play in the social interactions and exchanges between individuals? For the purposes of this study, the market will be defined as the social arena of economic activity in a country which operates under the laws of supply, demand, and monetary equivalence. Godbout (1998) posited that the market can be related to a variety of sectors in society, such as the world of education, production, business, so long as these sectors operate under the laws of supply, demand, and monetary equivalence. Similarly to the gift, the market is also characterized by social exchanges, that is, by the actions of giving and receiving, though the social roles in this scenario are those of buyers and sellers. However, the types of social exchange taking place in the market differ markedly from those in the gift: Whereas in the gift system the social exchange between individuals offers no guarantee of return, in the market, goods or services are exchanged if and only if financial

compensation is guaranteed. This demand for a guaranteed financial compensation enables individuals to settle scores, thus freeing them from obligation of a social bond. In terms of social exchange, the market is therefore characterized by loose social ties. It is in this sense that Godbout (1998) posited the market to be the site of, not primary, but secondary social relationships. The social exchanges taking place in the market can be examined according to the trajectory and logic described below

#### Stage 1: Superficial Interpersonal Contact

The first stage of superficial interpersonal contact is similar in both the gift and the market systems. That is, at first, givers and receivers are engaged in a situation of interpersonal contact devoid of personal bonds, history, and emotional involvement.

#### Stage 2: Giving and Receiving Goods or Services

In this stage, the social exchange is characterized by a mutual interest concerning the exchange of goods or services. This mutual interest is primarily characterized by the rules of mercantile equivalence: Individuals ensure that what is given is monetarily equivalent to what is received. Thus, this type of social exchange is different from the gift in the sense that it is explicitly quantified, equal, and guaranteed. The financial compensation for goods and services ultimately ensures that the interpersonal contact remains at a superficial level, since the settling of scores frees individuals from further social obligations.

#### Stage 3: Reciprocation

As previously specified in the logic of the gift, reciprocation was defined in terms of a circular, or a back and forth movement that characterizes social exchanges. Although this circular movement can take place both in the gift and the market, it differs significantly in both systems. The differences relate to (a) what is being circulated and (b) the type of social connections found in these systems. Whereas in the gift system, what is being circulated is a social bond, in the market what circulates is money. The

type of social connection found in the gift system relates to a primary social bond ruled by principles of alternating inequality and delayed reciprocity. The social connection in the market implies a secondary type of social tie that derives from the principles of alternating equality and by the immediate reciprocity. When givers pass on their goods or services, they must receive immediate financial compensation or acknowledgment for what is being received, ending effectively the social exchange.

To summarize, the logic of the market in social exchanges can be characterized by principles of equivalence, accumulation, and utilitarianism (Godbout, 1998). Equivalence is part of the logic of the market because financial similarity regulates this system. Further, the market is accumulative because the goods circulating in its domains are divorced from the obligations of social bonds. As a result, market goods do not have to be shared with others, being thus accumulated by individuals. Finally, the market is utilitarian because usefulness, practicality, and profitability regulate the nature of social interactions in these systems.

### 2.2.3 Language Transmission Experiences and the Theory of Social Exchanges

How can the theory of social exchanges be employed in the conceptualization of language transmission? Specifically, how can the logic of the gift and the market be employed in the study of language transmission experiences in the context of migration?

#### Language Transmission Experiences and the Logic of the Gift

As previously specified, Godbout (1998) indicated that the logic of the gift is primarily characterized by principles of anti-equivalence, anti-accumulation, and anti-utilitarianism. These principles render the gift to be a primarily social system, with the family being one of its most representative sites in society. In addition, Godbout specified the logic of the gift is also paradoxical because of the obligatory freedom to reciprocate present in every social bond. That is, to establish primary social bonds with others, individuals *must freely reciprocate* the received gift. Thus, the gift presupposes

imbalance as well as symbolic indebtedness. The logic of the gift is relevant for this research because it allows an exploration of the dynamics of language transmission considering the gift relationship in the intergenerational and other primary social exchanges taking place in the context of immigration.

Before immigrating and having their first children, it is reasonable to hypothesize that, in varying degrees, the mothers were involved in a gift-giving relationship with others in their countries of origin; that is, we could assume that, in varying degrees, the mothers were able to establish and nurture social bonds with others such as parents, relatives, and/or friends. With the advent of immigration, it is possible that the mothers' ability to reciprocate, that is, to fulfill social obligations with significant others in their home countries was challenged. Thus, after immigration, mothers might experience a heightened sense of imbalance and social obligation concerning their relationships with those who matter, such as family members, for example, in their countries of origin. They may feel that they must freely reciprocate the gifts that they have received by these significant others (e.g., the gift of nationality, lineage, or language), if they are to maintain intergenerational ties and cultural bonds. The context of reciprocation thus represents one of the contexts in which language transmission may take place.

In this study, I would like to explore the extent to which transmission of a mother's first language in the context of migration may be associated with attempts to repair and re-establish social and intergenerational bonds. Specifically, to what extent is first language transmission associated with continuity to one's intergenerational ties, nationality, and cultural roots? Also, what is at stake if mothers decide not to transmit their first languages? And, could there be a situation in which the transmission of a first language is forfeited because of a prior "poisoned gift?" Whatever the reasons for reciprocating or not reciprocating, how do mothers resolve the moral dilemmas

associated with the interruption of the gift cycle, and the subsequent break of social bonds?

Note, however, that in this study I will not restrict the study of language to gift relationships established in the countries of origin. Specifically, I also want to examine whether or not language transmission practices will be influenced by the social relationships that mothers want their children to establish with significant others in Canada, such as English-speaking peers, in-laws or husbands, in the instances in which partners are Canadian-born. In this respect, to what extent is English transmission associated with the nurturing of social bonds in the new country? And, more importantly are there language transmission dilemmas associated with the forming of social bonds in Canada and in the countries of origin? How do mothers make sense of the social consequences of their language transmission decisions or choices?

#### Language Transmission Experiences and the Logic of the Market

The market is one of the social domains that comprise the macro-level of relationships. As previously specified by Godbout (1998), the principles regulating the market and its secondary social ties are those of equivalence, accumulation, and utilitarianism. These secondary types of relationships found in the market are important and meaningful because they ultimately relate to individuals' ability to participate effectively in the social, economic and political spheres of their new country, in this case. That is, the goal of the "better life and opportunities for children" which is often associated with immigration seems to be intricately tied to individuals' ability to engage in relationships that are equivalent, utilitarian, and financially beneficial.

In this context, the market and its logic must also be related to the exploration of language transmission in migration. First, to what extent does the transmission of English relate to the mothers' desires to give their children access to the social, economic, and political systems in the new country? Could the logic of the market

override the logic of the gift when mothers make linguistic choices for their children? Or, on the contrary, do they cohabit with one another without friction? How are the languages in question—English, first languages, (and to a lesser extent, French) in the context of this research—evaluated by others in the local worlds, according to mothers? How do mothers perceive the “market” value of the languages at stake in the language transmission process and how do these perceptions affect their language transmission narratives? Finally, are the logic of the gift and the logic of the market completely independent from one another or do they interrelate or even interpenetrate one another?

To conclude, the primary goal of this study is to explore the meanings and stakes in the transmission of first languages and/or English in the context of migration, taking into account the intersubjective nature of the mothers’ language transmission experiences. Note that, even though Godbout’s (1998) conceptualization of social exchanges and Kleinman’s (1995, 1999) formulation of moral experience will provide the primary conceptual lenses for understanding language transmission experiences, I also had to draw on additional theories and concepts when analyzing and interpreting the data. These secondary theories were as follows: emplotment and subjunctivizing tactics (Good, 1994), resistance (Kleinman, 1999), as well as strategies and tactics (de Certeau, 1988). I will also present in the conclusion of the thesis Kleinman’s (1995, 1999) and Shweder’s (1991) formulations regarding ethics and morality. The manners in which both primary and secondary theories were applied in the study will be elaborated in both the Results and Conclusion chapters.



### 3. METHODOLOGY

In this section I will elaborate on the following topics: (a) the methodological approaches employed in this study, (b) the sampling criteria and recruitment strategies, (c) the instruments and interviewing procedures, (d) the methods of data analysis, and (e) the demographic and background information for participants in the sample. Before delving into these methodological considerations, however, I will first situate the present research by providing readers with relevant information about the broader social context within which the language transmission narratives in this study are embedded.

#### 3.1 Situating the Research

In order to situate this research, I will offer a general overview of five distinct, but interrelated topics that are pertinent to the study of minority language transmission in the Canadian context. First, I will specify to readers how social and academic discourses on bilingualism and/or linguistic minorities have changed from the early 1900's to the early 2000's both in the U.S. and in Canada. Second, I will indicate how bilingualism and multiculturalism became constitutional rights in Canada in the decades of 1970's and the 1980's. Third, I will describe the public responses to official bilingualism and multiculturalism (and consequently, multilingualism) in Canadian society as they are depicted in government and academic documents. Fourth, I will offer readers a portrayal of the types of heritage language programs in Canada and in Saskatoon that have been (at least partially) funded by the government. Fifth, I will give readers information about cultural and linguistic diversity in the Canadian Prairies and in Saskatoon. Finally, I will conclude this particular section by specifying how these five different topics are relevant for our understanding of the broader social context in this research.

Note that my discussion of the aforementioned topics is not meant to be exhaustive and will relate primarily to the social standing of non-official minority languages in Canada across time. The French language is mentioned in the context of official bilingualism in Canada. A discussion of the history and status of First Nations languages in the country was beyond the scope of my review.

### 3.1.1 Bilingualism as a Social and as an Academic Handicap

From the early 1900's to the late 1950's, the maintenance of minority languages by migrants and their children was strongly discouraged and frowned upon by the English-speaking society in North America. During this time span, bilingualism (i.e., the use of minority languages, including French in Canada, in addition to English) was associated with a variety of academic and social disadvantages such as linguistic and/or mental retardation, low levels of intelligence, and/or an array of negative personality traits. These associations appeared to derive from two distinct, but interrelated, factors.

The first was the assumption that migrants of non-English speaking origins in North America were "from inferior genetic stock," as Kenji and Garcia (1989, p. 376) described it. According to this hereditarian view, English speakers were both morally and developmentally superior to non-English speakers. A good illustration of this standpoint was offered by Lambert (1992) in his review of his research program examining Anglophone and Francophone relations in Canada in the late 1950's. Employing a sample of English- and French-speaking Canadian university students, Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillebaum (1960, cited in Lambert, 1992) found that both the English- *and* French-speaking participants in the sample rated Anglophone Canadians as having greater character, intelligence, ambition, dependability, and even height (judges assumed that those who spoke English were taller than those who spoke French) than Francophone Canadians.

The second factor concerned the prevalent view in North American academic circles in the first half of the century, namely that knowledge and use of two languages created a “mental burden that caused lower levels of intelligence” (Kenji & Garcia, 1989, p. 375). Specifically, Kenji and Garcia indicated that the dominant metaphor underlying the thinking of the time was that different languages competed for the same mental resources and that, as a result, bilingual children lagged behind in terms of intelligence and academic performance in comparison to monolingual children. According to both Kenji and Garcia (1989) and Lambert (1992), the association of bilingualism with cognitive handicaps derived not only from prevailing stereotypes regarding non-Anglophone migrants at the time, but also from methodological flaws of the studies carried out with monolingual and bilingual children, such as the following: (a) basing the definition of bilingualism, not on linguistic abilities, but on a foreign last name; (b) disregarding the role of socio-economic background on academic performance; and (c) carrying out intelligence tests only in English, the language of the monolingual children.

According to Lambert (1992), the dim picture of bilingualism in North American society in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led the phenomenon to be viewed as a “plague:”

In Canada in the 1950's...(bilingualism) was also broadly perceived as a plague associated with immigrant newcomers or with those on the margin of mainstream society...in North America, the bilingualism-handicap message served the aims of assimilationists by frightening language minority groups and public school educators away from the bicultural-bilingual socialization of children...waves of immigrants to Canada, the United States...had been warned to protect themselves from bilingualism. (pp. 538, 539)

In academic circles, the idea that bilingualism was not something to be shunned, but rather, encouraged only began to gather strength in late 1960's and 1970's.

Finally, Pavlenko (2006) has noted that in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, bilingualism in the U.S. and in some parts of Western Europe, such as Germany, was also associated with disloyalty and psychopathology, respectively:

...in traditionally monolingual societies, bilinguals are at times seen as people with two conflicting personalities whose shifting linguistic allegiances imply shifting political allegiances and moral commitments. Such views were particularly common in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the United States, during and after the First World War, language and educational policies targeted incoming immigrants and their children, forcing them to abandon their native languages in a show of loyalty to their new country...A decade later in Germany, Nazi scholars...argued that bilinguals experience a pathological inner split and suffer intellectual and moral deterioration in their struggle to become one... (pp. 3,4)

### 3.1.2 Bilingualism as a Valuable Cognitive Asset

From being associated with retardation, handicaps, and even the plague in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, bilingualism began to be depicted primarily as a valuable academic asset after the 1970's in academic discourses. This shift in perceptions seemed to derive, at least in part, from the results of a new wave of studies involving monolingual and bilingual children that took into account the methodological shortcomings of the previous research in the field. Once the past design flaws were corrected, bilingualism was then seen in terms of an advantage:

All of a sudden the handicap was gone and replaced by a bilingual advantage: The bilinguals were more advanced in school, scored better on tests of first language skills, were more facile at concept formation, and displayed greater "mental flexibility" and a more diversified "structure" of mental abilities." (Lambert, 1992, p. 539).

The dominant metaphor guiding the thinking in the academic field thus changed from one of 'languages in competition' to 'languages in peaceful co-existence' not only in the sense that one's first language was no longer posited to interfere with the acquisition and use of the second language, but also in that a first language was expected to facilitate second language learning: "...the rate of acquisition of a second language is highly related to the proficiency level in the native language..." (Kenki & Garcia, 1989, p. 378).

In the late 1990's and early 2000's, studies examining the effects of additive bilingualism on cognitive development continued to support the notion that bilingual

children fared better than monolingual children in matters such as (a) the understanding of the relationship between print and language (Bialystock, 1997) or (b) the development of reading skills (Leseaux & Siegel, 2003), for example. However, when reviewing the literature in this particular time span, I noticed that the portrayal of bilingualism as a valuable cognitive asset has not gone completely unchallenged. Specifically, in addition to the studies supporting bilingualism, I also came across research that associated multilingualism in the home environment with developmental language impairment in children (e.g., Cheuk, Wong, & Leung, 2005) or literature questioning the benefits of bilingualism for children who suffer from developmental disorders such as autism, down syndrome (e.g., Toppelberg, Snow, & Tager-Flusberg, 1999). Furthermore, Pavlenko (2006) has pointed out that the view of bilingualism as psychopathology has not completely disappeared from contemporary Western society:

From time to time this metaphor also pops up in political discourse. For instance, David Blunkett (2002), British Home Secretary, recently remarked that the use of English—rather than the native language—in Asian British households would help ‘overcome the schizophrenia which bedevils generational relationships’ in immigrant families. (p.3)

The extent to which positive academic portrayals of bilingualism are undergoing a change in more recent times remains to be seen.

### 3.1.3 Bilingualism and Multiculturalism as a Constitutional Right in Canada

The late 1960’s, the 1970’s and 1980’s not only marked a shift in the academic discourses towards bilingualism in Canada, but they were also characterized by significant legal developments concerning the political status of minority languages in Canada. From being associated with the “plague” in the first half of the century as Lambert (1992, p. 538) put it, bilingualism and cultural pluralism (and one could argue, by default, linguistic diversity) became constitutional rights. Specifically, in 1969, the government introduced the Official Languages Act, which gave equal and official status to French and English. The *Act* allowed Canadians the right to receive federal services

in either language and it ensured that the children of Francophone Canadians, for example, could be educated in the French language.

In 1971, the announcement of the Canadian Multiculturalism Policy (outlined in the site Multicultural Canada) addressed the question of the status of non-official minority languages in the country. The policy, which continued to honour official bilingualism, challenged the assumption that only those of Anglophone or Francophone descent had custodial rights over their cultural heritages. It read:

There is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly.

By rejecting the notion of biculturalism (but not of official bilingualism), the Canadian Multiculturalism policy supported, even if symbolically, the existence and preservation of non-official minority languages in the country by depicting ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism as key aspects of the Canadian life.

With the introduction of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 and the passing of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, Canada became the first country in the world to pass a national law that affirmed the value of cultural plurality. Building on section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which called for “the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians,” the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 sought to “...assist in preserving culture, reducing discrimination, enhancing cultural awareness and understanding, and promoting culturally sensitive institutional change at the federal level” (Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 2002 – 2003, p.4). Thus, nearing the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the maintenance of official and non-official minority languages was a constitutional right of Canadians within the framework of preservation of cultural heritage.

### 3.1.4 Responses to the Official Languages Act and to the Multiculturalism Act

Note that the political developments regarding minority languages in Canada described above did not take place without public controversy. With respect to the Official Languages Act, Fleras and Elliot (2003) have indicated that both the public and politicians responded to it with “a mixture of support, rejection, expediency, and indifference” (p.222). These authors pointed out that among the primary criticisms to the *Act* were the views that (a) the costs of official bilingualism were too high; (b) official bilingualism challenged national unity; and (c) the policy did not significantly increase the number of bilinguals in the country. On the supportive side there were the arguments that (a) official bilingualism had helped improve Anglophone-Francophone relations, thus restoring national unity and that (b) the social, cultural, and historical value of language preservation for both minority and majority groups was beyond politics or commercial value, the authors specified.

Likewise, the public response to Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 has been portrayed as positive, negative, or mixed, depending on the literature one reviews. Specifically, in government reports, the tendency has been to highlight the positive outcomes of multiculturalism programs and to emphasize the public support for cultural and linguistic diversity in the country. The Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 2002 – 2003 specified, for example, that “80% of Canadians agree that multiculturalism enhances the value of Canadian citizenship” (p. 9). Likewise, the national Multiculturalism and Canadians Attitude Study of 1991 (cited in Li, 1999) indicated that approximately 80% of respondents to the survey viewed multiculturalism to be vital to a united Canada.

Academics, however, have offered a “greyer” picture, if you will, of the public sentiment towards multicultural matters than those described in government reports. In an assessment of immigration and multiculturalism opinion polls in Canada in the years

of 2001, 2002, 2005, and 2006, Jedwab (2006) pointed out that the percentage of Canadians agreeing with statements such that “Canada’s multicultural make-up is one of the best things about this country” can be as high as the percentage of those who feel that “minority groups should be encouraged to try to change to be more like most Canadians.” Authors such as Fleras and Elliot (2003) and Li (1999, 2003), for example, have also argued that the support for multiculturalism and, one could argue by default, multilingualism, in Canadian society is a nominal one. “Canada,” Fleras and Elliot wrote, is “more multicultural in principle than in practice,” adding that many in the country still consider support for heritage languages as fostering linguistic and cultural barriers between native Canadians and newcomers to the country. Likewise, in a critical analysis of the academic and political discourses around the topic of migrant integration in Canada, Li (2003) concluded the following:

...cultural differences are seen as primordial and unbridgeable, and cultural identity as singular and not multiple. Consequently, tendencies of immigrants to maintain differences, whether it is in the form of residing in ethnic neighbourhoods, using non-official languages, or maintaining contacts with friends and relatives in the country of origin, are depicted as in opposition to integration...Indeed, immigrant’s cultural differences are typically depicted in a negative light and rarely as contributing to Canada, and as such, they must be discarded as quickly as possible. (p. 9)

Thus, it appears that at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the views of multiculturalism and minority languages in Canada are at best contradictory as positive, negative, and mixed depictions of the status and/or value of these languages can be found both within and across discourses in the realms of academia, the state, and public opinion.

### 3.1.5. Overview of Non-Official Minority Language Programs in Canada and in Saskatoon

In spite of the societal ambivalence towards multiculturalism, one of the practical consequences of having the rights of linguistic minorities legally recognized in Canada



was that government funding became available for non-official minority language instruction both inside and outside the school system.<sup>19</sup> Fleras and Elliot (1989) depicted the types of government-funded heritage language programs available for non-official linguistic minorities in the period of approximately 1975 until 1989 across the country in the following manner: In the Prairie Provinces, it was established that up to 50% of classroom instruction could be conducted in the so-called heritage languages (e.g., Ukrainian, German, or Chinese), given that a particular language group could provide a sufficient number of students; in Ontario, funding was made available for school-based heritage language with a sufficient number of students outside of the core school curriculum; finally, across the country financial support was also offered to groups of linguistic minorities across the country who desired to establish their own first language schools, such as Saskatoon's Multilingual School.

In the 2000's funding for heritage language programs is still available but it seems to have declined over time, as the focus of multiculturalism policies have changed from the celebration of cultural differences in the 1970's to issues of equality and systemic discrimination in the 1980's and questions of citizenship and inclusiveness in the 1990's (Fleras & Elliot, 2003). In Saskatoon, heritage language programs are offered through the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association (SIA), a non-profit organization that is partially funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada as well as by a wide network of other government and private parties. The mission of this organization, according to its website, is as follows:

To recognize and support the right of every cultural group and individual to retain and develop their distinctive cultural identity, language and arts without political or social impediment - for the mutual benefit of all citizens.

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<sup>19</sup> In the literature these programs are often referred to as "heritage language programs."

With this end in mind, the SIA runs a variety of minority language programs (including French) through the Saskatoon Multilingual School, which is comprised of 900 students and 150 teachers. This school offers evening and weekend classes for children and adults in 25 different languages in different locations (e.g., in schools and private homes) across the city. These languages were listed as follows: Arabic, Cantonese, Dari/Pashtu, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish, Tamil, Tagalog (Filipino), Tigrinya (Eritrean), Ukrainian, Yoruba, and Vietnamese. Note that of the 25 languages, only four—German, Mandarin, Polish, and Spanish—are described as being a part of the official high school curriculum. The remaining languages are taught outside of the core school program.

### 3.1.6. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in the Canadian Prairies and in Saskatoon

And what kind of cultural and linguistic pluralism is there in the Canadian Prairies and, more importantly, in Saskatoon—the place in which this study was conducted? According to Frideres (2009), in the past 25 years, the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan have experienced a significant increase in immigration numbers, following a period of low migration in the decade of 1970's and in the early 1980's. In his estimates, approximately 13% of the total migrant population in Canada now lives in these regions.<sup>20</sup> Of the three, Alberta is the location that appears to attract the largest number of migrants. According to the Statistics Canada report on the Census of 2006, the number of foreign-born residents<sup>21</sup> in the three Prairie Provinces was as follows: 527,030 in Alberta, 151,230 in Manitoba, and 48,160 in Saskatchewan.

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<sup>20</sup> The 2006 Census indicated that Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver have the largest number of immigrants, being home to nearly two-thirds of Canada's foreign-born population.

<sup>21</sup> The definition of 'foreign-born population' employed is that of Statistics Canada in the Census of 2006: "Foreign-born population (also known as the immigrant population) is defined as...persons who are, or who have been, landed immigrants in Canada." Note that in this

The Immigration Analysis Action Plan Gap Report commissioned by the City of Saskatoon (2008) stated that of the 2,232,831 migrants who moved to Canada during the 1995 – 2005 period, 17, 813 (0.8%) settled in the province of Saskatchewan. Of this number, 7,567 (42.5%) came to the Saskatoon metropolitan area<sup>22</sup>. A large proportion of these migrants (3,481, 46%) were described as “economic immigrants” in the report. This term was employed to refer to migrants that were recruited on the basis of their ability to contribute to Canada’s economy; that is, migrants who were given entry in the country on the bases of their education, knowledge or English and/or French, professional skills and experience, and age. The primary countries of origin of the migrants in Saskatoon specified in the report included the following: The People’s Republic of China, Afghanistan, The Republic of Sudan, India, and Iraq. Thus, in terms of linguistic diversity, the most prevalent non-official minority languages in the city in the 2000’s included the following: Chinese languages (e.g., Mandarin, Cantonese), Indo-Iranian languages (e.g., Punjabi, Hindi, Persian), and African languages (e.g., Sudanese, Arabic).<sup>23</sup>

One noteworthy factor in the aforementioned report was it indicated that the province of Saskatchewan has not been able to sustain critical numbers of migrants of any particular national origin. Specifically, while the national average migrant retention rate is 85%, Saskatchewan’s average retention rate is 57%—the lowest rate in the country. This means that four out of every ten migrants to Saskatchewan eventually leave the province. According to the document, the preferred destinations of these

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particular Census, refugee claimants were not considered to be part of the foreign-born population in the country.

<sup>22</sup> Saskatoon is a city located in Saskatchewan, a central province in Canada. It is the most populous city in the province, surpassing the capital of Regina. According to the Canada Census of 2006, there were 233,923 inhabitants residing in the census metropolitan area of Saskatoon.

<sup>23</sup> For comparison purposes, note that, according to Statistics Canada, the most common non-official minority languages in Canada in 2006 were as follows: the Chinese languages, Italian, German, Punjabi, and Spanish.

migrants are the more culturally diverse urban centers of Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, and Edmonton, in that order.

### 3.1.7 Summary and Implications for the Research

To conclude, what do the discourses on bilingualism and multiculturalism as well as the information regarding the linguistic and cultural diversity in the Canadian Prairies and in Saskatoon tell us about the broader social context in which the language transmission narratives in this study are embedded?

First, the varied portrayals of the status of multilingualism and minority languages suggest that the social standing of participants' first languages in Canadian society is at best ambivalent. Specifically, although native- and non-native born Canadians have the legal right to preserve their cultural, and by default linguistic heritages, the literature has indicated that multiculturalism and multilingualism are not unquestionably and unproblematically accepted and embraced by mainstream Canadian society. Perhaps, the word *tolerance*—a word which is often employed in the media when praise is offered to Canadians in relation to their attitudes towards cultural diversity (e.g., “Canadians are very tolerant of other cultures”)—could be descriptive of the situation of linguistic minorities in this country: One of the definitions of the verb ‘to tolerate’, according to Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (1995) is that of something that people accept in spite of their *dislike*; that is, to tolerate something is to put up with something. Thus, the migrant mothers who are part of this study seemed to be living in a social context in which multilingualism was viewed as desirable in theory, but perhaps not as much in practice.

Second, with regards to the academic discourses on bilingualism, it was interesting to note that, in the discussion of the cognitive benefits of deriving from the knowledge and use of two languages, what was depicted as valuable was *bilingualism*—and not maintenance of minority languages in the context of migration. Specifically,

much of the talk in this regard appeared to be decontextualized in the sense that the minority languages at stake seemed to be rarely identified or highlighted by researchers or authors. Thus, although one could say with a greater degree of confidence that the more abstract idea of bilingualism is valued in the globalized society of the 2000's, one cannot unquestionably make the same assertion in relation to the social standing of minority languages in the Anglophone Canadian society. The view that bilingualism is valuable but minority languages are not may play an important role in the shaping of language transmission narratives.

Third, the depictions of the cultural and linguistic landscape of Saskatchewan and Saskatoon suggest that the mothers in this study were carrying out their language transmission experiences in a Canadian urban center that does not have the same levels of linguistic and cultural diversity as the larger cities in the country. Even though all of the mothers interviewed specified being able to socialize with co-nationals, one has to acknowledge that language transmission experiences carried out in Saskatoon may differ from language transmission experiences taking place in more multicultural centers such as Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal. In fact, in its website, the City of Saskatoon stated that one of the goals of its migrant retention program was to increase the numbers of migrants from different national backgrounds in the city so that newcomers did not feel the need to move out of Saskatoon to enjoy the social support of a co-national network.

Finally, in spite of the availability of a multitude of first language programs for the children of migrants in Saskatoon, note that the declining government funding for these programs across the years may prevent the enrolment of the children of migrant parents who struggle financially. In my sample, at least one mother indicated to me that she was not able to take her four children to first language classes because she did not have enough money for transportation (In the late 1970's and early 1980's, transportation

funding was available for those students who required it.) Another mother, who was very familiar with, and knowledgeable about, the history of heritage language programs in Saskatoon, also explained to me that many of the non-official first language schools in the city have been increasingly relying on the volunteering efforts and/or financial help of migrant parents to run its language programs. Thus, for some migrants, the availability of heritage language programs alone may not necessarily translate into full support for first language transmission in the context of migration.

### 3.2 Methodological Approaches

Having described to the reader the broader social context within which the language transmission narratives in question take place, I will now turn to the methodology of the study. In this research, two approaches were employed. The first approach was that of ethnography as it is defined by the work of Bruner (1986b) and Good (1994); the second approach was derived from the theory of critical phenomenology as it is employed in the work of Good (1994). These approaches were congruent with the previously described theoretical, ontological, and epistemological bases of the research. A description of how each approach was employed in the present research is presented below

#### 3.2.1 Ethnography

Ethnography is generally employed by cultural anthropologists interested in studying the particular cultures of different ethnic groups. In earlier times, the goal of this methodology was to “grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world” (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25, cited in Spradley, 1979). According to this view, ethnographic work yielded a one-sided portrayal of how individuals experienced their worlds and, the relationship among individuals’ reality, experiences, and expressions of experiences was not perceived to be a problematic one. Researchers such as Bruner (1986b) and Good (1994), have employed this methodology in a rather

different way. First, they have embraced the position that there are unbridgeable gaps between reality and experiences as well as between experiences and expressions. Second, they have acknowledged that the expressions of experiences, that is, narratives, are ultimately co-authored by both participants and researchers (Bruner, 1986b). In this study, I will adopt the latter view of ethnography. Specifically, this methodological stance will be employed in the study of language transmission experiences in the following ways:

1. *Participants' expressions of their experiences will be conceptualized as narratives.*

Narratives have been defined by Good (1994) in terms of “attempts to link...lived experience to an underlying coherence, a story line, a meaning” (p. 121). Thus, in this study, participants' narratives will relate to the telling of their experiences as they attempt to both describe and make sense of language transmission life events.

2. *Narratives are not posited to be an unproblematic and crystalline portrayal of participants' actual experiences or their lived reality.*

As previously specified, Bruner (1986b) indicated that there are unbridgeable gaps between reality and its experience as well as between experience and its expressions. Because narratives are expressions of experiences, one cannot expect that the migrant mothers'<sup>24</sup> telling of their experiences in this research will be an accurate mirror of their lived reality.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Note that I employ the term 'migrant mothers' in this study to refer to any mother who has come to Canada with the intent of permanently living in this country. I avoided the term 'immigrant' because Statistic Canada does not employ the term to include refugee claimants in the country. Given that in my sample I had mothers who had varying migration statuses (e.g., there were landed-immigrants, refugees, and some who were applying for immigration), I thought the term 'migrant' would be better suited to describe the sample.

<sup>25</sup> In the Conclusion chapter, I will elaborate further on this aspect of the research.

*3. Narratives are social constructions of lived experience that have been co-authored by participants and researchers.*

Both Bruner (1986b) and Good (1994) indicated that narratives are socially constructed interpretations of one's lived experiences. Narratives are socially constructed in the sense that they are context dependent. That is, individuals can portray and organize their experiences in numerous ways according to the social and cultural contexts in which they live in. Narratives are also interpretive because individuals impose meaning to their experiences, highlighting some aspects of it and discounting others. Each narrative thus presents one of the many potential plots, in which experiences can be framed. Finally, Bruner indicated that narratives are co-constructed or "co-authored" (Kvale, 1996, p. 83) because their structures are determined not only by participants—but also by the ethnographer who will ultimately be telling stories about participants' stories.

*3. Narratives imply emergent meanings.*

As specified by Good (1994), one of the functions of narratives is to emplot experiences. That is, it is by the means of narratives that individuals make and create sense of their lived experiences. In ethnographic work, the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences are posited to be emergent and dynamic (Good, 1994). Meanings are emergent in the sense that they may not always be previously established by participants. Rather, as participants tell their experiences they may make connections and interpretations which were not considered before. Thus, meanings are posited to evolve and take shape throughout narratives. Finally, narrative meanings are posited to be dynamic because they can be interpreted, reinterpreted, and reshaped by participants and researchers.



#### *4. Narratives are a goal-oriented activity.*

Both Bruner (1986b) and Good (1994) specified that narratives have a quality of directness. That is, they posited that individuals' accounts of their experiences are always portrayed to go somewhere, tending towards the achievement of a goal. This quality of directness or teleology (Bruner, 1986; Good, 1994) requires that researchers examine participants' experiences considering the present, past, and future dimensions of the story. In this study I will examine language transmission taking into account the migrant mothers' telling of their experiences across time.

#### 3.2.2 Critical Phenomenology

Critical phenomenology is part of a theoretical tradition that investigates and describes conscious modes of experience without reference to the question of whether what is experienced is objectively real or not. In Good's (1994) theoretical perspective, critical phenomenology has been employed to study moral experiences in intersubjective terms. In methodological terms, one needs to consider how both the micro- and macro-levels of experiences fuse to shape individuals' lived experiences. In this study, the micro-level of experience will relate to how migrant mothers experience language transmission with others who are part of the domestic realm of their lives. The macro-level of language transmission experiences will pertain to their language transmission interactions in the public sphere. Therefore, one of the assumptions derived from this theoretical stance in this study is that data analysis should examine how participants contextualize their language transmission experiences across different social contexts.

#### 3.3 Sampling Criteria and Recruitment Strategies

The eligibility criteria and rationale employed to select mothers to take part in the study is described below.

Immigration Status. All participants were the first-generation of women who migrated to Canada. Participants' migration status could include women who were

permanent residents, women who had become Canadian citizens, women who had refugee status, as well as women who were in process of applying for immigration. Regardless of the status, the important criterion in relation to immigration was that participants were expecting to be living in Canada in both the near and distant future. That is, I was interested in recruiting mothers whose language transmission experiences were taking place in the context of permanent residency in Canada, as opposed to context of a limited sojourn to this country.

Length of time living in Canada. Participants included women who had migrated to Canada in the past 20 years or so, and who were residing in Saskatoon or in Saskatchewan at the time of the study. The rationale for the specified immigration timeline is based on previous literature (e.g., Grosjean, 1982; Hamers & Blanc, 2000) indicating that, in North America, it was only during the 1970's and 1980's that societal perceptions towards bilingualism shifted from negative to positive. Before and during the 1960's, migrant communities were discouraged to transmit their first language, and bilingualism was often associated with linguistic handicaps and even mental retardation (Grosjean, 1982).

Place of Residency. All mothers who participated in the study had to be residing in Saskatoon or Saskatchewan. This is because the language transmission experiences of mothers who live in this specific local context may be quite different than the linguistic experiences of mothers who live in bigger cities (e.g., Toronto, Vancouver), and who have greater access to a social network of individuals who speak their first languages.

First Language and English Fluency. Participants' first languages had to be any language other than English. However, mothers participating in the study should have been fluent enough in English so that they were able to talk about their experiences in English without the need of a translator. Thus, participants had to be fluent in at least two languages: their first languages and English.

Participants' children. In the first draft of the research proposal, I tentatively specified that I was interested in examining the language transmission experiences of first-generation migrant mothers and their first children. Also, I indicated that, ideally, the first children would be of three years of age or younger. After meeting with stakeholders in the organizations and agencies where the recruiting process took place, I realized that I would need a more flexible criterion in order to obtain a reasonable sample size. Specifically, stakeholders indicated to me that I should advertise the study not only to mothers of children of 3 years of age and younger—but also to mothers of older children—because the demographics of their clients included, in most part, mothers of children between 5 to 10 years of age, who may or may not have been born in Canada. This proved to be sound advice since it facilitated the recruiting process and enabled me to recruit sixteen mothers to take part in the study. There was no restriction regarding the number of children that each participant should have.

Participants' husbands/partners. Another eligibility criterion was that participants had to be either married or in a common-law relationship with their partners. This requirement related to my interest in exploring the dynamics of language transmission in relation to mothers' primary social relationships with significant others. Husbands/partners could be either Canadian-born men or compatriots. With regards to language status, husbands or partners could be monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual. There was no restriction on what their first languages should be.

Working status. There was no restriction in this regard. Participants could be stay-at-home mothers, full-time or part-time workers, as well as students.

With respect to recruitment strategies, my goal was to interview between 10 to 15 migrant mothers. The final sample in this research consists of 13 participants. These participants were recruited primarily from three organizations and agencies in Saskatoon that offer support services and classes (e.g., English as a Second Language, parenting,

and job search classes) to individuals who have migrated to Canada. The agencies and organizations that were contacted included the following: (a) Saskatoon Open Door Society, (b) the Multilingual Schools at the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association, (c) SIAST, and (d) Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan.

The strategy for recruiting participants in these agencies or organizations consisted of the following steps: First, I contacted key stakeholders—such as program directors, program coordinators, group facilitators and class instructors—and asked for permission to advertise the study in their support groups and/or classes. Second, whenever possible, I went to these classes and support groups in order to give an oral presentation about the research to potential participants. Potential participants were then given an information sheet providing general information about the study and related eligibility criteria (see Appendix B). I indicated to interested mothers that they could either call me for more information, or that they could provide their contact information (i.e., name, telephone number, e-mail address) in a sign-up sheet, which was left in their classrooms. A few days after the research presentations, I contacted the instructors and facilitators to collect the sign-up sheets. Once I had a list of interested participants, I called each one of them and we discussed both their eligibility and willingness to be part of the study.

It is important to mention that the following points were emphasized to potential participants during the recruitment process:

1. I explained the research project derived from my personal language transmission experiences with my son and that I hoped that this would be a meaningful study—not only *about* mothers— but also *for* mothers interested in the process of language transmission.
2. In addition to emphasizing that participation was completely voluntary and that responses would be kept confidential, I also stressed that this was an independent

research project unrelated to the Immigration Office or to any of the agencies or organizations that they were part of.

3. Finally, I specified to potential participants that we would need to discuss further issues related to the study eligibility criteria before confirming their participation. This approach helped me keep confidential the identity of those who took part in the study, since the sign-up sheet specified only the names of potential participants—but not the names of actual participants. Furthermore, this strategy helped me select participants who fit the research criteria, without creating any false expectations with regards to participation.

Additional recruiting strategies included both “word-of-mouth” advertisement as well as advertisement through e-mails and through the distribution of information sheets. The “word-of-mouth” advertising was carried out by stakeholders or participants who had acquaintances or friends whom they thought would be interested in the project. If these individuals were interested in the project, they were asked to provide their phone numbers or e-mail addresses to their friends so that I could call them to provide them with further information about the study and discuss their participation.

Advertisement through e-mail and through the distribution of the information sheets was carried out primarily at the Multilingual Schools at the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association and at Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan. This was because stakeholders in these agencies indicated to me that an oral presentation about the research in these settings was not feasible. The alternative strategies involved advertising the study by e-mail (see Appendix C) or by distributing information sheets (see Appendix B) to potential participants who did not have access to a computer. Interested mothers were then able to contact me directly or through the stakeholders.

The Multilingual Schools in which the project was advertised included the Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Norwegian, Filipino, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Yoruba

Language Schools. These particular schools were selected because stakeholders indicated that many children under the age of 10 were registered in these language classes.

### 3.4 Instruments

#### 3.4.1 Instrument and Procedures

In this research, semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix D) were the primary mode of data collection. Rothe (2000) defines this type of interview as a series of concise, clear, and focused questions that are followed by probes or follow-up questions. In this study, the questions in the interviews were partially derived from the literature on language transmission and from the primary theoretical frameworks guiding the study: Godbout's (1998) theory of social exchanges and Kleinman's (1995, 1999) theory of moral experience. The research dimensions explored in the study are detailed in the interview schedule presented in Appendix D.

In order to obtain detailed and nuanced accounts of language transmission experiences in the context of migration, participants were asked to take part in two interviews, which were carried out two to three weeks apart.<sup>26</sup> Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Participants had a choice of being interviewed in their homes, at the university, or in another place of preference, such as the Open Door Society in Saskatoon. Of the 13 mothers in the sample, nine chose to be interviewed in their houses, three at the university, and one at the Open Door Society. All interviews were tape-recorded with participants' permission.

First interview meeting. The first interview meeting was, for the most part, fairly unstructured and non-directive. The focus of interview was to get participants to talk about significant aspects their lives that were directly and indirectly related to their

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<sup>26</sup> Of the thirteen mothers in the study, two interviewed only once: One had difficulties communicating in English and the other had scheduling constraints.

language transmission experiences. The questions posed to mothers were broad and general (e.g., “How did you come to Canada?” “Tell me about your children.”) in order to allow them flexibility to conceptualize their language transmission and migration experiences in their own way, as much as possible. In general, I found that most participants were very eager to talk, and I had very little difficulty establishing good rapport. And, more often than not, a first question was not even necessary since many participants began talking about the many dimensions of their language transmission experiences, without any prompt from me.

Although the first interview meeting gave participants a greater degree of flexibility, it was not completely free of restraints since I ensured that the conversation was always related in one way or another to the main topic of the study. In general, the first meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Procedures. Before carrying out the first set of interviews, I was contacted all participants by phone and provide them with general information regarding the purpose, length, nature of the interviews, as well as information concerning confidentiality. After greeting participants in the beginning of the interviews and engaging in some small talk, I provided them with the consent form and answered any questions that they may have had. The interviews were then tape-recorded, with their permission. At the end of the first interview, I asked participants to fill out a brief survey (see Appendix E) asking for demographic and contextual information about themselves and their family. Then, if applicable, we scheduled a time for the second interview for the following weeks.

Second interview meeting. The second interview meeting was more structured and directive than the first. Specifically, the purposes of this second interview were as follows: (1) to explore to a greater extent the relevant aspects of language transmission experiences that were identified by mothers in the first meeting and (2) to ask any questions regarding the research dimensions that we did not have a chance to discuss

during the first interview meeting. In general, the second interview meeting lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Procedures. To prepare for the second meeting, I listened to participants' tapes prior to the follow-up interview. I then identified dimensions or topics that needed to be explored further, and took note of those questions that had not been asked during the first meeting. The second meeting was also tape-recorded and all interviews were transcribed for analysis. Participants were then provided with a chance to review their interview transcripts, if they wished.

Finally, I closed the (first or second) interview meetings by asking participants if they wanted to add anything to the study. I indicated that they were free to contact me if they need additional information. I specified that I would make results available to them once the project was finalized and that they should contact me in case of an address change. Participants were then thanked for their participation. As a token of my appreciation for their time and cooperation, I gave each mother a thank-you note attached to a gift bag containing a box of Saskatoon chocolates and of Saskatoon tea.<sup>27</sup> All participants seemed to enjoy this gesture.

#### 3.4.2 Pilot Interviews

The appropriateness and relevance of the questions was assessed through pilot interviews employing two participants. In general, all questions were clear. This initial assessment helped me determine the best approach for carrying out the first and second interview meetings: In the first meeting, I asked broader questions and let participants elaborate on the aspects of the language transmission process that they deemed to be the most important; in the second, I focused my attention on the aspects of the language

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<sup>27</sup> In conversations with other migrant mothers who knew about my research, but who were not a part of the study, the consensus was that an offer of money for participation in the research could be viewed by the mother participants as offensive, given that that the research addressed the precious—but priceless—topic of relationships between mothers and their children.



transmission experiences that (a) required further elaboration and/or (b) had not been examined. Also, the idea of asking participants to fill out the survey at the *end* of the first interview meeting—and not at the beginning—derived from these initial interviews. Specifically, if I began the interview process asking participants to fill out a fairly close-ended survey, I risked curtailing their spontaneity since most were eager to talk freely upon my arrival.

#### 3.4.3 Confidentiality

Participants were asked to sign the standard consent form required by the Ethics Committee at the University of Saskatchewan (see Appendix F). Participants were informed that their individual responses would be kept confidential. Only the researcher, her dissertation supervisor, and the professional transcriber had access to individual responses.

#### 3.4.4 Feedback

A letter summarizing the results of the study will be sent to after the thesis defense. The researcher will also provide a summary of the thesis to the organizations who helped her during the recruitment process. She will also indicate to all parties involved that a copy of the dissertation will be available to them at the main library at the University of Saskatchewan.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

In this section, I will discuss three aspects of the data analysis process: (1) transcription, (2) my approach to data analysis, and (3) the manners in which I have organized and presented the data.

Transcription. As specified previously, participants' interviews were tape-recorded. These tapes were taken to a professional transcriber who typed out the oral interviews. In this regard, the transcription process did not follow a formalized notation approach as the one specified in the appendix of Wood and Kroger's (2000) book.

Rather, I instructed the transcriber to type out the data in a manner that would be readable for both me and my participants, without sacrificing the integrity of the conversation. Thus, the transcriber included in the transcripts, for instance, long pauses, notes about participants' emotions in certain parts of the interviews in brackets (e.g., feelings of sadness, laughter, etc.), as well as information about interruptions in the interview meetings, such as a door bell ringing. However, she did not specify minute speech details such as the extension of a sound or syllable, laughter within a word, or every single "huh" or "hmm" that participants uttered.

In order to ensure that important details were not left out and that the interviews were accurately transcribed, I reviewed once each transcript while listening to the interview tapes. Only minor changes had to be made in this respect. In addition, to make sure that participants were comfortable releasing the information in their printed interviews, I offered them a chance to review their transcripts and make any changes that they deemed necessary. Of the 13 participants, five reviewed their transcripts. The remainder of the sample indicated that they did not feel the need to do so. Again, only a few modifications were made by those who read their interview transcripts. In all cases, participants were asked to sign a transcript release form (see Appendix G). The number of pages for each transcript ranged from 60 to 80, using double-spacing.

The data analysis approach. In this research, data analysis was based on Geertz's (1973, 1974) hermeneutic method. According to Geertz (1974), the hermeneutic method is a method of interpretation employed in the analysis of social discourse. Also defined as "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p. 6), the method involves an interplay between participants' and the researchers' interpretations of a phenomenon, which have been described as the 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' aspects of the research process, respectively.

With regards to participants' interpretations, the hermeneutic method does not attempt to provide a reflection of the phenomenon. Rather, it aims to portray participants' constructions of the phenomenon—taking into account all sort of “exotic minutiae” (Geertz, 1994, p. 491) or local detail associated with the phenomenon in question. In other words, researchers employ thick description in order to develop participants' experience-near concepts.

However, Geertz (1973) indicated that the development of experience-near concepts is only a part of the hermeneutic interpretive process. The other part of the process, Geertz argued, relates to researchers' theoretical conceptualizations of the phenomenon. These are the experience-distant concepts that provide the global context in which the microscopic details of the phenomenon can be understood and interpreted. In this regard, the method of hermeneutic interpretation involves a “...back and forth (movement) between the whole conceived through the parts which actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole which motivates them...” (Geertz, 1974, p. 491). In other words, researchers employing this technique of data analysis engage in a continuous back and forth process between the parts and whole of the text in order to search for meaning (Kvale, 1996).

Note also that, during the process of data analysis, I examined how the themes of each narrative were inscribed in time. Good's (1994) conceptualization of “emplotment” was helpful in this respect. I will elaborate on how the concept of emplotment was applied to data in the upcoming section (pp. 82, 83).

Thus, in the Results section, I present participants' portrayals of their language transmission experiences; that is, I center my attention on the experience-near aspect of the research. In the Conclusion, I will establish a dialogue between the data and (a) the past literature review and (b) the theoretical frameworks that were relevant to research.

In other words, in the conclusion, my focus will be on the relationship between experience-near and experience-distant concepts.

Organizing and presenting the data. I employed the Atlas-ti software to prepare the data for analysis. Specifically, I used the software to code and classify the data within each narrative according to themes, some of which derived from the theoretical frameworks and others which were based on participants' talk about their language transmission experiences. This thematic analysis helped me identify similarities and variations across the sample. It also enabled me to specify nuances that were unique to a particular narrative or group of narratives, but not to others.

At the end of the data analysis process, I was able to group the thirteen language transmission narratives within four distinct language transmission plots. Each of these four plots is comprised of language transmission descriptions that depict similar language transmission journeys. In the results section of this thesis, I dedicate one chapter to each of these four language transmission plot. In the conclusion, I provide a global overview of the data, taking into account the similarities and variations not only across the language transmission plots, but also across individual narratives.

### 3.6 Participants: Demographics and Background Information

The demographic and background information described in this section derived from the data obtained from the short survey (see Appendix E) that participants filled out at the end of the first or second interview meetings. These survey findings offer information about the demographic characteristics of the sample as well as describe pertinent contextual information about participants and their families. In total, 16 participants were interviewed. However, I was able to include only the language transmission narratives of 13 mothers in the study. The reasons for not including the data for the remaining three participants included were as follows: (a) participants had English limitations that prevented them from discussing the topic of language

transmission in an in-depth manner and/or (b) language transmission experiences were not the most pressing migration issue that participants wanted to discuss during the interviews. (The latter topic will be discussed to a greater extent in the conclusion of the study.)

Of these 13 mothers who took part in the research, five were recruited through the Saskatoon Open Door Society, another four through e-mail advertisement, the remaining four through word of mouth. These 13 participants came from nine different countries: Afghanistan ( $n = 1$ ), Argentina ( $n = 2$ ), Chile ( $n = 1$ ), Japan ( $n = 2$ ), India ( $n = 1$ ), Iran ( $n = 1$ ), Russia ( $n = 2$ ), South Korea ( $n = 1$ ), and Ukraine ( $n = 1$ ). Their age range was as follows: 25 and 34 years old ( $n = 8$ ) and 35 years of age or older ( $n = 5$ ).

Concerning immigration status, the majority of the sample ( $n = 10$ ), specified that they had permanent residency. The remaining participants reported having Canadian citizenship ( $n = 1$ ), refugee status ( $n = 1$ ), or specified that they were in process of applying for immigration ( $n = 1$ ). Regardless of their status, all indicated to me that they expected to be living in Canada in both the near and distant future. Considering education, the majority ( $n = 11$ ) had university qualifications, including bachelors, professional, Master's, or Ph.D. degrees. Two participants had either earned a Junior/High School degree or a Technical college qualification.

With respect to work status, seven reported working full- or part-time; four were stay-at-home mothers who wished to return to the workforce; one was pursuing graduate studies; another was in the process of trying to renew her professional qualifications. Note that of the seven participants who were working full- or part-time, only one specified that she had been able to resume her original professional occupation after

migration. The remaining five were working in occupations for which they were over-qualified.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding language status, participants' first languages included the following: Dari ( $n = 1$ ), Farsi ( $n = 1$ ), Hindi ( $n = 1$ ), Japanese ( $n = 2$ ), Korean ( $n = 1$ ), Russian ( $n = 4$ ), and Spanish ( $n = 3$ ). Of the 13 mothers, 12 were able to express themselves in English quite fluently. The remaining mother seemed to have more difficulties with English but was still able to discuss her language transmission experiences in a satisfactory manner.

The mothers interviewed reported that they had been living in Canada and in Saskatoon for varied lengths of time, which ranged from 3 months to approximately 26 years. The length of participants' *language transmission journeys* in Canada, however, generally spanned a period of less than 5 years for the majority of the sample ( $n = 11$ ). What this means is that, overall, the mothers in question were in the earlier stages or years of their language transmission experiences.

Finally, in the survey, I also asked participants to answer questions about their husbands, children, and relatives. This information is summarized below.

Husbands. Of the 13 participants, three were married to Canadian-born monolingual English-speaking men and nine were married to co-nationals who shared their first languages and who also had (varying levels) of fluency in English. One of the mothers in the sample (Miwako) was married to a Canadian-born man who also shared her linguistic and national origins. This man was a child of Japanese migrants to Canada and had both Japanese and English as his first languages. With regards to age, the majority of husbands ( $n = 8$ ) were between the ages of 35 and 44, three between the ages of 25 and 34, and two were older than 45.

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<sup>28</sup> This topic will be discussed to a greater extent in the Results and Conclusion chapters.

The education statuses of non-Canadian born husbands were as follows: Six had Masters or Ph.D degrees and three had university degrees. By comparison of the four women who were married to Canadian-born men, two specified that their Canadian-born husbands had university degrees; another indicated that her partner held a Masters' degree; and the remaining two mothers explained that their husbands had technical and high-school diplomas, respectively.

Eleven participants specified that their husbands worked full-time and the remaining two indicated that their partners were in the process of renewing their work qualifications in Canada. Note that of the nine participants who were married to co-nationals, seven specified throughout the interviews that their partners had been able to resume their original professional careers after the move to Canada. The remaining two indicated that their partners were in the process of renewing their professional qualifications.

Children. The total number of children for *all* participants was 23. The age of these children was quite varied, ranging from 3 months to 25 years of age. The mean age for *all* children was approximately 7.8 years of age ( $SD = 5.7$  years). In six narratives, the children who were the focus of language transmission narratives were toddlers or pre-schoolers. In remaining seven accounts, the children who were at the center of language transmission descriptions were school-aged.

The majority of participants ( $n = 11$ ) specified that they had one ( $n = 6$ ) or two children ( $n = 5$ ). The remaining two indicated that they had three and four children, respectively. Concerning place of birth, in six narratives, participants indicated that their children had been born in Canada; in five, the children were born outside of Canada, mainly in the mothers' countries of origin; and in two accounts, mothers explained that they had one child that was Canadian-born and another that was not.

Relatives. In the survey, participants were asked to specify whether they had any relatives or extended family (e.g., parents, siblings, or cousins) living in Saskatoon or in Canada. For the most part, mothers ( $n = 12$ ) specified that their family of origin resided in their countries of origin. Only one participant migrated to Canada with her mother, siblings, and cousins. In the cases of participants ( $n = 9$ ) who were married to co-nationals, all in-laws lived in the countries of origin.

### 3.6.1 Summary of Survey Findings

All mothers expected Canada to be the place of residency for themselves and their families in the foreseeable future. The whole sample spoke at least two languages, and most mothers were very fluent in English. Most participants were highly educated with at least one university degree; however, only a minority was working in a field related to their original professional background. Findings also suggest that most participants were married to men who had high levels of education. It appears that the co-national husbands in question did not experience the same level of difficulties when resuming their original careers in Canada as participants did.

Overall, the language transmission experiences described in this study concern both pre-school children and school-aged children. While the pre-school children were Canadian-born, the school-aged children shared, for the most part, their mothers' national origins. Note that these two variables, namely age and national origins of the children, seemed to play an important role in the shaping of language transmission narratives. Note also that, with the exception of one participant who had moved to Canada with her family of origin (i.e., her mother, siblings, cousins), all remaining mothers did not have the support of extended family members in matters of language transmission or childrearing in Canada.

The varied national and social backgrounds of mothers in this study are also noteworthy. Specifically, this was a sample comprised of 13 migrant mothers who moved



to Canada from nine different countries. In addition, having had a chance to see how and where most participants lived, I noted that the sample included mothers coming from low, middle, and higher socio-economic classes. For example, whereas some participants lived in rented apartments in more modest areas of Saskatoon, others owned houses in the more expensive parts of Saskatoon. What appeared to bring these diverse participants together was their desire to talk about their language transmission experiences.

## PART II:

### PORTRAYALS OF LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION EXPERIENCES IN SASKATOON

The focus of the following four chapters will be on participants' portrayals of their language transmission experiences with their children in Saskatoon. Specifically, I grouped the 13 language transmission narratives in this research into four different language transmission plots. Each plot was formed on the basis of similarities with respect to how migrant mothers talked about their language transmission journeys. I dedicated one chapter to each language transmission plot. Note that my upcoming discussion of the language transmission plots is primarily descriptive in nature in the sense that the experience-near aspect of the research process (i.e., participants' construction of the phenomenon) is emphasized in this section. The link between the theoretical frameworks in this study and the data (i.e., the interrelationship between experience-near and experience-distant concepts) will be described in detail in the Conclusion of the thesis.

However, the only aspect of the theoretical framework that I would like to highlight at this point concerns the use of the concepts of (a) narrative semantics and syntax as well as of (b) emplotment in the analysis and organization of the language transmission plots that will be described in the following chapters. Specifically, during the process of data analysis, the importance of the notion of time within each language transmission narrative became clearly apparent as closer examination of the data showed that depictions of language transmission experiences changed across time and social contexts. Thus, in addition to analyzing the data with semantics (i.e., themes) in mind, I paid attention to the narrative syntax of each language transmission account. That is, I examined how the themes of each narrative were inscribed in time. This was consistent with Kleinman's (1999) approach to the study of experience, which was described earlier in the thesis, in the sense that experience is posited to be a dynamic

phenomenon that is shaped by the particular historical time, place, and socio-cultural aspects of life.<sup>29</sup>

Good's (1994) conceptualization of "emplotment" was also helpful. According to Good, emplotment relates to the process by which individuals connect and give meaningful order to disparate events and experiences across time. It is the way by which individuals frame and configure life stories which would be fragmented otherwise, Good says. By examining participants' narratives with the concepts of narrative semantic and syntax as well as of emplotment in mind, I was not only able to ascertain the general configuration that participants gave to their language transmission experiences, but I was also able to determine how the 13 narratives converged and diverged from one another. In particular, I was able to identify four distinct configurations or plots.

Broadly speaking, the first plot ( $n = 3$ ) was marked by an unrelenting concern about the transmission of first languages in the past, present, and future. The second ( $n = 3$ ) appeared characterized by a *simultaneous* worry about the transmission of English and first languages across time. The third ( $n = 5$ ) began with a marked concern about the transmission of English and ended with uncertainty about the long-term viability of first languages. Finally, the last plot encompassed the narratives of two participants who, for the most part, spoke of opposite—not divergent—language transmission concerns and experiences across very specific segments of time. These four plots comprise the four chapters that will be presented next.

When reading the upcoming four chapters, readers should keep the following points in mind. First, note that each chapter is comprised of two parts. In the first part, I provide a general overview of participants' *migration* trajectories. That is, I first examine how participants portrayed their move to Canada and their broader migration

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<sup>29</sup> Recall that this is not a longitudinal study. However, participants described their language transmission experiences across time and different social contexts.

experiences in the country. This discussion is important because the context of migration comprises the main backdrop against which participants' language transmission experiences took place. Without an understanding of the mothers' constructions of their migration journeys, the reader would have a limited picture of what was at stake in the language transmission process.

In the second part of each chapter, I focus my attention on how participants depicted their *language transmission experiences* across time. Note that, in this respect, my description was linear: I describe how mothers talked about their language transmission interactions with their children and others in the past, present, and future. This was done mainly for the sake of clarity and organization. Note that while some participants did talk about their language transmission journeys in a linear way, others moved back and forth in time when talking about their experiences.

Participants' portrayals of the *objects of the language transmission process*—that is, the depictions of first languages, English, French, or other languages—will be embedded in the presentation of each language plot. Readers will realize that, much like language transmission perspectives, language views were also bound to time and context.

About the description of each language transmission plot, the presentation of the data does not follow a fixed format in relation to the themes that were highlighted by each participant group. Different participant groups highlighted different migration and language transmission themes in their accounts. A full examination of the types of contextual and demographic variables that shaped each particular language transmission plot will be presented in the Conclusion of the thesis.

Readers should be aware that, in some cases, participants had more than one child. In these situations, language transmission narratives were either focused on a particular child (often the oldest child) or on "the children" in general. Thus, the upcoming

description of language transmission narratives will reflect these nuances. And, note that, unless specified otherwise, the use of quotation marks throughout the text will be used to describe participants' talk and expressions—and not the researcher's.

#### 4. PLOT 1: THE UNRELENTING CONCERN FOR FIRST LANGUAGES

In this plot, I will explore the language transmission narratives of Lucia, Olga, and Nara: Participants whose description of language transmission concerns and efforts across time centered primarily on first languages. Lucia, Olga, and Nara moved to Canada from Argentina, Russia, and South Korea, respectively. Their ages ranged from 24 to 35 years, and they had been living in Canada for approximately two to four years at the time of the interviews. With regards to educational background, Lucia and Olga held university degrees and Nara had a high-school diploma. Their work status before migration was as follows: Lucia worked as teacher, Olga as a manager, and Nara as helper in her family's restaurant. At the time of the interviews, none of the three participants had resumed their previous work lives: Lucia and Nara were stay-at-home mothers and Olga was working full-time in a different work field.<sup>30</sup>

Lucia, Nara, and Olga were also all married to Canadian-born men of European ancestry. These men were depicted as monolingual English-speakers who were very appreciative of participants' language<sup>31</sup> and cultural backgrounds and, in Lucia's and Nara's case, as interested in learning participants' first languages. In Nara's and Olga's accounts, all living Canadian grandparents<sup>32</sup> were portrayed as monolingual English-speakers and the non-Canadian grandparents were described as lacking fluency in English. In Lucia's instance, the participant's and her husband's parents were deceased.

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<sup>30</sup> The topic of work experiences in migration will be discussed in greater detail in the upcoming section.

<sup>31</sup> Participants' depictions of their husbands' views of their first languages will be presented throughout the chapter.

<sup>32</sup> Nara specified that her husband's father was deceased.

Lucia and Nara had one child each: Lucia was the mother of a nine-month old girl and Nara of a one-year old daughter. Both children were born in Canada. Olga had two children: a 19-month old boy who was also Canadian-born and a ten-year old girl from a previous relationship,<sup>33</sup> who had been born in Russia. In our interviews, Olga focused her discussion on her language transmission experiences with her Canadian-born toddler.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in this chapter, I will center my attention on the language transmission experiences of participants whose husbands and children were Canadian-born. Also take note that the narratives in question all refer to language transmission experiences with fairly young children.

Finally, in respect to participants' first language network in Saskatoon, all three were able to socialize with others (co-nationals or not) who shared their first languages. Of the three, Olga and Nara were the participants who were most involved in such language networks. Olga, for example, who was very involved in the Russian Club in Saskatoon, socialized with others of the same linguistic background on a weekly basis, and appeared to thoroughly enjoy such interactions. Nara was also involved in the Korean-speaking community and, like Olga, participated in weekly get-togethers. Finally, of the three, Lucia was the least involved in her first-language community. She would occasionally socialize with Spanish-speaking friends in Saskatoon but did not seem to participate in any organized language groups.

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<sup>33</sup> Olga was reluctant to discuss this aspect of her life, so it remains unclear to me whether or not she had been previously married in her country of origin.

<sup>34</sup> Olga's focus on her young Canadian-born son is understandable if we take into account that she was primarily concerned about the transmission of her first language, Russian, and that her 10-year old daughter was already fluent in Russian at the time of migration. Having said that, note that, at times, Olga referred to both of her children as well as to any future children she would have with her husband, when talking about her language transmission journey.

## 4.1 Portrayals of Migration Experiences

Lucia's, Olga's, and Nara's portrayed their migration experiences according to two general time segments: (1) pre-migration experiences and (2) experiences after the move.

### 4.1.1 Time Segment 1: Pre-Migration Experiences

With regards to pre-migration experiences, Lucia, Olga, and Nara focused their talk on the following topics: (a) work experiences, (b) the decision to migrate, and (c) previous English skills.

Previous work experiences. Lucia's, Olga's, and Nara's portrayals of work experiences in the countries of origin varied in the following way: While Lucia described a fulfilling professional life in Argentina, Olga and Nara talked about frustrating work experiences in Russia and South Korea, respectively.

Lucia, the participant who had worked as a teacher before the move, explained that she enjoyed a well-established and rewarding teaching career before her arrival in Canada. She illustrated her investment in, as well as feelings towards, her professional life in the following way:

...I always was having, you know, training and you go (to) many professional upgrading and things. I always was busy. I remember I never arrived home until nine...it was fantastic! ...I always loved what I was doing.

Additionally, Lucia specified that she had been able to achieve financial success through her work before the move:

I really had a...good life...I was working...(in a) good private school, you know how (it) is at private schools, you have a nice wage and comfortable life, I had my own house and everything!

By contrast, Olga and Nara both expressed disappointment about their previous working lives. Olga attributed her professional frustrations to her inability to make a reasonable living in her field in her country of origin:



I was a manager in Russia, I was (on) one of the...high management positions, I was surviving barely from month to month because I didn't have money. Like I couldn't buy food, so it's just the basic needs...and I was in one of the management positions there...it (was a) huge stress just surviving.

Likewise, Nara complained that it was “difficult to make money” in South Korea and that her work in the family restaurant was, at times, “boring.”

The decision to migrate. Lucia, Olga, and Nara explained that they came to Canada because they had fallen in love with, and married, Canadian-born men. Lucia, for example, explained that her life in Argentina was never the same, after she met her husband in a chance encounter while vacationing in a different country: “I was sure that I was in love with him, and sometimes I couldn't be concentrating (on) my stuff in Argentina, just thinking what he was doing...” She explained that within six months of this meeting, she moved to Canada to start a new life with her partner. Likewise, Nara and Olga pointed out that approximately one year after meeting their partners in Canada (Nara had been studying English in the country and Olga was here on a temporary work exchange program), they got married and moved to this country.

In Nara's and Olga's accounts—but not in Lucia's—the aforementioned difficulties of making a living in their countries of origin were also cited as motivators for the move. In Olga's case, this migration factor appeared to be particularly salient, given her description of the enormous stress that she and her daughter faced because of the participant's persistent—yet futile—attempts to provide for her family. In Lucia's situation, however, this did not seem to be the case as the participant had expressed great fulfillment with her professional and financial life after the move.

Finally, note that when I asked Lucia, Nara, and Olga if they had considered starting their married lives in their countries of origins rather than Canada, they all indicated that the couple had chosen Canada as the place of residence because of the socio-economic stability of the country. Thus, in all three cases, even though “falling in

love and marrying a Canadian” were listed as the primary reasons for migration, additional factors appeared to have contributed to the move.

Feelings towards the move. With respect to migration feelings, Lucia’s, Nara’s, and Olga’s narratives diverged in the following way: While Lucia seemed to have ambiguous feelings towards the move, Nara and Olga reported experiencing primarily excitement. Lucia, the participant who spoke of a fulfilling professional life in Argentina, appeared to have mixed feelings because her decision to come to Canada entailed a professional loss. Specifically, Lucia knew that it would be difficult to have her educational and professional qualifications recognized in Canada and was uncertain if she would be able to resume her career in the new country. In the end, she had to make a choice between her career and her newfound love. “I was having a really comfortable life but in one point of your life you need to decide...your work, or your love...Well I chose (love),” she said.

By comparison, Nara and Olga indicated that falling in love with their partners generated such great excitement that potential migration concerns were overpowered at the time. Olga depicted this pre-migration mood well when she explained that, “...I was just so happy to find a man that I want to be with that I didn’t really have time to think seriously how (migration) will affect my future life...” The two participants also attributed their migration enthusiasm to their hopes of leading a more fulfilling life in Canada. Nara, for example, envisioned that migration would open a variety of life vistas, not only for herself, but also for the family that she hoped to build with her partner:

...I was like 28 years old that time, and I just want to do something different, really different. So I said okay, this is my chance...I thought like, my (female) friends (in Korea) they got married and they have kids, and when I looked (at) them, their life looked so bored, you know?...They just stay home and cook for husband and clean the house, it was so boring to me... I don’t want to live like that. I want something special in my life. Especially for my kids, I want (life) to be little different than that. So when B. proposed (to) me, I said, I didn’t think twice...“I will, I will,” you know, “I want to get married to you,” and he was happy about that. And...my dream was...to open a business in Saskatoon...

And Olga, who struggled professionally and financially in Russia, felt optimistic about future work opportunities in the new country:

...I've been on a very good business program (in Canada)...so I kind of had a feeling of business environment in Canada and I liked it, and it wasn't very difficult for me to make this decision (to migrate)...

Previous English skills.<sup>35</sup> Lucia's, Olga's, and Nara's portrayals of their past English skills tended to be brief. In Lucia's and Olga's instances, participants depicted themselves as having good English abilities while living in their countries of origin. Lucia, for example, specified that she was at ease with the language because, in Argentina, she had worked in a bilingual school where English was the second language, for a lengthy period of time. "I was working my whole life in a bilingual school," she said. And, Olga depicted the process of learning English as easy and enjoyable:

...English was my strongest subject and my favorite, so I had a good basis of English...I had a very great (English) teacher at school, and...I had a very easy time (learning) English...for me it was just easy and of course I enjoyed it.

By contrast, Nara viewed herself as lacking proper English abilities, in particular conversational skills:

We learned English at the school, for six years. But just the basic, you know, "Good morning, good afternoon," and (when) we were in high school, just the grammar, not the speaking...so...I knew just a little bit (of) basic English...

#### 4.1.2 Time Segment 2: Experiences after the Move

Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's talk about how they experienced life in Canada was complex in the sense that they depicted life in Canada bringing them as many difficulties as it did rewards. Below, I will specify what were the most prominent migration challenges and gains in these participants' accounts.

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<sup>35</sup> Note that my definition of previous English skills for these three participants refers to participants' assessment of their English abilities *before* they had a chance to experience life in Canada, since Olga and Nara lived in Canada temporarily, before making the country their permanent home.

With respect to migration challenges, feelings of homesickness, frustrations in the work realm, and English language barriers were identified as the main difficulties that Lucia, Nara, and Olga struggled with, after the move.

Homesickness. Feeling homesick for one's family, friends, and/or country of origin was a challenge that Lucia, Nara, and Olga experienced after their arrival in Canada—and also at the time of the interviews. Nara's description was noteworthy in this regard because of the intensity with which she described this difficulty. Rather than finding herself in the place that she had imagined, Nara longed to return to her country of origin:

...Oh, it was just horrible... when I came to Saskatoon after (I) got married, I feel really lonely, kind of homesick, so I didn't want to talk, just cried all day...when I got married and came here, oh! Just I want to go back to Korea...I missed my parents, I missed my friends, I missed my brother. Even I missed my puppy. Everything! I just cried...

Although at the time of the interviews, Nara, Lucia, and Olga still missed family and friends, they specified that they were able to cope with these feelings by visiting, or by being visited by, family members, sometimes on a yearly basis.

In the narratives of Lucia and Olga, feelings of homesickness pertained not only to people they missed, but also to specific aspects of their previous lives. Olga, for example, missed her first language and, particularly, her ability to read in Russian:

...I do miss being able to go and read any (Russian) book I want. Like I didn't read many books but when I wanted to read something I could just go and get it. Now I have such limitation in books, and sometimes like it's hard because you want to have this particular book sometimes, but you don't have it so...I miss just even (the Russian) language...

And, Lucia missed her "artistic side," which was cultivated through sculpting classes in her country of origin. Unable to resume such classes after migration, Lucia reported that she developed a great interest in Argentinean culinary—a pursuit that enabled her to nurture *both* her artistic self *and* her roots with her country of origin in Canada. This is how she described this noteworthy transformation:

...I love to do a sculpture...it was my Saturdays in Argentina...my sculpting classes...Then here...I think I find out...my artistic side in...the cooking...you know (in) psychology...cooking is your roots with your country...I learned how to do empanadas and pies and everything...just like (in) my country. Things that you cannot get here I was learning...and showing in the webcam to my sisters, "Look what I did!" (laughter) And they were laughing, "Oh looks so good!"

Work Challenges. Lucia, Nara, and Olga all indicated that they had experienced difficulties in relation to the work realm, after moving to Canada. These difficulties were portrayed in different manners: Nara, who was unable to pursue her work plans, talked about "broken dreams;" Lucia, who felt like she had lost her professional identity with the move, described a "shock;" Olga, who experienced a long and "difficult" job search, explained that she had to switch career fields.

As the reader may recall, before migration, Nara had hoped to open a Korean restaurant in Saskatoon. After arriving in Canada, Nara realized that this "dream" would be hard to achieve because of limited financial resources. This sobering realization had a great impact in Nara's migration experiences. First, attached to the dream of opening a restaurant were Nara's hopes of bringing family members to Canada:

...my brother...was studying for the cooking in Korea, I told to him, "...you study long time and get a license, then you can come and we can open the restaurant," ...so he studied for one year...first my brother (was) going to come and then, you know, if we work together and if business getting better, then my parents (could) come too. But...it was just a dream...it never happened.

Second, Nara's desire to achieve singularity through the pursuit a life beyond the domestic realm after the move was also intricately connected to her restaurant "dream":

I wanted to change, like (be) different, really different (from) Korean girls...not...just to stay home and raising the kids, not that. Like I said, I want to...open the restaurant (in Canada) and I work really hard and save lots of money. That is...really different to me...I thought I am different girl...when I came to Saskatoon...I thought I'm just a little Korean girl, I wasn't a bit different...I thought, oh my God, this is just...not special, is just the same as Korea!

Ironically, at the time of the interviews, Nara found herself leading the same life that her friends did in Korea: She too had become a housewife who spent her time looking after her child and husband.

When Lucia talked about difficulties in the work realm after migration, her discussion centered on a “shocking” life change, namely, her transformation from busy career woman to unemployed person:

...when I arrived it was...a shock because it was from (a great) amount of (work) activity every day, starting on weekends, going here and there, and (then) coming here and I didn't have nothing! Nothing to do! ...I didn't know what to do.

Finally, Olga indicated that, after the move, she found it “very, very difficult” to find a job in management (her original professional field) and that, when she finally did, “relationship” problems discouraged her from continuing to work in the same field. After deciding to give up her original career, Olga got re-trained in another field. In her new line of work, she experienced some loss in professional status, but no longer had to deal with “personal” problems in the work realm. More importantly, in her new job, Olga was able to find the financial stability that she had longed for before migration. Thus, at the time of the interviews, Olga was the only one in this participant group who seemed to be reasonably satisfied with her work status in Canada.

English Difficulties. Lucia, Nara, and Olga all indicated that English became a source of problems in social interactions after migration. In the accounts of the two participants who felt confident in their English skills before the move—that is, in Lucia's and Olga's narratives—English difficulties appeared to be more specific and less far-reaching than in Nara's instance. In Lucia's case, for example, problems with the language arose primarily when the participant dealt with health care professionals. Specifically, Lucia felt that these professionals both dismissed her views and treated her as “illiterate” because of her English skills:

...until I find the right word to say (in English), takes me a little bit...I'm not illiterate. You know, I'm a professional, I have enough knowledge, and if I don't know, I read.

To deal with these difficulties, Lucia began to employ a very forthright communication style in her dealings with medical personnel:

I realized (that)...I (have to be) as rude as I can. It's the only way that they will understand...Right now, if I need to talk with a professional I'm just...direct. Direct. You know, just to the point, and (pretending to be talking to a doctor) "if you don't understand, I'm going to talk with another professional because I think you are not very accurate..."

Olga's language challenges pertained to the domain of her extended family in Canada. Specifically, Olga specified that her in-laws, who were monolingual English speakers, disapproved of her use of Russian with her children:

...their family (referring to in-laws) is just English-speaking. Just English. They never had even a thought about learning...another language...even like French, no, they just think that there's no necessity for that (laughter)...(and) it is a problem for people...what bothers them (is)... when it's a family event, and we're sitting at the table, for example, I could say something to my kids<sup>36</sup> in Russian, they don't like it, unfortunately...they're...stubborn English people who don't like something which is different from their culture...they are nice people but...they can't accept, I think, the fact that I want to keep my culture.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, in Olga's account, English was constructed as a language of contention between herself and the in-laws.

Nara's narrative contrasted with Lucia's and Olga's accounts in the sense that the former participant spoke of widespread English difficulties. Specifically, in her account, Nara spoke of experiencing English-related difficulties in her interactions with her husband, with other English-speaking Canadians, and even with co-nationals! Her portrayal in this regard was influenced by her views that English was a language of impossible mastery:

Like I said, my English is just the basic...especially my grammar is just terrible...English is... "I go to school," right? But in Korean, "I school go to." See (it) is opposite. So I all the time confusing, to make a sentence. So people doesn't understand what am I trying to say...So that's my big problem...lots of my (Korean) friends (in)...Canada or Saskatoon, they speak English really smooth and really naturally, like you...(it) is just perfect speak. So I said, "Oh my God, how do they can speak English very well?" Like it's just amazing to me...Even when I (am)...60 years old, still I think I cannot communication perfectly with...people ...English is too hard, hard, hard language..."

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<sup>36</sup> Here Olga refers to both her Canadian-born son and Russian-born daughter.

<sup>37</sup> Olga was referring to her first language here, when she employed the word "culture."

These difficulties with English, Nara explained, created many “communication problems”. First, they affected her interactions with her husband, who was as a monolingual English-speaker:

The problem with my English...we (referring to couple) are fighting very often because I speak that way but he understood the other way, you know? That’s why we have lots of trouble (with) each other...we are getting used to understanding each other, but (it is) still hard, it’s still hard...Like I said, my English is just the basic...

Second, language barriers affected her ability to function well in an English-speaking world:

...for example, when I had a driver’s license test, when I drive...the guy, instructor, he goes, “Okay, next two block, you have to turn right.”...and I have to think what he say. You know, I have to think in both (English and Korean)! In my one head. It was really difficult... when (her daughter) was born, they gave me the...birth certificate, to...fill.... But there was something really unusual, the sentence...I couldn’t understand...I wasn’t sure. But if I write down, then after...if I found out that it was mistake, what are you going to do?

Third, her difficulties with the language discouraged her from speaking English near co-nationals and from interacting with English-speaking Canadians. Her description in this regard was poignant:

...if I speak (to a) Korean and somebody find out my English is terrible...then I thought (what) they’re going to say about me...when I was pregnant, nurse came...she gave to me some program about baby and...mom, but...only for the...Western people, just the normal people, not the immigrant...I (wanted) going to there but like I said, just my English not perfect, not good enough, so I was kind of scared (of) that.

Thus, in Nara’s account, English was depicted not only as a language of impossible mastery, but also as a language of social handicap: Not only did it interfere with her ability to interact with others in society, but it also placed her in the category of the abnormal, namely, the non-English speaking people.

The difficulties that Lucia, Nara, and Olga encountered after their move to Canada co-existed with positive and fulfilling migration experiences. In this regard, narratives were quite similar. First, on practical terms, all participants were leading a



financially comfortable life regardless of their work status. The three of them lived in nice, comfortable homes in Saskatoon. Olga, the only participant of the three who was employed at the time of the interviews, provided a vivid description of migration gains in this respect. Being able to make a comfortable living through her work after migration, Olga explained, had not only helped her adjust to life in Canada, but it had also increased her “self-esteem:”

Immigration really raised my self-esteem. Yes. And that makes me more comfortable in life, that’s maybe (why) I feel (more) comfortable in Canada...than Russia. Because in Russia you have to struggle so much that your self-esteem really is very low, because you’re doing, doing something (at work) and you don’t see result. Here, if you do something, you could get something...it’s a pleasure for everybody... So it really raised my self-esteem...

Second, in addition to leading a stress-free financial life, participants enjoyed living in a country that had more socio-economic stability than their countries of origin. This stability seemed to be especially important for Nara and Olga since it was one of their migration goals. Nara, the participant who had regretted moving to Canada shortly after her arrival, indicated that, now, she would “die” if she had to move back to Korea because of the social and economic disparities in that country:

...when I was in Korea...seven months ago, the Korean economy was very poor...really bad. And I thought, thank you God, I don’t have to live in Korea...the poor people...kids they cannot eat, I mean they don’t have food...and they are begging the money from the...rich people...their kids are sick...but they don’t have enough money...I don’t see that kind of thing in Canada...I thought, oh, I just don’t want to live in Korea. Visiting is okay, once in a while, but if they said I have to live there forever, I’m just going to die.

Olga, who had experienced firsthand the effects of an unsteady economy in her country of origin, specified that she not only enjoyed the “stabilized” Canadian lifestyle, but that she also missed it, whenever she visited her country of origin:

...what I found in (visiting) Russia (was) that after two weeks I wanted to get back to Canada, I wanted to go home...I think I just missed this...stabilized lifestyle, that’s what we have a huge lack in Russia, because it’s just so much stress.

Finally, in Lucia's and Nara's accounts, the husbands were depicted as loving partners ("...the Canadian guys they are so romantic," Nara explained), who were not only interested in their wives' first languages, but also in different aspects of their cultural backgrounds.<sup>38</sup> In this respect, Lucia provided a great illustration:

...He's trying (to learn Spanish). He always takes the cassettes or book when he's working and when he has time at night...he learns a little bit...I really think (it is) very important to have a partner that appreciates that, appreciates your culture. Well, my husband he appreciates everything. He likes all the food that I do, he eats everything...he likes the music...he never was a dancer, but he went with me to take (salsa) dancing classes...and he is good at that!

Likewise, Nara pointed out that her husband's love for Korean language and food must have meant that he was Korean in a previous life:

P: ...he loves Korea, so he wants to learn Korean, all the time...he loves Korean food, even spice. So ...I told him, "You must have been Korean before you were born."

R: In a previous life?

P: Yeah, other than (that) how can you love Korean food?! I mean my friends they married Canadian guys but they don't like Korean food at all. Just a little bit, maybe. But him, oh my God, if I make something he just loves it...even...in Korea, every time (we) go somewhere, he got to try everything. I couldn't believe that!

By enjoying the food, the music, or the language, for example, of their wives' countries of origins, it appeared to me that husbands not only made participants feel loved ("...it's very important that I have that understanding," Lucia said), but they also helped them nurture and retain important cultural pillars after the move.

Finally, a noteworthy experience for Lucia and Olga concerned the event of motherhood in migration. Specifically, the two participants indicated that the birth of their children in Canada had given them "roots" in the country. This ability to feel connected to a new country in relatively short period of time (Lucia and Olga had been living in

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<sup>38</sup> Olga was more reserved than Lucia and Nara when discussing her relationship with her husband and her husband's views towards her first language and cultural background. Nonetheless, she did specify to me that her husband was supportive of her Russian language transmission efforts and my impression from our talk was that he was also appreciative of his wife's Russian background.

Canada for less than four years) seemed to have far reaching implications for their migration adjustment. Specifically, participants indicated that after the birth of their children in Canada, they were able to embrace the country as their own. This is how Lucia depicted her relationship with Canada, after the birth of her daughter:

...you...love and you work and you give your life to the country that gave you your family. Then you need to feel proud of that...not because it's the land (but because it is) the place that...gave you the roots to stay...if I need to talk about my house, my family is here...I feel comfortable here...

In Olga's account, the event of motherhood in migration was depicted as deeply transforming the relationship that both she and her Russian-born daughter had with Canada, with their new family, and with Canadian society. She described this transformation in a most compelling fashion:

P: This is home now. After R. (the Canadian son) was born...this is my home now.

R: So it became home after R. was born? (Participant agrees)...that's a very interesting observation, you know?

P: Yes, I know...that was (an)...opening in...my brain, like, "Oh! I feel different now!" Well we moved with N. (the husband) and it was always like...me and B. (the daughter)...have our Russian...life and N. (the husband) has his own life here. We live together but still there was nothing connecting us...other than just feelings...And once R. (the son) was born, I realized that now, B. (the daughter) has somebody in this country other than parents, and I think it's very, very important for her to have this sibling...so it really makes Canada...and Saskatoon feel more comfortable...I'm not just an immigrant, with my daughter, I am...(a) normal...society member...and I am involved into all the stuff that other people are involved...So having a child and getting a good job,<sup>39</sup> that's what made me feel 100% comfortable (in Canada)...

Thus, in both Olga's and Lucia's narratives, the birth of their children seemed to have mitigated their feelings of "otherness" (my expression) in the new country as they began to view themselves a legitimate part of Canadian society.

Interestingly, in Nara's narrative, the event of motherhood in migration seemed to have the opposite effect as Nara's feelings of being an outsider in Canada appeared to have been exacerbated after the birth of her daughter in Canada. As I discussed

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<sup>39</sup> The relevance of Olga's professional success after migration is illustrated here.

previously in the section concerning English difficulties, Nara's feelings that her English was "terrible" discouraged her from participating on socialization opportunities with other English-speaking mothers, who were also first-time parents.

#### 4.2 Portrayals of Language Transmission Experiences

In this section, I will describe Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's language transmission experiences taking into account three different time segments. The first time segment relates to participants' depictions of language experiences during their pregnancies; the second refers to language transmission experiences that took place after the children's birth; and, the third concerns depictions of language interactions in the future.

The reader should keep the following points in mind when reading this section. First, recall that this discussion pertains primarily to Canadian-born children, who were less than two years old at the time of the interviews. Second, because participants' husbands were an important part of the language narratives that will follow, I would like to remind readers of their national backgrounds and language status: They were all Canadian-born men of European background and none of them had fluency in languages other than English.

##### 4.2.1 Time Segment 1: Language Experiences during Pregnancy in Canada

Lucia, Nara, and Olga described their language experiences during their pregnancies in the following manners: They talked about their initial language decisions and language focus and they explained what they considered to be at stake in the language transmission process at the time of their pregnancies.

##### Language Decisions and Language Focus

At the time of their pregnancies, the primary language decision made by Lucia, Nara, and Olga and their respective husbands was that, in addition to English, their children should also learn participants' first languages. In Lucia's instance, the participant seemed to have played a greater role in the language decision-making

process than her husband did. The participant, who indicated that, throughout her pregnancy, she had “always been sure” that she would be speaking Spanish to their child, explained that she did not even need to discuss her language plan with her partner because she knew he would agree with her: “We were talking about (language) but really we never discuss (it)...because he thinks the same way like me.”

By comparison, in Olga’s and Nara’s cases, the participants highlighted the role of their husbands in the decision-making process to a greater extent than Lucia did. Specifically, both participants talked about the support that they had received from their partners in their quest to teach their children their first languages. In Olga’s words:

...I was going to keep teaching Russian to my children<sup>40</sup> ...I don’t feel comfortable speaking other language than Russian to my children...I...discussed that with N. (the husband)...he (was) supporting...like he wants for his children to be able to speak Russian...he said, “Of course you will be teaching them Russian,” yes...So we decided that before R. (the son) was born that I will speak Russian and N. (the husband) will speak, obviously English (chuckles) (to him).

And, in Nara’s narrative, the participant portrayed her husband as not only supportive of her first language transmission efforts, but also as more concerned about the transmission of Korean than English:

...So he (said) “of course...we’re going to teach Korean...English we’re not going to (be) pushing to the kids because they’re going to learn naturally, when they go to (the) market or when they go to grocery store, when they go to school, even at home they can learn. They will learn. But Korean...who can talk Korean with them?” So he said...I have to...talk Korean...I got to talk in Korean.

The second language decision that participants and their husbands made during their pregnancies was that their children should learn, in addition to first languages and English, also a third language: French. In regards to the transmission of French, the decision-making process was discussed in brief terms, with participants explaining that the couple had plans to enroll their children in French Immersion programs. In Nara’s

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<sup>40</sup> Here Olga seems to use the word “children” to refer to her Canadian-born son, Russian-born daughter, and any other children that the couple might have.

narrative, in addition to Korean, English, and French, the couple was depicted as wanting their daughter to learn yet a fourth language: Spanish. Nara provided few details in this regard because her husband had made the language choice. “I still don’t understand why it got to be Spanish,” Nara pointed out, “but F. (the husband)...figured that (in) the next ten years...Spanish (is) going to be very popular in North America, so she can learn...” Because neither Nara nor her husband had any fluency in Spanish, they planned on hiring a private “tutor” for their daughter to ensure the transmission of the language.

Note that in spite of the couple’s desire for multilingualism, the primary focus of Lucia’s, Olga’s, and Nara’s language journeys at the time of their pregnancies appeared to be on the transmission of first languages. Specifically, participants did not seem to be worried about the transmission of English, because they took for granted that their children would have enough exposure to this language, growing-up in Canada. Olga’s quote illustrated participants’ perspectives in this respect quite well:

...I believe they<sup>41</sup> will learn English anyway... It’s impossible not to learn English living in and English-speaking environment....But for Russian, I am the only source of Russian for them, so I have to use each moment I could to give them something to support this.

In addition, participants knew that the children would have exposure to English *inside* the home as well given that their partners were monolingual English speakers.

Likewise, French did not seem to raise any concerns for the three participants. As Lucia said, “...we can send her (the daughter) to French Immersion then she will learn just the same (as English and Spanish). And she will understand everything.” Thus, at the time of Lucia’s, Olga’s, and Nara’s pregnancies, the transmission of first languages appeared to be at the center of participants’ language concerns.

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<sup>41</sup> Referring to her two children and any other future children she may have with her husband.

Language Stakes. Lucia's, Olga's, and Nara's narratives converged in the sense that the three participants focused their discussion on the stakes involved in the transmission of their first languages. In Lucia's instance, the participant also elaborated on what was at stake in the transmission of all three languages: first languages, English, and French.<sup>42</sup> In this regard, Lucia did not focus on any specific language, but, rather, talked about the three languages in question altogether.

#### Stakes in the Transmission of First Languages

In Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's accounts, transmission of first languages was intricately connected with the transmission of important aspects of participants' cultural backgrounds. In this regard, the three narratives diverged and converged in the following ways: (1) In Olga's narrative, the transmission of Russian was associated with transmission of national roots and cultural heritage; (2) in Lucia's and Nara's accounts, the transmission of Spanish and Korean, respectively, was connected to the transmission of social or family values, and (3) in Olga's and Nara's descriptions, the transmission of first languages were depicted as essential to establishment and maintenance of family bonds with maternal relatives.

Languages of National Roots and Cultural Heritage. Olga associated the transmission of Russian with her children's ability to learn important aspects of her national and cultural backgrounds. In her narrative, Russian was depicted as enabling the transmission of so many relevant features of her national and cultural roots that Olga employed the metaphor "language as a jewelry" to convey the value of her first language. She provided an eloquent description:

...(the Russian language) has an important meaning (because)...Russia is a huge cultural country...I want for them to know the literature... Like instead of

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<sup>42</sup> Olga and Nara did not discuss this topic.

giving...Tolstoy's books in English, I would rather give...the original book of Tolstoy, right? ...I want for the (children) to be able to read this literature, because I think it's the best! ...I want for them to know the art. I want for them to know the history....I want for them to know geography of Russia....I really would love to go through all Russia (with the children), so I do want for them to know this country very good... language (allows) you...to see these things...So why should I just be lazy and not try to give my children this chance...because any language is your...like, how we say that, jewelry (laughter), I will say that.

Languages of Social and Family Values. In Nara's and Lucia's accounts, the transmission of their first languages were portrayed as being critical to participants' ability to teach their children appropriate social and family values from their cultural background. In Nara's narrative, the transmission of Korean was intricately connected to her children's ability to learn "polite" Korean conversational skills:

...Korean people are very polite, especially to older people...we have three different sentence when you meet people, say if you are my friend, then we can talk casually, but if you are older than me, then I have to say polite. And, if you are younger than me, then I don't have to talk polite. I mean, still I have to (be) polite, but...So I want to teach (the children) that kind of polite...conversation...

These conversational skills were depicted by Nara as being so important that she and her husband even had plans of moving the family to Korea for a few years ("You cannot teach [the polite conversational skills] in Saskatoon, in Canada," Nara pointed out.).

In Lucia's description, the transmission of Spanish was intricately connected to Argentinean family values (or "family traditions" in Lucia's words) that she hoped to pass on, not only to her child, but also to her husband. Although Lucia was not able to provide an elaborate explanation on the topic,<sup>43</sup> my understanding from our discussion was that she associated the Spanish language with particular Argentinean social values that could not be conveyed in English. For example, while Spanish was linked to daily, long, and relaxing family dinners around the dinner table, English was connected to "eating fast...relaxing on the couch and watching TV." With the transmission of Spanish, Lucia

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<sup>43</sup> My sense was that Lucia did not have time to process fully what was at stake in this respect, when we talked.



hoped to teach both her husband and daughter that meal times were “sagrado” (“sacred” in English), as cooking in Argentinean tradition was an enterprise of love. “...cooking (in Argentina)...means I love you! And I care for you...,” Lucia specified.

Languages of Family Bonds. In the accounts of Olga and Nara, the transmission of first languages was also related to participants’ desire that their children establish meaningful relationships with their family relatives (especially, grandparents) who lived far away, and who spoke little or no English.<sup>44</sup> Through these languages, the children would be able to communicate directly with these far away relatives and thus form significant family bonds with them. In her account, Olga described the critical role of her first language in the maintenance of family bonds:

...I have my parents in Russia and, well...just because I’m so far, it doesn’t mean we’re not a family anymore. And (this is why) I’m trying to teach them this language...my parents...have the right to speak to their grandchildren...I just think that it won’t be fair for me to say, “Okay, we’re in Canada, we don’t care (about Russian)...how would (the children) communicate to my family? Because they are...part of my family. And my parents and my family they don’t speak English so...it’s for the family, it’s for everybody.

Nara also indicated that she felt that the transmission of Korean was very important because her “very traditional” parents would never approve of English as a language of communication between themselves and their Canadian-born grandchildren. Thus, in her account, the transmission of the language was also associated with filial respect.

Stakes in the Transmission of Multiple Languages. As I have previously specified, Lucia was the only participant who elaborated on this topic. In her account, she associated multilingualism with a cultured identity and with promising opportunities:

I think that knowing different languages is part of...culture. Open your mind, make your mind flexible, you know...knowing different languages is culture...is

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<sup>44</sup> It is possible that Lucia did not portray language stakes in this manner because her parents were already deceased at the time of the interviews. In addition, Lucia’s siblings (whom Lucia had a very close relationship with) were fluent in English.

being involved with all the world and...we (referring to the couple) like traveling, both of us, and I know having two, three languages...could happen with her (their daughter), it will always open doors. Even for work. In this moment with the world so small because communication... (the more) you know, (the) faster you go.

What I found interesting about the above portrayal was that Lucia's depiction was remarkably vague. Later, I realized that this vagueness might have been quite strategic: By not specifying exactly what "doors" the languages would open, Lucia seemed to further broaden the range of future opportunities for her daughter. Thus, the transmission of multiple languages appeared to be associated with very open and promising life vistas.

#### 4.2.2 Time Segment 2: Language Transmission Experiences after the Children's Birth in Canada

In this section, I will first present how Lucia, Nara, and Olga depicted their current language practices with their children. Then, I will describe participants' anticipated language concerns and language strategies. Note that, in this section, descriptions of anticipated language problems and solutions related to the near—not the distant—future. Specifically, they appeared to refer to the time when the children would begin day care or school programs.

##### Current Language Practices

In the present, Lucia, Olga, and Nara depicted the couple's language practices with the children in the following way: While fathers spoke English, mothers employed primarily their first languages with the children both inside and outside of the home environment. In Nara's and Olga's cases, the participants specified using their first languages with their children even when their monolingual English-speaking husbands were present. Nara, for example, portrayed her family's language dynamics in the following way:

R: So when F. (the husband) is with you two, you still speak Korean to her?

P: Yes, I do...when F. wakes up (he) speaks English...and then he goes to work and then maybe we go shopping...just to look around. And I (tell) B. (the daughter)...just in Korean...this is a mouse, this is a cat, this is a dog...I just explain to her what is this, what is that. And I come home, just talk to her again (in Korean)...

And, Olga pointed out that, after the birth of her son in Canada, she felt such great discomfort conversing in English with the child that she employed Russian, not only when her husband was near, but also when her English-speaking in-laws were around:<sup>45</sup>

...when R. was born...I found...that I feel just awful when I try to speak to baby in English...I just felt so uncomfortable! I couldn't express my...real feelings to this baby...Like I couldn't say, "Oh look at this baby!" No!...when everybody<sup>46</sup> is around the baby and...you talk for the baby...you want everybody to be part of the conversation, and that's when I felt...awkward because I don't even know what to say in English to a baby. I don't know these things! How the people express their, like, "Hey, boo!" or something. I don't know these things in English, so I just found that very strange to myself, and I apologized in front of the family and said, "Sorry, but I will be speaking Russian to my son."

Like Nara and Olga, Lucia also spoke Spanish with her 9-month old daughter in the presence of her husband. However, in her instance, she specified that she often translated into English her conversations with the baby, so that her partner did not feel left out:<sup>47</sup> "...if I say something to her in Spanish, I translate it immediately to him, if he didn't understand...But sometimes he understands what I say..." In addition, Lucia specified that she also allowed English to be a part of the mother-child language interactions in situations where the rule of politeness applied:

...with the doctor it's in English...with some part of the family<sup>48</sup> in English but when I'm with the Hispanic ladies, in Spanish and you know, it kind of depends on the environment because, well, I have the rule that it's respect for the one who doesn't understand what we are saying...It's a polite rule.

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<sup>45</sup> Lucia and Nara spoke in English with their children when their Canadian family in-law was around.

<sup>46</sup> Here Olga refers to Canadian relatives.

<sup>47</sup> Nara and Olga did not feel that their partners felt left out of the conversation when they employed their first languages with the children.

<sup>48</sup> Here Lucia refers to Canadian relatives.

Finally, note that in addition to using mainly first languages with their children, Lucia, Nara, and Olga also indicated that they read books, played music, and showed videos in their first languages. In this regard, Olga seemed to be particularly dedicated as she explained that even a short car ride provided her with the opportunity to expose her son to Russian songs. Furthermore, although participants were the main sources of first language exposure to their children, transmission of first languages did not appear to be confined to situations in which only mother and child interacted. Specifically, all three took part in social gatherings with others who shared their first language backgrounds.

Finally, because the children in question were all younger than 20 months, there was not much discussion with respect to the children's language preferences and behaviours. Only Lucia and Olga offered their views on these matters. Their assessment was that their children preferred first languages to English at the time. "He understands everything...we say in Russian...He starts to speak, to talk us, he tells things (in Russian)...," Olga said of her son. And, Lucia depicted her nine-month old daughter's fondness for Spanish in the following way:

She loves my songs...and she loves all the (Spanish) music...I always make fun and games with toes and fingers in Spanish and she loves it! ...singing (in Spanish) is her comfort...

### Language Concerns and Strategies

Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's depictions of language concerns and strategies converged in several ways. First, all participants talked about their language worries in relation to the near future; in particular, their narratives focused on language problems that they *expected* to encounter upon the children's entry in school or day care. Second, in the three descriptions, these anticipated language concerns appeared to derive from participants' interactions with others in their linguistic networks. Third, first languages remained at the center of participants' language transmission worries. None of the three

participants anticipated that their children would have problems learning or speaking English. Finally, in the three accounts, when participants spoke of anticipated language strategies, they all relied on their experiences with their linguistic networks when devising solutions to potential language problems.

Lucia and Olga portrayed their language concerns and strategies in very similar ways. Specifically, both participants feared that, after commencing day care or school, their children would develop a preference for English and thus refuse to communicate in participants' first languages. Olga's narrative provided a good description in this respect:

P: He doesn't go to day care yet, and I know that as soon as he will go to English day care that will be a huge problem for me. I know that it will be challenging.

R: In the way that he will...prefer English?

P: He will be using English, oh yeah, yeah. He will...prefer to speak English, that's what happens, I believe, with everybody...

This view that the children would eventually prefer English to first languages was rooted on Lucia's and Olga's observations of the language behaviours of school-aged children in their linguistic networks. In particular, Lucia and Olga had noted that, for the most part, these children employed English—and not first languages—to speak with their parents and others (including children) in these social gatherings. Olga depicted the language behavior of several co-national friends and their children in the following way:

...like people in our (Russian-speaking) community...I looked at their children and very few of them speak their own language to their parents. All the rest they speak English. (My) friends speak Russian or Ukrainian, but in fact they get only English (from their children). And they (the parents) continue this conversation!

In order to prevent, what Olga termed to be, the “two-way communication” problem (i.e., a communication in which the parents use first languages but the children employ English), the following language strategy was established by participants: If the children spoke in English with them, they would neither reply in English, nor continue the conversation in first languages; rather, they would halt the communication and insist that

the conversation be resumed in first languages. This would be Lucia's language plan, if her daughter began to employ English in their interactions:

...I (would) need to trick her and say (in Spanish), "I don't understand you." Then I'd have an answer in Spanish...I think it (would) be the only resource that you have...to make her speak Spanish.

Note that Lucia and Olga depicted the aforementioned language intervention (i.e., refusal of English and insistence on first languages) as highly effective. Specifically, both participants explained that co-nationals had successfully employed this language practice in their interactions with their own children. Olga, a keen observer of parent-child language interactions in the Russian-speaking community, portrayed the efficacy of the technique in the following manner:

...the girls who don't want to give up (their first languages), they will say (to the children), "Sorry, I don't understand you. What do you want?" But they would say that in Russian so the child sees that, okay...I have to say that in a different way (and not in English)...I have a friend who is an English teacher, she is from Ukraine...she speaks English in front of the family to her kid, but her kid doesn't speak Ukrainian to her when she speaks Ukrainian...I have another girlfriend who has two kids and she sticks just to Russian...she speaks...strictly Russian to them. So these children speak Russian to her. Yes.

By refusing to allow English in their language interactions with the children, Lucia and Olga hoped not only to foster the use of first languages, but also to convey to their children the value of these languages. As Lucia pointed out, when the Spanish-speaking parents that she knew allowed English in their interactions with their children, Spanish became a devalued language. The children began to think of Spanish as "garbage" and of English as "more valuable," Lucia said.

Contrary to Lucia and Olga, Nara was not concerned with matters of language preference and language use. Rather, what worried her was the transmission of, what she deemed to be, proper Korean pronunciation. Specifically, Nara did not want her daughter speaking Korean with the same "strong accent" that she did:

...in Korea...we have different province, and...they each have own province sound, and my hometown, where I grew up, the city has a really strong

accent...we have a really strong accent. Even when I talk to Korean people, sometimes they don't understand me and then they are just laughing at me because my accent is really strong, and we are using lots of slang. But most of the Korean...like from Seoul...their speaking is just level...they don't have accent. And I want teaching her that kind of language, not my sound, do you understand? When I talk to her, my voice go up and down, up and down, I really hate that. But she will learn that because we are all the time talking.

In order to ensure the transmission of a more socially desirable Korean, Nara began to attend weekly religious services with co-nationals, even though she was not religious!

The goal of this strategy, Nara explained, was to expose her child to "different" Korean sounds:

R: ...so you (attend the church)...more...for the language than for the religious part of it (P. agrees), that's what you're saying.

P: ...if I take her to church there is lots of...Koreans (accents)...Like she can learn...my city's sentence and the other cities' sentence, she can learn lots of things, she can hear lots of things. So I just want to give her...different sounds.

#### 4.2.3 Time Segment 3: Future Language Interactions with Canadian-Born Children

When Lucia, Nara, and Olga talked about their language interactions in the *distant* future, their discussion, once again, centered on issues concerning the transmission of first languages. Their descriptions focused on the following: (a) future language practices with children, (b) the outcomes of first language transmission efforts, and (c) intergenerational transmission of first languages.

##### Future Language Practices

With regards to future language practices, Lucia, Nara, and Olga did not seem to foresee any significant changes in their current language behaviours: I left all interviews with the feeling that they all planned on continuing to speak primarily first languages with their children. Olga, the participant who appeared to be the strictest in relation to the transmission of her first language indicated that she would consider employing the rule of politeness (i.e., the rule in which the mother would speak English with the child, if English-speakers were part of their communication) when her son turned "ten." This rule, however, would only come into effect if the child's Russian skills were strong: "...it

depends (on) how well he will be developing (Russian), right? Maybe in a three-way conversation I will be speaking English to him...”

In Olga’s narrative, the continuous transmission of first languages was depicted as particularly important because she wanted her son to grow up in Canada with a strong sense of his Russian familial and cultural roots:

R: You would like him (referring to her son) to speak Russian (P. agrees)...

P: Yes, I would like for him to be able to go to Russia to spend a whole summer with my parents without me. Like I want for him to still now this culture and family and everything.

And in Nara’s and Lucia’s account, the development of first language skills were viewed as important to the participants’ (and their husbands’) plans to one day return to their countries of origin. Nara, for example, thought of living in Korea with their family for a few years (“maybe five years,” she guessed); and Lucia entertained the possibility of her family living in both Canada and Argentina: “...Summer here (in Canada) and summer there (in Argentina)...”

#### The Outcomes of First Language Transmission Efforts

Concerning the outcomes of first language transmission efforts, Lucia’s, Nara’s, and Olga’s narratives were brief and varied slightly. Nara, for example, appeared to have no questions that her daughter would be fluent in Korean in the future. In her narrative, the successful transmission of Korean seemed to be a given. Lucia did not seem to be as sure as Nara. In her story, the long-term transmission of Spanish was depicted as likely, but not as guaranteed: “If we’re still living here, probably she will speak English,” Lucia said, adding that if the couple conveyed to their daughter “the right importance...about languages,” she would also keep her Spanish skills. Finally, Olga had two divergent language outcomes, or endings, for her language transmission story. In the first ending, Olga appeared to feel confident that both her children would speak Russian in the future: “...I just can’t imagine that my children will not be speaking



Russian...I just can't imagine them not being able to speak Russian." In second ending, Olga seemed quite uncertain towards the language future of her son:

R: ...what languages will he be speaking (in the future)?

P: It's difficult to say, I don't know. I kind of have a feeling that probably English will be his more natural (language)...just because that's his environment...but I don't know because I didn't have this experience...there's not many books to read about that...there are more questions because I don't know...what (the future) will...bring me...I don't know yet what to expect from him...I don't know if he will be...gifted with languages, or maybe he will be just stuck in English...I will try to teach him everything, but...

Thus, in her narrative, Olga portrayed the outcomes of her language transmission efforts as both predictable and unpredictable.

#### Intergenerational Language Transmission: The Future of First Languages

The topic of intergenerational language transmission was discussed only by Lucia and Nara. My impression in this respect was that the subject matter pertained to a future that was still too distant for Olga to imagine. Lucia's and Nara's talk about first language transmission to a third generation (i.e., the generation of their future grandchildren) was brief and fragmented. Both participants indicated that they hoped that their children would pass on their first languages to future grandchildren; however, they could not be sure if the transmission of first languages would take place. In Lucia's words:

...probably she will try to teach Spanish...you never know. Depends...maybe (if she finds out that she likes a Latin guy (laughter) instead of a...Canadian. You never know. Maybe...in this community she finds out...a nice guy with...Hispanic background...then maybe...

And, Nara, who did not envision her daughter's future husband as having any Korean language skills,<sup>49</sup> indicated that she would gladly help her daughter in her language efforts: "...I will ask...her (the daughter) "If you want to, I (can also) teach your kids Korean ...if she doesn't want it, fine...I'm not going to push her. But, I...wish they (the

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<sup>49</sup> Nara indicated that she would like her daughter to marry a "Canadian guy" because she perceived Canadian men to be more family-oriented than Korean men.

grandchildren) can learn (Korean)...” Thus, Lucia’s and Nara’s language stories in regards to the third generation finished open-ended and uncertain.

#### 4.3 Summary and Discussion

In spite of having different national and linguistic backgrounds, Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's language transmission descriptions were strikingly similar in a variety of respects. First, the three narratives shared two interconnected, but distinct, segments: One concerned the pursuit of multilingualism; the other related to a quest for the transmission of first languages. In relation to multilingualism, language transmission stories were brief and optimistic, being virtually free of any concerns: Participants seemed confident that their children would grow up with fluency in two, three, or perhaps even four languages. In this respect, it seemed to me that participants' language plans were intricately connected to their migration expectations, namely, that migration should bring new life vistas, not only for themselves, but also for their families. Furthermore, my hypothesis is that the desire of multilingualism for the children might have been fuelled by Lucia's, Olga's, and Nara's hopes that their children do not experience in Canada the same type of language-related professional and/or social obstacles that they encountered. This assumption, however, would have to be supported by further research.

In regards to the first languages, narratives were long, dramatic (as there was a lot at stake in the transmission of these languages), and characterized by an unrelenting concern for these languages throughout time: First languages were the focus of Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's language worries in the past, in the present, in the near future, as well as in the distant future. In this regard, participants' language accounts seemed to be, once again, related to their migration expectations. Because Lucia, Nara, and Olga wanted migration to be an *inclusive* process—that is, a process that allowed them and their children to lead a Canadian life without sacrificing links with their non-Canadian familial, cultural, and national roots—they were not prepared to give up their first languages.

Second, Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's narratives resembled one another in the sense that Canadian-born husbands appeared to play an important role in participants' first language transmission journeys. As the previous discussion showed, the husbands' support and appreciation for first languages were depicted as crucial to participants' abilities to keep these languages alive. Olga, in particular, portrayed her husband as having a critical role in the language troubles between herself and her Canadian in-laws. As readers will recall, she was the participant who indicated that the use of her first language created tension with Canadian in-laws.<sup>50</sup> In her account, Olga portrayed her husband as not only supportive of her language transmission efforts, but also as instrumental in getting his parents to respect the couple's decision to nurture the Russian language:

He told them that it was our decision to raise our children this way and that "you don't have to feel bad when Olga speaks her own language to our children," and that "that's what we will be doing, and please accept that."

Overall, my impression was that in the three narratives in question the transmission of first languages was, without question, a mother *and* father language enterprise—even though fathers had no fluency in participants' first languages.

Finally, the importance of linguistic networks was underscored in these three narratives: Socialization with others of the same first language background not only shaped Lucia's, Olga's, and Nara's portrayals of anticipated first language problems, but it also helped them devise language strategies to address or prevent such problems. The three accounts were particularly interesting in this respect because they portrayed co-national language support as ambiguous. In Nara's narrative, fellow Koreans in Saskatoon were viewed as potential source of language problems (i.e., they could tease her daughter's Korean accent) and as the solution to these problems (i.e., they could

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<sup>50</sup> Lucia and Nara did not seem to have first language difficulties in relation to their Canadian in-laws.

help the child speak a more socially-desirable Korean). In Olga's and Lucia's description, the support of first language networks seemed to be only partially helpful: Even though the networks offered first languages exposure to their children, they did so in a limited way as Olga and Lucia had observed that many of children in those social groups preferred to speak English to first languages.

## 5. PLOT 2: FIRST LANGUAGES AND ENGLISH AS LANGUAGES OF SIMULTANEOUS CONCERN

In this chapter, I will focus my attention on the narratives of Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako—participants whose language transmission experiences were marked by a simultaneous concern about the transmission of both first languages and English and by unexpected changes in language practices and rationale. Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako—who migrated to Canada from Japan (Miwako and Kasumi) and from Ukraine (Katya)—were in the same age group, which ranged from 24 to 34 years of age. They all had obtained university degrees before their migration—Kasumi had a degree in the field of business, Katya in medicine, and Miwako in field of sports coaching<sup>51</sup>—and none of them resumed work in their previous career fields after their move. At the time of the interviews, the work status of the three participants was as follows: Kasumi was staying at home with her baby; Katya worked full-time in the field of accounting; Miwako worked part-time teaching Japanese, her first language.

Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako were all married to men who had fluency in their first languages: In Kasumi's and Katya's instances, the husbands were co-nationals; in Miwako's case, the husband was Canadian of Japanese descent. In all three cases, the husbands were depicted as bilingual, having fluency in both first languages and English. All three husbands had steady job positions (in their chosen career-fields) in Canada at the time of the interviews. With the exception of Miwako's in-laws, who lived in a different city in Canada, all other extended family members resided outside of Canada. Thus, none of the three participants had any extended relatives living in close proximity.

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<sup>51</sup> Note that Miwako obtained her university degree in Canada, as she first lived in the country as an international student.

Furthermore, in the three accounts, no relatives on the participants' side of the family were depicted as having English skills.<sup>52</sup> In respect to the husbands' extended family, with the exception of Miwako's in-laws who had fluency in English, no other relatives could speak English. Finally, participants' children were all Canadian-born. In this respect, note that Miwako had two children (ages one and four) and Katya and Kasumi had one child each (ages two and nine months, respectively).

In spite of the aforementioned commonalities, the three narratives diverged in important ways. Miwako had lived in Canada significantly longer than Kasumi and Katya. While the latter participants were relative newcomers to Canada, having been in the country for less than four years, Miwako had resided in Canada for approximately 10 years: four years as an international student and six years as a migrant. In addition, Miwako was the only participant who was married to a Canadian national. She met her husband, a Canadian of Japanese descent (his parents were Japanese migrants), during her four-year stay as an international student in the country. In addition, contrary to Kasumi's and Katya's in-laws, Miwako's in-law family members (i.e., her husbands' family including his siblings) all lived in Canada and were all able to speak English.<sup>53</sup> Because of all of these characteristics, it seemed to me, that of the three participants, Miwako felt the most comfortable with her Canadian surroundings and lifestyle.

In respect to first language networks, Katya was the participant who had the largest and most organized language group in Saskatoon. This network not only offered Russian lessons for the children of Russian-speaking migrants, but it also provided its members with a variety of socialization opportunities throughout the year. Katya and her family were active participants in this linguistic community. By comparison, Miwako and

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<sup>52</sup> In Katya's instance, the participant indicated that her father had knowledge of English, but that he had lost fluency in the language throughout the years.

<sup>53</sup> Note that Miwako portrayed her mother-in-law as preferring to speak Japanese.

Kasumi's first language network was fairly small. Even though they were able to socialize with Japanese-speaking friends, both participants indicated that there were only a few Japanese-speaking families living in Saskatoon.

Finally, in terms of standard of living after the move, Miwako and Katya seemed to be more financially settled than Kasumi. While the former participants resided in fairly large and comfortable homes, the latter lived in a small rented apartment. However, it appeared to me that it was just a matter of time before Kasumi and her partner improved their living conditions in Canada as her husband had been offered promising work opportunities in the country.

### 5.1 Portrayals of Migration Experiences

Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's descriptions of their migration experiences centered on the events that preceded their migration (time segment 1) as well as on their adjustment process after the move (time segment 2). In these particular timeline and migration contexts, language portrayals were focused on English. Depictions of first languages were intricately connected to the talk about language transmission experiences and, as such, will be presented in that context.

#### 5.1.1 Time Segment 1: Pre-Migration Experiences

Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako talk about pre-migration experiences related to (1) the reasons for their migration, (2) their feelings towards the move, and (3) previous English skills.

Reasons for Migration. With respect to reasons for migration, Kasumi's and Katya's narratives shared the most similarities. Specifically, both participants specified that the couples' financial difficulties in their countries of origin had motivated their move. Kasumi, for example, indicated that the couple's monetary struggles derived from her husband's inability to find work after the completion of his Ph.D. "In Japan," the participant, explained, "a lot of doctor...who graduated (with a) Ph.D....didn't have a



(position at) the university.” Similarly, Katya pointed out that, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, both she and her partner (like many other Ukrainian couples) were not able to make a reasonable living through their work. The participant, who worked as a doctor before the move, described the couple’s financial struggles and the subsequent decline in their quality of life in the following way:

... my salary...dropped down and J’s (the husband) dropped down because of Soviet Union split...(there was) inflation...insecurity...even...if you’re working in the hospital...there is no possibility to survive on money that government pays you (and)...it’s only like \$70.00 (dollars) a month...(the) insecurity and angeriness, tiredness, you work all the time to have more money (and)...you live in...(a) small apartment with sometimes six people living in that. Even if you’re really kind and gentle person inside of you, you’re already tired of that. You want just your space.

Both Kasumi and Katya specified that the couples’ financial difficulties led their husbands to apply for positions in Canada. After their husbands were offered work opportunities in their career fields in this country, the couples decided to move.

Unlike Kasumi and Katya, Miwako did not move to Canada because of financial stress. Before migration, the participant lived with her family and her parents were able to provide her with ample financial support.<sup>54</sup> Rather, what motivated Miwako’s migration was the participant’s life-long goal of pursuing a career in sports coaching. Miwako felt that, in Canada, she would have more opportunities to achieve this work objective because there were more female coaches in this country than in Japan. To this effect, she came to Canada, as a student at first, to learn English and to obtain a university degree in the sports field: “...I saw so many women coaches in Canada, but not in Japan, so I wanted to study...about coaching in Canada....” Thus, Miwako spent the first four years of her life in Canada, not as a migrant, but as an international student. It was during this time that she began dating her husband, a Canadian of Japanese descent.

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<sup>54</sup> Recall also that Miwako was single before the move.

The four years that Miwako lived in Canada as a student cemented her desire to move permanently to the country: Not only did she have a fulfilling relationship with her Canadian boyfriend, but she also developed a great affinity for the “Canadian lifestyle.” In fact, Miwako explained that when she returned to Japan after finishing her studies in Canada, she found herself acting “more Canadian” than Japanese:

...after I was four years in Canada...it was very difficult to adjust (to Japan)...because...I act...more Canadian...in Japan, you have to respect...the people who are older than you. And of course I’m respecting them...but if I have a question, I always ask them...other Japanese...younger people, even though they don’t understand...they don’t ask...so...other people who was watching me thought...she is woman...and young, but still always talking to her boss...but I don’t think it (referring to her behaviour) was bad, because if I don’t know what they are saying...I should ask them...

A few months later, Miwako and her boyfriend decided to get married and, a year later, the participant moved permanently to Canada.

Feelings towards the Migration Decision. Kasumi’s, Katya’s, and Miwako’s depictions of feelings towards the decision to migrate all converged in the sense that their discussion revolved around their perceptions of the nature of the migration process. Specifically, the talk about migration feelings was intricately connected with (1) whether or not migration was considered an expected or unexpected life event and (2) how participants perceived their role in the decision to move.

Kasumi, for instance, explained that, for her, the decision to migrate elicited great surprise not only because she had never imagined herself moving, but also because her husband was the one who had made the migration decision. In the exchange below, the participant recalls how she learned about the move:

P: ...We got married (and) after three weeks....my husband said to me he decided to come to Canada (for a university position)...so...I’m very surprised. I never heard of Saskatchewan! Or Saskatoon! (laughter)

R: ...did you know it was Canada that you’re coming to? (P. denies) (laughter)

When I asked Kasumi how she felt about her husband’s decision to move, the participant explained that she had accepted it without hesitation: “...my husband he find

job... (and) if he decided (to move to) another country, I should go with him...I want to (go with him).”

Unlike Kasumi, Katya indicated that she had entertained the idea of leaving her country of origin for years. In fact, Katya pointed out that she had always felt *destined* for migration: “...I was born for migration. You know?...Some people (are) born for migration; they just not belong to the country (of origin) completely....” When I asked the participant to elaborate on this statement, she replied in the following way:

I just feel that I like to travel...and you just want more freedom, you want to travel (but)...our government prefer us not to see (the west of Europe) because it was very expensive and they just preferred us not...(to) compare how they live...it's such a wonderful thing to see all the cultural things, you know?...and I thought, what's wrong to know another culture?

When Katya learned that her husband had been offered a work contract with a Canadian company, she embraced the move wholeheartedly.

Similar to Katya, Miwako explained that migration was both an expected, and longed for, life event. As previously discussed, Miwako wanted to move to Canada not only to pursue a career in sports coaching, but also because she thoroughly enjoyed the Canadian lifestyle. In fact, it appeared to me that when the participant and her Canadian boyfriend decided to get married, Miwako was the one who decided where the couple was to live: “...if I'm going to get married... (and) if...I can choose where I want to live then I wanted to choose Canada.” In spite of looking forward to married life in the new country, Miwako specified that the move had elicited both happiness and sadness. First, Miwako felt happy because migration represented a new exciting chapter in her life—one, as I have discussed, that was full of promise and opportunities. Yet, migration also

brought sadness because Miwako's father was against the move.<sup>55</sup> Miwako explained that, even though her father was supportive of her marriage, he disapproved of her decision to leave Japan. This disapproval, Miwako indicated, became the source of many arguments and much sadness in the months that preceded her migration:

...my dad...was pretty...sad and angry...we argued so many times...and you know...that was very sad...(he) wanted to keep me in Japan...even though we (wouldn't) live together (after the wedding)...he can see me whenever (in Japan)...So...he was very sad...

Previous English Skills. With respect to previous English skills, the three narratives varied in the following way: Miwako depicted English as a language in which she lacked skills at the beginning of her move, but not in the present; Kasumi depicted English as a language in which she had much difficulties both before and after the move; and Katya portrayed English as language of familiarity and ease.

Miwako's and Kasumi's depictions of their pre-migration English skills converged in the sense that neither participant saw herself as having adequate conversational skills in English before the move to Canada. The two specified that their previous learning experiences in Japan had been focused on the written—not the spoken—language, resulting in poor oral English abilities. "...we learned English from junior high school, high school, and I even learned English at college...but you know, in my country (they teach) grammar...not (English) conversation..." Kasumi said; and "...what we were doing is just reading the English textbooks, not the conversational English...So it was very hard to communicate with...English speakers..." Miwako echoed. As the upcoming discussion will show, Miwako's and Kasumi's pre-migration English difficulties played a significant role in both their migration adjustment and language transmission experiences.

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<sup>55</sup> Note that Miwako's mother was depicted as very supportive of her daughter's decision to move.

In Katya's case, the participant saw herself as having reasonable spoken and written English abilities before the move. She explained that her familiarity with English dated back to her school days ("I was introduced to English from age eight...in school.") and that her parents—in particular, her father, who was an avid student of languages—had actively encouraged her to learn the language while she was growing up ("...he hired private teachers for me [to learn the] English language"). Contributing to Katya's sense of ease with English was the participant's previous sojourn to an English-speaking country before her arrival in Canada and also the fact that much of literature in her field, medicine, was written in English. Interestingly, in spite of feeling confident in her pre-migration English skills, like Kasumi and Miwako, Katya also identified English as an adjustment obstacle after her arrival in Canada. The similarities and differences in English portrayals across the three narratives in this regard are examined in greater detail below.

#### 5.1.2 Time Segment 2: Experiences after the Move

Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako described their adjustment process in Canada in terms of migration difficulties and gains. In this section, I will highlight the migration challenges and benefits that were most prominent in their narratives.

##### Difficulties in Migration

Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako all identified English difficulties and family concerns as their most significant migration challenges. Katya—but not Miwako and Kasumi<sup>56</sup>—also specified that professional difficulties in Canada had been one of her most prominent migration obstacles. The aforementioned topics are discussed below.

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<sup>56</sup> In Kasumi's instance, the participant did not appear to have any immediate expectations to work outside the home, after getting married. In Miwako's case, the participant had chosen to put her coaching career on hold, after the birth of her first child.

English Difficulties. Kasumi, Miwako, and Katya explained that part of their migration challenges could be attributed to difficulties with the English language. Each participant portrayed their English-related migration difficulties in a different way: Kasumi described English as a language of social unease; Katya portrayed English as a language of professional barriers; and Miwako talked about English as (1) a language of helplessness and uncertainty, (2) a language of loneliness, and (3) a language of sadness and frustrations.

Kasumi, the participant who had lived in Canada for approximately two years and who had not been able to overcome her English difficulties, described English as a language of social unease in the sense that the language made her feel “very nervous” in her interactions with English-speaking others. Specifically, the participant explained that she was often uncomfortable talking with “Canadians” because her English vocabulary and pronunciation were “no good.” In fact, during our meeting, I was able to witness Kasumi’s discomfort with the language: The participant not only constantly apologized for her English skills, but she also cried a few times because of her perceived lack of fluency in the language. The following exchange illustrates one of these emotional moments:

P: ... (I’m) a little bit nervous (participant cries), because my English is no good. Sorry, this interview is ruined (participant cries)...if this interview is (in) Japanese, I can speak...I ruined (participant cries)...sorry...

R: You want (the interview) to stop? (Participant denies)...it’s okay to cry.

Katya—the participant who had lived in Canada for four years and who felt comfortable with her pre-migration English skills—depicted English as a language of professional barriers in the sense that the language interfered with her ability to resume her previous career as a doctor. Specifically, if Katya were to apply for a medical residency in Canada, she would first need to pass required English tests—a process that was too lengthy and costly, in the participant’s view. In addition, Katya felt “Canadians”

perceptions that her English was limited could hinder her future work pursuits in the country. The participant employed the metaphors of a “fish in a tank” and a “fish in the ocean” to describe her views in this respect:

P: I...feel kind of like a fish in a tank, you know? ...exactly like a fish in a tank. With Russian...back to Russia<sup>57</sup>, you feel like a fish in (the) ocean, right? Here like a fish in a tank, you see?”

R: Explain to me...these feelings...

P: Well, I mean...you still will not swim as far as you probably can...Canadian people still feel at work that I don't know enough English to probably take equal career opportunities with the same level of knowledge...Some clients...they never heard immigrants. They hardly understand us sometime...Saskatoon for me it's like a fish in a tank...I know I couldn't swim far, it will be always limited ...before I thought I would have my own business, but now I'm thinking because of...lack of knowledge (in English)...I probably will not succeed in a business on my own.

Finally, Miwako—the participant who had lived in Canada for ten years and who spoke English fairly fluently now—recalled how her lack of fluency in the language deeply affected her first years of life in Canada. First, the participant explained, there were feelings of helplessness and uncertainty:

...after a month (in Canada)...I couldn't speak English at all so I couldn't communicate with the other people...and I thought, oh my goodness, I can't do anything in Canada...So I was thinking, should I go back to Japan?...I didn't know what to do...because I didn't have any English skills...

Second, there was the loneliness, which was accentuated by the lack of support of a first language network in Saskatoon at that time:

...I couldn't communicate with the other people (in English)...and...ten years ago, well nowadays you can see so many Asian people at the university, but... ten years ago, I couldn't meet...someone who can speak Japanese...I didn't know anybody...it (was) so hard to...talk...I didn't have any English skills...I (wanted) to have a friend...I just wanted to have someone I can talk to.

Finally, there were feelings of worry, frustration, and sadness because English-speaking others could not understand Miwako's English pronunciation:

...living here...the problem was...my English...I was worried about my pronunciation...like even though I say right word (in English)... (the) pronunciation (was)...more like Japanese pronunciation and then (English

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<sup>57</sup> Note that Katya was born in Ukraine, but appeared to nurture a Russian identity.

speakers) couldn't understand!...my first year of coaching...I had summer camp and (was) coaching little kids and then they said, "I don't know what you are saying!"...And I was very sad and then hurt, you know?

In spite of having overcome the aforementioned challenges, Miwako explained that her initial language difficulties had a profound effect in her language transmission experiences, influencing not only her language transmission decisions but also her language practices with her two children.<sup>58</sup>

Impact of migration on the family of origin. Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako all indicated that they worried about the impact of migration on family members residing in their countries of origin. Kasumi's and Katya's depictions converged in the sense that the two participants—who had no siblings and who depicted themselves as having a very close relationship with their families—worried about how their parents were coping with their move. Specifically, Kasumi and Katya indicated that, even though their parents had accepted their migration, they felt sad, lonely, and missed their children to a great extent. Katya illustrated well this aspect of participants' narratives, when she pointed out that "...my parents...they still want us to enjoy the move....," however, she continued, "...in the Middle East<sup>59</sup> it's a tragedy, when children move away...and...my parents (feel)...sadness and loneliness."

In spite of similarities, Kasumi's and Katya's portrayals of parental concerns had slight variations. In Kasumi's instance, the move was depicted as being especially difficult for the participant's father, not only because she was an only child, but also because she had never lived away from her family before migration:

... my dad (was) always talking, joking with me...my dad really misses me because I am only child...even (after) I got married, I did live together with my parents, I never go...live separate...

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<sup>58</sup> This topic will be discussed in the section entitled "English as a Language of Social-Well Being."

<sup>59</sup> Katya likened Ukrainian culture to the culture of Middle Eastern countries here.



In Katya's account, migration was described as challenging for both the participant's and her husband's parents (in particular, for Katya's mother), not only because *both* Katya and her husband were only children, but also because the couple's two-year old son was the first and the only grandchild in their families:

...I'm only (child). And the same for J. (referring to her husband)...H. (the couple's son) is...the single grandchild...the only one...so you could imagine how (the grandparents) miss us... she (referring to her mother) saw him only...two times, and...she's very close by heart (but) she wishes to see him more often.

Finally, even though neither Kasumi nor Katya posited an explicit link between their filial concerns and their language transmission practices, it is noteworthy that, at later time in their interviews, both participants specified that it was important that their children learn first languages so that they could communicate with relatives, in particular with grandparents, living in their countries of origin.<sup>60</sup>

Miwako's portrayals of the impact of migration on her family of origin varied from Kasumi's and Katya's descriptions in the following ways. First, in Miwako's description, the discussion pertained not only to her parents, but also to her sister and her family. Second, this participant's discussion focused not on how her family of origin was coping with her migration,<sup>61</sup> but rather, on how migration could affect the relationship between her Japanese family members and her Canadian-born children. In particular, Miwako worried about the possibility of her daughters<sup>62</sup> not being to establish and maintain family bonds with their Japanese grandparents, aunt, and cousins who did not speak English. This concern arose approximately a year after the birth of her first child, when Miwako

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<sup>60</sup> This topic is explored further in the language transmission experiences section when I focus on participants' depiction of first languages as languages of family duty.

<sup>61</sup> It is possible that the content of Miwako's discussion differed from Kasumi's and Katya's because, unlike the latter, Miwako had a sibling living near her parents in Japan. It was my understanding this sibling, along with her children, interacted with Miwako's parents quite frequently. Thus, in Miwako's instance, the participant's parents may not have been quite as lonely because they still had another child and other grandchildren living nearby.

<sup>62</sup> Even though Miwako's language concerns related to both of her daughters, she generally focused her discussion on her oldest child (i.e., her four-year old daughter).

returned to Japan for a family visit. Miwako's daughter, who was approximately 14 months, was showing a strong preference for English at that time and did not seem to understand Japanese, even though she had been exposed to both languages during the first year of her life. As a result, Miwako was primarily speaking English with her daughter around the time of her visit to Japan—a language practice that brought great discomfort for the participant, particularly in the realm of her family of origin:

P: ...while we were in Japan when she (referring to her first daughter) was thirteen, fourteen month, I had to speak English to her because she couldn't understand Japanese... So everyone in Japan was kind of staring at me...because we look Japanese...but we are speaking English (laughter)... (I felt) uncomfortable...but this (was) our way to communicate, you know?

R: And how did your family react?

P: Well...they didn't say anything but I felt bad because her words...were English...English words came from her mouth. So only one word, my parents (were) able to understand, you know?

The participant added that, after returning to Canada, she was determined to encourage her daughter to speak her first language, in spite of her child's language preferences:

...I don't care (if she has a preferred language)...but I want my daughter to communicate with my parents, and my sister and cousins...so she (needs) to speak Japanese...

Professional difficulties. In addition to discussing English-related work difficulties, Katya also talked about additional challenges in the professional realm that were not directly related to language. As readers may recall, Katya was the participant who felt compelled to sacrifice her career in medicine after the move, and who was working as an accountant at the time of the interviews. She specified that the event of migration had affected her professional life in two primary ways. First, it challenged a professional identity that had been nurtured since childhood:

You know some people who know (what) they want to be, from age five?...I couldn't imagine how (a) little girl (would) dream like she would be great accountant from since she knows herself...In my situation I've been brought up in doctor family, who was just telling me that back that time, "It's just more logical for you...to be a doctor. We'll help you. Lots of books already, look at that library."

Second, the participant specified that she lacked a sense of professional fulfillment working as an accountant in Canada. “I don’t feel like I want to stay in accounting,” Katya specified. Thus, broadly speaking, in Katya’s instance, migration seemed to have been particularly challenging in the work realm: After the move, a career in medicine was deemed unviable; accounting work was not as professionally rewarding; and, as I have previously specified, English was viewed as a language that could hinder future professional pursuits in Canada.

### Migration Benefits

The two primary migration gains specified in the narratives were as follows: (1) work and financial stability (in Kasumi’s and Katya’s accounts) and (2) a sense of autonomy or “freedom” (in Miwako’s and Katya’s descriptions).

Work and Financial Stability. Both Kasumi and Katya indicated that the move to Canada had been beneficial because the couples had been able to fulfill their goals of achieving job security and financial stability.<sup>63</sup> In respect to job security, Kasumi’s and Katya’s descriptions were similar in the sense that both participants depicted their husbands’ work opportunities in Canada as stable and promising. Both men had been able to resume their previous careers after the move and seemed to be succeeding professionally. In Katya’s account, the sense of job security also derived from the fact that the participant had also been able to find stable employment in Canada, albeit in a career path that was not deemed to be as desirable as medicine.

In relation to financial stability, Kasumi’s and Katya’s narratives converged in that migration had enabled the couples to lead a more financially viable life in Canada than in their countries of origin. This was particularly evident in Katya’s situation. In one of our

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<sup>63</sup> It is possible that Miwako never discussed migration gains in this respect because, unlike Kasumi and Katya, job security and financial stability had never been problematic issues for Miwako before her move.

meetings, Katya indicated to me how delighted she and her husband were about the recent purchase of a spacious suburban home in Saskatoon—a house, Katya explained, that the couple would “never have in Ukraine,” where they would likely be living in a “small apartment with sometimes six people....” The couple’s ability to achieve job security and financial stability had a place of prominence in Katya’s narrative as the participant described her life at the moment in Canada as “the best life ever” not only because all of her family members were enjoying good health, but also because she and her husband were “secure with work, without financial loss.”<sup>64</sup>

By comparison, Kasumi and her husband were not as financially settled as Katya and her partner. As described previously, at the time of the interviews, the couple was living in a rented apartment and seemed to be leading a modest life. However, from my discussion with Kasumi, I gathered that it was only a matter of time before the couple could improve their standard of living as the husband’s improved work prospects in Canada were promising.

“Freedom”. Both Miwako and Katya employed the word “freedom” to describe their migration gains. In their descriptions, the term related to Miwako’s and Katya’s perceptions that migration had enabled them to gain a greater degree of autonomy in the private spheres of their lives. Miwako, for example, felt that the move had given her “lots of freedom” to pursue personal interests, such as leisure activities (e.g., hobbies, exercise), because work routine and expectations in Canada were not as restrictive as in Japan:

...in Canada you have lots of freedom. You can do whatever you want. But in Japan, if I wanted to...let’s say...(go) to exercise gym...it is hard to find the time

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<sup>64</sup> Note how Katya’s experiences in the work realm after migration were complex and multilayered: In one narrative line, Katya emphasized the many professional challenges that she was faced with (e.g., inability to resume a career in medicine, lack of professional fulfillment as an accountant); in another, she focused on how her work experiences in migration had helped her achieve important life goals and improve her family’s quality of life.

because I have to commute...one-and-a-half hours every day...and...if I don't finish (work at 5 p.m.)...then I have to stay...over (to) work. So, you know, come home around nine o'clock p.m. and the next day I have to leave home at six o'clock a.m.... I couldn't do anything. But here, you can access everything that you want.

Furthermore, the participant felt that her nuclear family was not as bound by her partner's work obligations and expectations in Canada, as other families were in Japan:

...(in Canada) my husband comes home around five-thirty (p.m.), (has) weekends off, and then during the summertime we go camping...but in Japan, guys work until seven or eight p.m., and after that they go for supper with (the) company...So they don't have much...free time with the family...we (referring to herself and her husband) like more (the) Canadian (lifestyle)...

Katya—the participant who felt destined for migration—hoped that, with a new Canadian identity (“I wish...some day we...have Canadian citizenship”) she would not only gain more freedom to pursue her lifelong goal of traveling around world, but that she would also rid herself of the many travel restrictions and stereotypes attached to those of Ukrainian or Russian descent, which were described in the following manner:

...with Ukrainian passport it's so complicated to get visa for travel everywhere...  
...people (from Ukraine) just want to see New York and...several times they (referring to the American embassy) say no...people...come to England, they say “no” to them...So I notice that any country of former Soviet Union...still don't make the trust... (but) I don't blame embassies...Look at these movies. Did you see new movie about CIA? They're...hunting down Russian criminals...which is (proof) that we...maintain bad reputation...they don't trust Ukrainians and Russians...for me who likes to travel and wants to have freedom, (the) Ukrainian passport is not good.

## 5.2 Portrayals of Language Transmission Experiences

In this section, I will describe Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's language transmission experiences taking into account three different time segments. The first time segment relates to participants' depictions of language experiences during their pregnancies or shortly after the birth of their children. The second time segment refers to participants' portrayals of language interactions with their children after their birth. The third time segment regards participants' depictions of language interactions in the future.

Finally, readers should keep in mind the following points when reading this section. First, in this particular participant group, all of the children were born in Canada. Their ages were nine-months old (in Kasumi's instance), two-years old (in Katya's description), and four and one years old (in Miwako's account). Note that when Miwako described her language transmission experiences with her children, she focused her discussion on her eldest daughter. Second, the husbands in question were depicted by participants as bilingual; that is, they could speak both English and first languages. Recall also that Miwako's partner was Canadian of Japanese descent and that Kasumi's and Katya's husbands were co-nationals.

#### 5.2.1 Time Segment 1: Language Experiences during Pregnancy or after the Birth in Canada

When Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako described their language experiences around the time of the birth of their children, it became clear to me that the language transmission process at that time was a *joint* enterprise between themselves and their husbands. In particular, when they discussed language experiences in this specific timeframe the following topics were addressed: (1) the couples' language transmission decisions and concerns; (2) the couples' anticipated language strategies; and (3) the couples' views of language transmission stakes.

#### Language Transmission Decisions and Concerns

Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako indicated that, at the time of their pregnancies or shortly after the birth of their Canadian-born children, the couples agreed that the children should grow up in Canada with fluency in both English and first languages.<sup>65</sup> In this respect, participants portrayed the decision-making process in a brief manner: They simply indicated that they shared the same language objectives as their partners and

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<sup>65</sup> Note that none of the three participants discussed the possibility of their children learning French.

that there was never any disagreement that their children should be raised bilingually. My impression was that, for these three couples, the goal of bilingualism for the children was a given; it did not require much negotiation.

The topic that did generate more discussion—and that clearly set Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's accounts apart from Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's descriptions—regarded the couples' language transmission concerns at that time. Specifically, while Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's talk about language worries focused on the transmission of first languages, Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's discussion of language concerns centered on the transmission of first languages *and* English. Specifically, whereas in the former instances, only first languages were depicted as the cause of language transmission concerns for participants and their husbands, in the latter, both first languages and English were cited as sources of language transmission worries for participants and/or their partners.

Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's descriptions of language transmission concerns also tended to be more complex than those of Lucia, Nara, and Olga because the data from the former participant group varied not only across, but also—in Miwako's and Katya's instances—within narratives. While in Kasumi's description, the participant depicted the couple as being equally worried about the transmission of Japanese and English, in Katya's and Miwako's accounts, the participants portrayed the couples as having opposing concerns. In Katya's instance, the husband was more apprehensive towards the transmission of English and the participant felt more worried about the transmission of Russian. In Miwako's situation, the Canadian-born husband had greater worries about the transmission of Japanese and Miwako a greater preoccupation with the transmission of English. When explaining the couples' specific language transmission worries, participants referred to one or more of the following factors: (a) fear that the children would not have adequate exposure to first languages and/or

English (in Kasumi's and Katya's accounts), (b) views of other children's language behaviours in co-national or first language networks (in Katya and Miwako's instances), and (c) previous English experiences in Canada (in Miwako's case).

Inadequate exposure to First Language and/or English. Both Kasumi and Katya explained language transmission concerns in terms of their children's anticipated level of exposure to first languages and English in the context of migration. The primary difference in their accounts was that while Kasumi discussed the topic in relation to the couple's language concerns towards first languages and English, Katya only talked about it in regards to her husband's preoccupation with English. Kasumi specified that the couple worried about the transmission of Japanese because they anticipated that their nine-month old son would not have sufficient exposure to the language *outside* the nuclear family realm in the future:

...we were...(worried) about...Japanese...because if he live in Japan he can meet a lot of Japanese, but if he speak just to me and my husband, maybe (his) Japanese...vocabulary is not so...(big)...Japanese is so hard...and if we live in Canada long time...maybe he can speak English but maybe he can't...Japanese.

Conversely, in relation to English, the couple worried that their child would not receive adequate exposure to the language *inside* the nuclear family realm. Kasumi, a stay-at-home parent who envisioned that her child would only begin attending English programs at age four, described the couple's fears in this respect as follows: "...if I stay at home...I...speak no English...he (will) go to (English) preschool (and)...he (will) not know what they are talking..."

Similarly, Katya explained that her husband felt more concerned about the transmission of English than Russian because he worried that their two-year son would not have sufficient exposure to English at home:

...my husband, told me that "...We probably better talk to (him) also in English and we need to put him in (English-speaking) day care as soon as possible...(because) if he's going to stay with you at home all the time...he will not pick up (English) quick..."



Views of Language Behaviours in First Language or Co-national Networks. Both Katya and Miwako explained first language transmission concerns in terms of their understanding of language behaviours in their first language or co-national networks. The main difference in their narratives was that whereas Katya discussed the topic in terms of her Russian worries, Miwako talked about it in relation to her husband's Japanese concerns. Katya pointed out that she felt more preoccupied with the transmission of Russian than English because she had noted that while most children in her Russian-speaking network had no troubles acquiring fluency in English, they seemed to have difficulties developing and/or maintaining Russian language skills. She illustrated her view by describing how even older children, who had established Russian skills before migration, were quick to lose their overall fluency in the language once they became immersed in an English-speaking environment:

...different parents who came from Russia, Ukraine...I saw that their children...who probably immigrated at age 10...in two years they hardly write in Russian! They hardly talk in Russian!

Miwako attributed her husband's first language transmission worries to his observations of language behaviours in his Japanese-Canadian co-national group. The participant explained that her husband, who had grown up in a Japanese-speaking family in Canada, felt more worried about the transmission of Japanese than English because he had observed that "...most third-generation (Japanese-Canadians) couldn't speak...their traditional language," Japanese. She suggested that her husband's preoccupation with the language might also have been accentuated by the language behaviours he observed in his nuclear family realm. Even though the husband's parents had spoken Japanese with all of their children, "... (my) sister-in-law...speaks English, she doesn't have Japanese...", Miwako pointed out.

Previous English experiences in Canada. Miwako depicted herself as having a greater preoccupation with English than Japanese because of her intense difficulties with English after her arrival in Canada. As readers may recall, the participant had portrayed English as a language of helplessness, loneliness, frustrations and sadness in her early days in the country. Miwako explained that, at the time of her pregnancy, she felt especially concerned with English because she did not want her daughter (and any other future children) to experience similar language-related problems:

...I was worried...(about) English...Because I (had) lots of problems speaking English when I came here, so I was very very worried about how they can play with other kids...if she doesn't understand English...how (would) she feel? You know, how does she feel...because I had an experience, right?...I don't want N. (the daughter) to feel that way.

In spite of the aforementioned variations, it is interesting to note that Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's discussion of language transmission concerns did share some similarities after all. First, in all accounts, portrayals of English transmission worries appeared to relate primarily to the first few years of the children's life, in particular, to the pre-school years—a time when the children would supposedly have more exposure to first languages than English, because they would be spending most of their time with their first-language speaking parents. Second, in the three narratives, depictions of first language transmission worries did not appear to relate to any specific timeframe.<sup>66</sup> Hence, at the time of the children's birth, while English transmission concerns seemed to be short-term transmission concerns, first language transmission worries appeared to be vaguer in nature.

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<sup>66</sup> In Kasumi's account, the participant hinted that the couple's first language transmission worries related to the future. However, later in the discussion (see p. 26), Kasumi specified that the couple also had short-term first language concerns.

### Anticipated Language Plans

In respect to anticipated language plans at the time of the children's birth, Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's accounts converged in two ways: First, all participants predicted that first languages and English would be part of their families' language practices; second, all three specified that expected language practices were a direct reflection of the couples' common (in Kasumi's case) or opposing (in Miwako's and Katya's instances) language transmission concerns.

Kasumi, for example, indicated that she and her husband planned to address the couple's worry towards the transmission of Japanese and English with an agreed-upon language strategy. Initially, she explained, they would employ only Japanese with their son because they wanted the child to learn "...Japanese first." After the child's second birthday, however, the husband was expected to speak English with their son so as to ensure that the child's safety in the English-speaking environment:

...when he will be two years or three years old...my husband (will) speak to him in English...(because) if we were shopping and...he can walk by himself and if somebody said 'Watch out'...if he didn't understand (it) is very dangerous.

Miwako explained that the couple's opposing language concerns yielded two separate language strategies. Her husband, the participant explained, expected to speak only Japanese with their child because he felt that "...English is easier to learn (and) sure easier to speak." Miwako, however, intended to communicate with the child in English, in addition to Japanese, because, unlike her husband, she did not think of English as a language of guaranteed transmission. "(B)efore I had children," Miwako explained, "I was worried how they (could) learn English, if we (referring to the couple) are speaking Japanese."

Finally, much like Miwako, Katya specified that she and her husband devised distinct language plans to address their contrasting worries towards the transmission of Russian and English, respectively. While Katya intended to speak only Russian, her

husband planned on speaking primarily English with the child. The participant explained that her decision to focus her efforts on the transmission of Russian was based on the language advice that she had received from other Russian-speaking parents in her first language network. These parents, Katya pointed out, had told her that if the couple wanted their child to speak Russian, they should not allow English in the family realm—if they did, the child would not only prefer English to Russian but could also “...refuse (to) talk in Russian....” By contrast, Katya pointed out that her husband’s determination to speak only English with their child (“from the beginning he told me...he will be talking in English”) stemmed not from a concern towards their son’s future language preferences and behaviour, but from a worry about the child’s ability to interact with English-speaking peers:

...my husband...told me that “he will know Russian anyway...(but) he will not know what a Pokemon is, or Beauty and the Beast, because (even) if you teach him the same in Russian, he will not pick it up quick if...English-speaking children will ask him that.”

#### Language Stakes at the time of the Children’s Birth

In spite of variations regarding language concerns and anticipated language plans, readers should recall that, in the three accounts, participants and their husbands were depicted as sharing the goal of bilingualism for their children; that is, the couples wanted the children to grow up in Canada with fluency in both first languages and English. Thus, when the discussion turned to the stakes in the language transmission process, both first languages and English were at the center of Kasumi’s, Katya’s, and Miwako’s talk. In this respect, narratives were strikingly similar: The three participants described first languages as languages of family duty and English as a language of socio-economic well-being. One participant, Katya, elaborated further in her discussion of first language stakes: She also portrayed her first language, Russian, as (a) a

language of cultural heritage and national identity as well as (b) a language of work opportunities.

First Languages as Languages of Family Duty. In the three accounts, the transmission of first languages was related to couples' sense of duty to maternal and paternal family members. In particular, Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako specified that couples felt an obligation to pass on their first languages so that their children could communicate directly with relatives—in particular grandparents—who, for the most part, lacked English skills and still lived in their countries of origin.<sup>67</sup> As Katya pointed out, how could she and her husband bring “an English-speaking child” to visit Russian-speaking grandparents and great-grandparents? Miwako's narrative offered the clearest description of how first language transmission was connected to the sense of family duty. In the quote below, the participant described why it was critical that her children learn Japanese:

...I left my family in Japan. Of course they want to see the grandchildren, so...I just want...my kids to communicate with my family...if I'm living in Japan, I don't have to worry about this...but my parents let me come to Canada to get married, to have family, so...I felt I have responsibility to (make sure) my children communicate with grandparents, so they have to speak Japanese.

Finally, in Katya's account, the intergenerational transmission of Russian related not only to filial duty (i.e., responsibility towards parents), but also to parental duty (i.e., obligation towards the child). Specifically, Katya was of the opinion that parents who forfeited the transmission of their linguistic background not only deprived their children of the ability to forge family bonds, but also of the opportunity of learning a second language. To illustrate her viewpoint, she described her perceptions of language

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<sup>67</sup> Miwako's family-in-law was the exception here. Specifically, in Miwako's instance, the husband's immediate family resided in Canada, although in a different city. In addition, the participant explained that, with the exception of her mother-in-law, most of her husband's immediate relatives were fluent in English. She indicated that, even though her mother-in-law had been living in Canada for many years (she was originally from Japan), she had limited English skills and preferred to communicate in Japanese.

experiences of English-speaking Canadians of Ukrainian descent, who had not been taught their family's language:

...I know lots of...Ukrainians...who were born here...(whose parents) were (the) first land developers here...and I know that many many (of the) grandkids now tell...their parents, "How come you still know Ukrainian?...How come you never taught us (Ukrainian)?" They complain to parents..."I wish my grandmother will talk to me more often. I wish my parents will talk to me in Ukrainian and I will know two languages."<sup>68</sup>

First Language as a Language of Cultural Heritage and National Identity. In

Katya's account the transmission of Russian was also related with the transmission of important aspects of Russian culture and identity. Specifically, not only did Katya want her son to have direct access to the great works of Russian literature ("...he needs to read to Pushkin and Bulgakov and Dostoevsky in his own language,<sup>69</sup> in Russian language..."), but she also would like him to understand his family's national roots and identity:

...for roots, for culture, for spirit, I would like him to know Russian...we have a really complex culture...we came from (a) really difficult country...no one will understand each other like Russians...understand Russians...we're...devoted to our culture...I mean there are certain things that happened...in our history, that would never happen in any other country...

Hence, in Katya's narrative, the transmission of Russian was depicted as providing the child access to his family's Russian lifeworld.

First Language as a Language of Work Opportunities. Katya, but not Kasumi and Miwako, also associated the transmission of her first language with her child's ability to pursue career opportunities in Russian-speaking countries in the future, if he wished to. To illustrate her view, the participant described how there were attractive job

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<sup>68</sup> Recall that Katya was Ukrainian-born but identified herself with Russian culture and language.

<sup>69</sup> The expression "his own language" is very telling of how Katya envisioned the relationship between her Canadian-born son and her first language, Russian.

opportunities in her country of origin for Canadians (but not Ukrainians<sup>70</sup>) who could speak Russian:

...there's lots of job opportunities...I know...some people<sup>71</sup> that could...work in Donetsk tomorrow where everybody speaks in Russian...Canadian people who go and work in Kiev they like it! Because food is delicious...(Kiev is) not so expensive...you're safe in Kiev, and you enjoy having Canadian salary in dollars... you just enjoy.

English as a Language of Social Well-Being. When Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako talked about English as a language of social well-being, they focused their discussion on the types of social difficulties that their children could experience, if they did not develop appropriate English skills in their first few years of life.<sup>72</sup> Kasumi, for example, indicated that the couple did not want their son to be “nervous” or fearful about commencing his English schooling:

...if he goes...to (English) pre-school...if he didn't understand English, maybe he will be nervous...maybe...he will not...want to go to pre-school because he (won't) know what they are talking (about)...

Katya specified that both she and her husband agreed that, without English skills, their son would feel like an “outsider” in the English play world: “...he (the child) needs to meet...his (English-speaking) peers...children...(of the) same age, Canadians, (he needs) to at least know the (English) games.” Similarly, Miwako anticipated that her daughter would be “sad” and “hurt” if language barriers prevented her from taking part in activities with English-speaking children.<sup>73</sup> In sum, Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's narratives converged in two ways: First, English-related social difficulties seemed to relate primarily to the children's interactions with English-speaking peers in their first few

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<sup>70</sup> Recall that one of the primary reasons for Katya's migration regarded great difficulties that the couple had in making a living in that country.

<sup>71</sup> Here Katya refers to Canadians who could speak Russian.

<sup>72</sup> Recall that, in the three accounts, this was the time period when the couples anticipated that their children would have more exposure to first languages than English.

<sup>73</sup> Note that, unlike Kasumi and Katya, Miwako never described her husband's view of the stakes in the transmission of English.

years of life; second, English was portrayed as a language of social well-being in the sense that it played a critical role in emotional well-being and the social inclusion of the children in the English-speaking environment.

### 5.2.2 Time Segment 2: Language Interactions with Canadian-Born Children in the Present

In this section, I will present participants' portrayals of their language interactions with their Canadian-born children in the following ways: First, I will explain how Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako depicted the couples' language behaviours with the children in the present and discuss how they justified the couples' changes in language practices across time. Second, I will explain how participants portrayed their children's language preferences and describe how they addressed perceived language challenges. Note that participants' descriptions of their current language transmission concerns were embedded in the discussion of the aforementioned topics.

#### The Couples' Language Behaviours and Rationale for Changes in Language Practices

With regards to the couples' language behaviours with the children in the present, Miwako's and Kasumi's narratives shared the greatest similarities. To begin with, both participants specified that their partners had been able to implement successfully their previous language plans, namely, that of employing primarily first languages in their communication with the children.<sup>74</sup> Thus, at the time of the interviews, both husbands were depicted as speaking Japanese with the children, as they had expected.<sup>75</sup> A slight variation in the data in this respect was that while Kasumi's husband appeared to communicate in English with his nine-month old baby sporadically,<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Here I refer to the languages plans that were devised at the time of the children's birth and that were discussed in previous section named "Anticipated Language Plans."

<sup>75</sup> Kasumi's husband was only going to begin speaking English with his son only after the child turned two.



Miwako's husband never seemed to employ the language with his four-year old and one-year old daughters, particularly in the home environment. As Miwako specified, "my husband wanted them to speak Japanese...so...(he) speaks only Japanese to them...at home he doesn't speak English at all."

Second, both Miwako and Kasumi explained that, unlike their husbands, they had not fulfilled their earlier language expectations: In the present, their current language practices differed in varying degrees from the language plans devised at the time of the children's birth. An important nuance in this respect was as follows: While Kasumi had changed her original language plans once, Miwako had altered hers twice. Kasumi—the participant who expected to speak only her first language—indicated that, in spite of conversing primarily in Japanese with her son (i.e., she would talk, read, sing, and play in Japanese), she also began to talk in English with the child in public and at home.<sup>77</sup> In public, English was a part of mother-child communication whenever others who did not know Japanese were involved:

R: I never (speak) Japanese (with the baby) if...I went to see a doctor or... nurse.

R: ...you speak with him (referring to her son) in English then.

P: Yeah...if I go Global Gathering Place, I didn't (speak) Japanese. If Japanese (people) come this same place I can (speak) Japanese, but...(if) they didn't understand Japanese...

R: So you...always speak to him in English (P. agrees)...if someone else doesn't speak Japanese.

P: Yeah. So if I...stay just my baby and me I speak Japanese but if somebody (referring to individuals who do not speak Japanese) comes over there I speak English to him.

At home, English seemed to be employed on random occasions. Even though Kasumi did not elaborate on the topic, my impression was that, every now and then, she would say isolated English words to the baby. In Kasumi's account, the rationale for this

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<sup>76</sup> Kasumi never specified the types of situations that the husband would speak English with the child.

<sup>77</sup> When I asked Kasumi how she felt about speaking English with her child, after all she had expressed great discomfort with the language earlier in the discussion, she specified that she found it enjoyable because the type of English required in that context was "not very hard."

language practice related to the enduring concern that the child should develop familiarity with English before entry into the English school system—a worry reinforced by the participant’s experiences in her co-national network in Saskatoon. The son of a Japanese acquaintance, Kasumi explained, “...went to (English) pre-school (and) he (didn’t) know...English so he (was) very nervous and...he didn’t want to go (to) pre-school.”

Miwako—the participant who intended to speak both Japanese and English—pointed that even though she had been able to implement her initial language plans in the first year of her daughter’s life (“...I...always spoke both [languages]...if I said apple, I always say Japanese word first and then English word...second...”), she felt the need to nurture Japanese to a greater extent after the child turned one. As readers may recall, it was around that time that Miwako realized that her daughter was unable to communicate in Japanese with the grandparents who lived in Japan. In order to avoid language barriers between the child and the grandparents, Miwako increased the child’s exposure to Japanese: Not only did she speak the language more often with her daughter, but she also started to socialize with co-nationals in Saskatoon more frequently (“...I decided to see Japanese people who have kids...more often to let her hear Japanese...not only from my mouth...”). In addition, the participant made sure that her child was surrounded by Japanese books, videos, and music. Miwako saved the use of English for social outings, as she felt uncomfortable speaking—in particular, disciplining her child—in Japanese in public:

Whenever I get mad at N. (in public), I guess I speak English because... everybody can understand what I’m saying to her. But if I said in Japanese and say loud...they don’t know what I’m saying and then they might say I’m verbally abusing her (laughter)...

A couple of years later, Miwako’s daughter began attending English pre-school.

At this point in time, Miwako altered her language practices for a second time. The

participant explained that even though the transmission of Japanese continued to be a priority for her (i.e., she continued to nurture the language at home), her daughter's entry in school had compelled her to resume her English transmission efforts, albeit not in same extent as when the child was a baby. This was Miwako's poignant description of the second turning point in her language transmission journey:

Well, I always thought how she (does) feel when she's in English atmosphere if she can't understand (English)...I don't want her to be sad...(the) first day (of) preschool, the teacher said, "Tell us about yourself."...I thought, oh my God, it's so hard for her (referring to daughter) to answer...And then, well other kids are saying their name and age and birthday and N. was...(whisper) "Mommy, they were asking my birthday!...And how do you say my birthday in English?" she was saying...And I said, (whisper) "November"...So she is fine I guess, but first Show and Tell...she (couldn't) make complete (English) sentence...Well she (could) speak and she (could) understand, but not enough compared to the others, because she's speaking, you know, Japanese at home. So I felt so sad, but she didn't feel sad (nervous laughter), she was having fun, was just me.

To help her daughter adjust to "English atmosphere" of the new school, Miwako not only began to teach the child basic conversational skills in English ("I taught her, when people said 'What's your name?' you have to say, 'N.,'...'How old are you?'...you have to say, 'Three,'" and so on..."), but she also began to employ English whenever grammatical corrections were required:

...right now she says "I like chocolate." But before she said, "I chocolate like," this is Japanese way of saying...So...I just repeat, "Oh, you like chocolate!" and then she learns how...(to) say correctly.

Contrary to Miwako and Kasumi, Katya indicated that while she had been able to fulfill the language goal that she had set out for herself at the time of her son's birth, her husband had not. As previously specified, Katya had planned on speaking primarily Russian with the couple's two-year old son and her husband mainly English. In the present, Katya explained that in addition to conversing in Russian at home and in public with her child, she frequently read Russian books ("I...try to read with him every evening..."), and provided the child with weekly opportunities to interact with Russian-speaking others at the Russian Language School. In order to strengthen her son's

Russian skills even further, the participant also hired a Russian-speaking babysitter (“...she’s coming three times...a week ...I want her...[to come] full-time”) to aid her language transmission efforts.

As for her husband, Katya indicated that, in spite of having been determined to converse only in English with the child at first, he felt the need to re-evaluate his language decision after a visit from his mother:

I was worried about it,<sup>78</sup> he was probably thinking...there’s nothing to worry about until the time has come...we solve problem when it comes. So...the problem comes...J.’s mom (her husband’s mother) came and (we) see that he (the child) couldn’t talk in Russian properly...

Katya enthused that, in the present, her husband fully supported her first language transmission efforts: “(Now), he thinks it’s the right thing to do! Now, he said, we’re only talking in Russian at home.”

In a nutshell, Kasumi’s, Katya’s, and Miwako’s portrayals of language practices could be summarized in two primary ways. First, in all three accounts, participants indicated that the couples’ language transmission journeys had been marked by language adjustments. Whereas in Miwako’s and Kasumi’s instances, language changes were made by participants, in Katya’s, they were undertaken by the husband. Second, changes in language behaviour across time were related to the following language concerns: (1) the children’s inability to converse in first languages with grandparents (in Miwako’s and Katya’s accounts), (2) the children’s social well-being in the English school environment (in Kasumi’s, Miwako’s, and Katya’s descriptions), and (3) a concern for or about those who did not speak first languages (in Kasumi’s and Miwako’s narratives, respectively).

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<sup>78</sup> Here Katya refers to the transmission of Russian at the time of her son’s birth.

### The Children's Language Preferences and Participants' Language Strategies

Miwako and Katya—but not Kasumi<sup>79</sup>—provided a brief description of their children's current language preferences and of the strategies that they (the participants) employed to address perceived language challenges. The two narratives were strikingly similar in both respects. In regards to the children's language preferences, Miwako and Katya indicated that, in spite of being able to communicate in first languages<sup>80</sup> and to speaking first languages with the couples, their children seemed to be developing a greater preference for English as their exposure to the language increased with time. In both accounts, the children's entry in the English school or day care systems were depicted as significant influences in the children's preference for English. As Miwako explained of her four-year old daughter, "... (as) she goes to school she picks English more and more... and now she speaks English to me, sometimes, after she (comes) from preschool..." The two participants also specified that their children were particularly fond of English narrative books and movies. Katya, for example, affirmed that one "couldn't protect" her two-year old son "from English narrative... he loves... Finding Nemo... he loves movies about dinosaurs, you know, he loves Spiderman." Likewise, Miwako specified that "at bedtime narrative," her daughter "always (brought) English books" for her to read.

Although Miwako and Katya appreciated the fact that English was critical to their children's emotional and social development in Canada, they felt worried that the

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<sup>79</sup> It is possible that Kasumi did not elaborate on this topic because her child was rather young at the time of the interviews (he was nine-months old).

<sup>80</sup> A variation in this respect was that while Miwako depicted her four-year old daughter as having fluency in Japanese, Katya portrayed her two-year old son as being somewhat delayed in the development of Russian language skills. Even though her son was able speak the language, she did not feel that he spoke Russian as well as children of the same age in her first language network.

children's burgeoning preference for the language could interfere with the development of first language skills. In order to address this language challenge, the participants specified employing two strategies. First, they would, at times, acquiesce to the children's request for English narratives or English conversations because they felt that if they were inflexible in this respect (e.g., if they forced the children to speak only first languages or if they refused to read English books), the children could develop an even stronger predilection for English. Katya, an astute observer of parent-child language interactions in her first language network, explained that, she did not want to "push" her two-year old son to speak only Russian, because she did not want the child to develop a dislike for the language:

I don't want him (to have) the opposite reaction...I don't want hear... 'Mommy, please, I'd rather read two books in English rather than one in Russian.' Like I heard sometimes kids<sup>81</sup> telling that.

Second, in addition to reading books, playing movies and music in first languages whenever the children were receptive to those activities, Miwako and Katya also ensured that the children had opportunities to interact with other children in their first language networks. That is, participants ensured that their children also had exposure to first languages in a social context characterized by play and fun.

Finally, in spite of the aforementioned similarities, Miwako's and Katya's narratives did diverge in one respect: While Katya indicated that her son spoke both Russian and English with the couple, Miwako's specified that, although her daughter employed both English and Japanese in their interactions, she never conversed in English with her Canadian-born father. She illustrated and explained the child's language behaviour with the couple in the following way:

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<sup>81</sup> Here Katya refers to children of Russian-speaking friends from her first language network.

And now she speaks English to me, sometimes...but not my husband at all. Because she never heard...my husband speaks English to (her), so she never ever speaks English to my husband.

### 5.3.3 Time Segment 3: Future Language Interactions with Canadian-Born Children

When Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako described their language interactions in the future, the discussion focused on the following: (1) language practices with children in the near and distant future, (2) the outcomes of first language transmission efforts, and (3) intergenerational transmission of first languages. Notice that when participants talked about the aforementioned topics, they did so anticipating that they and their families would continue to reside in Canada. Also, take note that, in the following description, participants discussed primarily *their* visions of future language interactions; the husbands' viewpoints—which, until now, had been a central part of the portrayals—received little, if any attention.

#### Language Practices in the Future

When Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako talked about future language practices they spoke of two different timeframes: the near future, which seemed to refer to the time when the children would begin to attend elementary school, and to the distant future, which related to the time when the children became young adults.

Language Practices in the Near Future. With regards to the near future, narratives diverged and converged in the following ways: While Miwako and Kasumi did not foresee any significant changes in their current language interactions with their children, Katya anticipated that she would have to make adjustments in her language transmission practices. Miwako—the participant who was speaking primarily Japanese with her four-year old daughter in the present—explained that she would continue to focus her efforts on the transmission of Japanese not only because of her daughter's growing preference for English ("...these days when she speaks English I try to...answer in Japanese, and she said "Mommy, I'm speaking English so please answer in

English...”), but also because she was afraid her child would not develop appropriate English pronunciation skills if she copied her English pronunciation. This was her viewpoint in this regard:

...at bedtime narrative, she always brings English books to me...Until now it was okay because she was just listening. But right now she wants to repeat after me, so in Japanese book that’s fine, you know? I can pronounce perfectly (in Japanese, but English sometimes...I can’t pronounce...well...

Similarly, Kasumi—the participant who was conversing in Japanese (most of the time) and English (on occasion) with her child—did not predict any substantial changes in her language transmission practices; if anything, she considered the possibility of speaking more English with her son in a few years (“[when] he will be five or four years old, maybe more English...”) so as to help him feel comfortable in the English-speaking school environment.

Finally, Katya—the participant who spoke primarily Russian with her child—specified that she anticipated that the following change in her language transmission practices: In the near future, she would have to focus her efforts not only on the transmission of Russian, but also on the transmission of English. Specifically, Katya felt that she would need to enroll her two-year old son in English pre-school soon because she was beginning to worry that the child was not developing appropriate knowledge of the language: “...(at a) Christmas party...recently, I see that (English-speaking) kids know some stories and poems and he doesn’t know so many in English....” Furthermore, the participant was concerned that if her son did not receive formal instruction in the language, he could experience future academic difficulties:

He needs to already...study a little bit how to read in English, because kids nowadays, at age seven already can read and count...He needs to read and count in English so I’m going to put (him) in pre-school...Because I don’t want him to be behind in...school.

Language Practices in the Distant Future. When Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako talked about their language practices in the distant future, their discussion was brief and,



in Kasumi's instance, somewhat fragmented. In this respect, Miwako's and Katya's accounts shared the greatest similarities as both participants pictured themselves employing primarily first languages with their adult children. In Miwako's narrative, the continued transmission of Japanese—especially spoken Japanese—was depicted as important for two reasons: First, the language would enable the maintenance of family bonds with Japanese relatives; second, the language would allow the child to socialize with others in Japan. “It doesn't matter if she can read or write (Japanese),” Miwako explained, “...if she goes to Japan, if she speaks (Japanese) then she will be able to communicate with other Japanese people.”

In Katya's account, the long-term transmission of the participant's first language<sup>82</sup> seemed to be associated with the child's ability to embrace his Russian-Ukrainian background. This is how Katya envisioned herself explaining to her son the importance of Russian:

I will talk about (Russian language) to him later and explain ...he was born in Vancouver but...he supposed to be born on the first place...in (Ukraine)...I want him to know that...still deeply in his roots he's still Russian-Ukrainian.

Finally, unlike Miwako and Katya, Kasumi predicted that she and her husband<sup>83</sup> would speak both their first language and English in the future. In this respect, the participant did not offer many details. She simply indicated that the couple would likely speak Japanese with their son in the home environment and English in other social contexts.

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<sup>82</sup> Note that in Katya's narrative, whenever the participant discussed the transmission of Russian, she had in mind the transmission of the oral and the written language.

<sup>83</sup> Note that Katya and Miwako never specified what their husbands' future language practices would be. However, my impression was that, in both accounts, the husbands would continue to speak first languages with the children.

## The Outcomes of First Language and English Language Transmission Narratives

Concerning the outcomes of language transmission, Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's descriptions shared several similarities. First, the three participants felt confident that, in time, their children would understand and speak English very fluently. As Katya put it, "I'm not worried about English language. If I can pick it up, at age 30, so he can do it at age 12...." Second, they all wondered if their children would prefer English to first languages. "... (when) he will be...grown up," Kasumi said of her son, "maybe...he wants to talk English." Third, although the three of them seemed to feel confident that their children would be able to understand first languages eventually ("...Russian...sooner or later they will understand...(but) if I don't put ...rules in the house, talk to me only in Russian, he<sup>84</sup> will never talk in Russian," Katya explained), they were unsure if they would be able to *speak* these languages. This is how Miwako expressed her uncertainty towards the outcomes of her Japanese transmission efforts:

If our children lived in Japan for several years, they may keep more Japanese, but if they (are) living only here...so I think that's my big task...that they will be learning Japanese...

Finally, note that, in Miwako's and Katya's instances, the two participants also entertained the possibility of their children, not only preferring English, but actually refusing to employ first languages in the future. The two participants appeared to consider this scenario as plausible because both of them had already thought of which language negotiation strategies they would employ, if faced with such situation. Katya, for example, specified that even though the couple may have to acquiesce to their son's refusal to speak Russian, she would still continue to encourage the transmission of the language:

...in a certain age he (referring to the child) will say, "I don't want (to speak Russian)," and I guess we will fight for that for a while but if it will be a problem

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<sup>84</sup> Here Katya refers to her son.

we will go his way. But I will always try to convince him that, to know more than one language is always a benefit.

Miwako explained that she would refuse to communicate in English whenever her daughters spoke the language: “Even though they will speak English to me, or to my husband, I will keep speaking Japanese.”

Thus, in general terms, in the three descriptions, while the outcomes of the English transmission narratives seemed to be more predictable (i.e., English was a language of guaranteed transmission in the long run), the conclusions of the first language narratives appeared to be more open-ended (i.e., first languages were languages of uncertain transmission in the future).

#### Intergenerational Language Transmission: The Future of First Languages

Miwako and Kasumi, but not Katya,<sup>85</sup> discussed the topic of intergenerational transmission of first languages. The two participants provided dissimilar accounts concerning the future of their first language, Japanese: While in Miwako’s account the intergenerational transmission of the language was portrayed as likely, in Kasumi’s it was depicted as unlikely. Miwako considered the transmission of the language possible because she planned on employing only Japanese with her daughters and their children. Even though she predicted that English would be the primary language of communication between her children and her grandchildren (in her narrative, her two daughters would not only prefer to communicate in English but they would also be married to English-speaking Canadian men), she anticipated that her daughters would eventually teach their children Japanese to enable them to talk with their grandmother:

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<sup>85</sup> Katya simply indicated that she hoped her son would marry a “Russian-immigrant girl” who spoke both English and Russian. Even though she did not discuss the topic directly, my impression was that she hoped for the intergenerational transmission of Russian.

“...if I don’t speak English then they<sup>86</sup> have to speak Japanese to me, right? ...so they might teach Japanese to their kids, to communicate with me.”

Kasumi viewed the intergenerational transmission of Japanese as unlikely because she felt that, if her son’s future family lived in Canada, the grandchildren would not be able to develop much fluency in the language: “...my grandchildren [will] speak English and maybe a little bit...Japanese.” One interesting aspect of this viewpoint was that the participant seemed rather confident that her son would marry a Japanese girl. “...most Japanese men get married to Japanese women... [they] can’t marry from another country,” she asserted. Thus, in Kasumi’s account, the intergenerational transmission of her first language was portrayed as improbable, even with the presence of a Japanese-speaking mother. When I asked Kasumi about her feelings towards this supposed language outcome (after all, she had portrayed English as a language of much social discomfort), to my surprise, the participant cheerfully replied that it would not be bothersome at all, because “...at that time, I can speak English very well (laughter).”

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<sup>86</sup> Here Miwako seems to refer to her daughters and future grandchildren.

### 5.3 Summary and Discussion

In spite of particular variations, Kasumi's, Katya's, and Miwako's language transmission descriptions shared important similarities. First, the three participants depicted the language transmission process as joint enterprise between themselves and their husbands. In their accounts, they portrayed their husbands as playing a significant role in their language transmission views or considerations.

Second, Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako seemed to have given their first languages and English a place of prominence throughout their language transmission narratives. The two languages were simultaneously highlighted not only when participants felt apprehensive about the transmission of either language, but also in those occasions (such as in Katya's and Miwako's instances) when husband and wife did not share the same language strategies or goals.<sup>87</sup> In Katya's description, I found a quote that aptly illustrated the dynamic nature of the type of language transmission processes in question:

Waves, it's like...curves...I don't want dream or fantasize what I better do, I'd just rather do...If I see he is not progressing in Russian at all, I try to probably put himself in Russian, fully in Russian, for maybe three months. But still...it's reality, I need to put him then back to English environment (because) he needs to know, by seven years old, he needs to learn (the) sort of things that Canadian kids know.

Furthermore, the stakes concerning the transmission of first languages seemed to be as high as the stakes regarding the transmission of English in all three narratives. In general, the transmission of first languages was associated with the establishment and nurturing of critical family bonds with relatives who could not speak English, and the transmission of English was related to the children's social and/or academic well-being

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<sup>87</sup> This was illustrated in "Time Segment 1: Language Experiences at the time of the Children's Birth."

in the English-speaking environment. Kasumi, Katya, and Miwako also depicted themselves as sharing with their husbands the goal of bilingualism for the children.

Finally, depictions of language transmission journeys often seemed to be marked by unanticipated language events. All participants spoke of significant, and often, unexpected, changes in their (or their husbands') language transmission practices at one point or another. Miwako's narrative illustrated this shared characteristic quite well: Recall how the participant's passionate concern for the transmission of English (which was fuelled by her own English difficulties upon her arrival in Canada) at the time of her pregnancy and at the time of the child's entry in English pre-school was eventually replaced, in the present, by an equally intense determination to teach her child Japanese (which, in turn, was motivated by a fear that her daughter may have difficulties communicating with Japanese-speaking grandparents).

## 6. PLOT 3: ENGLISH TRANSMISSION CONCERNS REPLACED BY FIRST LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION WORRIES

In the two previous chapters, I explored the language transmission narratives of six participants who had Canadian-born children (i.e., they were participants who became parents after migration). In this chapter, I will examine the language transmission accounts of five participants—Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya—who migrated to Canada *with* their children. In all of these instances, the children in question were born outside of Canada<sup>88</sup> and, at the time of the interviews, all were enrolled in the Canadian school system. Thus, an important difference that should be noted at this point is that, in Nadeje's, Nora's, Joyce's, Anee's, and Lya's instances, the focus of the narratives was on school-aged children (whose ages ranged from six to seventeen)—and not on babies or pre-schoolers like in the preceding two chapters (i.e., in plots 1 and 2).

The national origins of the participants whose narratives I will now describe were as follows: Afghanistan (Nadeje), Argentina (Joyce), Iran (Nora), India (Anee), and Ukraine (Lya). In spite of coming from different countries, Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya shared a number of common background characteristics. To begin with, they were in the same age group, which ranged from 35 to 44 years of age. In addition, they were highly-educated, holding graduate or professional degrees in fields such as Chemistry (Nadeje), Medicine (Nora), Geology (Joyce), Law (Anee), and Linguistics (Lya). Before migration, all five had worked full-time in their chosen career fields and,

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<sup>88</sup> Nadeje's, Nora's, and Lya's children were all born in their parents' countries of origin. Joyce's three children and Anee's only son were born outside of their parents' countries of origin (but not in Canada). However, in all instances participants' viewed their children as sharing their national identities.

during our discussions, it became clear to me that Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya all placed great value in their professional identities. At the time of the interviews, with the exception of Joyce who was working in her original field of expertise, none of the remaining participants had been able to resume their previous careers in the new country.<sup>89</sup> The work status of these participants in Canada were as follows: Nadeje and Anee were unemployed, but looking for job opportunities in which they could employ at least some of their previous professional skills; Nora was trying to renew her medical license in Canada; and Lya got re-trained as an accountant.

Another commonality concerned participants' family background and first language networks. Specifically, Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya were all married to co-nationals and, with the exception of Nora who had a sibling living in a different Canadian city, the couple's family network in the new country was limited to their nuclear families. That is, most relatives in both participants' and their husbands' side were still living in the countries of origins. Nonetheless, all participants specified that they had the ability to count on first language and/or co-national networks for social and first language support in Saskatoon as there were established groups of individuals who shared their linguistic and/or national backgrounds.

Finally, concerning language abilities, participants depicted the skills of family members in a similar fashion: Husbands were described as bilingual, having fluency in first languages and English; children were portrayed as having little or no fluency in English *before* their move to Canada;<sup>90</sup> and other family relatives (e.g., grandparents) were viewed as having limited or non-existent English skills. Note also that, of the five participants, Joyce and Lya were the ones who arrived in Canada with the greatest

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<sup>89</sup> A detailed discussion of how migration affected participants' professional lives is presented on pages 16 and 17.

<sup>90</sup> Portrayals of the children's English and first language skills *after* the move to Canada will be examined in greater detail after the discussion of migration experiences.



English fluency as they had learned the language quite well before the move. The two appeared to feel quite confident and comfortable with their English skills. Nadeje, Nora, and Anee could also communicate well in English, in my opinion; however, they were not as confident in their abilities as Joyce and Lya were.<sup>91</sup>

In spite of the aforementioned commonalities, Nadeje's, Nora's, Joyce's, Anee's, and Lya's situations diverged in important ways. First, while Nadeje, Anee, and Lya had been living in Canada with their families for over three years, Nora and Joyce had been in the country for less than four months. Second, while in the former cases, participants depicted their children as quite fluent in English at the time of the interviews, in the latter, participants specified that their children were still struggling to learn the language. As I will discuss later, these differences played an important role in how narratives were shaped. Third, in terms of standard of living, Joyce, Anee, and Lya appeared to be more financially settled than Nora and Nadeje after the move. In the former instances, the couple (in Joyce's and Lya's cases) or the husband (in Anee's situation) had full-time jobs in Canada and the families' future economic prospects seemed promising. At the time of the interviews, Joyce and Lya, for example, had already achieved the financial means required for the purchase of a house in Saskatoon. By contrast, Nadeje and Nora and their respective partners had not been able to secure permanent employment at the time of the interviews. In these two instances, then, participants were not only struggling with language issues, but also with financial worries. To conclude, the number and ages of children in each family varied across narratives: Nadeje had four daughters (ages 17, 13, 11, and 9); Joyce had two daughters and a son (ages 10, 8, 6, respectively); Nora had a girl and a boy (ages 10 and 6); and Anee and Lya had one child each (a girl and a boy respectively), both of whom were 9 years old.

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<sup>91</sup> I will present how participants constructed their views of English in greater detail in the upcoming section.

## 6.1 Portrayals of Migration Experiences

When Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya discussed their migration journeys, they talked about life and language experiences that took place before and after their move. Note that, in respect to language constructions, participants' talk was primarily focused on the English language. Descriptions of first languages in the context of migration were intricately connected with the talk about particular language transmission experiences and will be discussed in that context.

### 6.1.1 Time Segment 1: Pre-Migration Experiences

In respect to pre-migration experiences, the five participants talked about two distinct, but interrelated, topics, namely, the reasons for their migration and their feelings towards the move. In addition, all discussed their previous views of the English language.

#### Reasons for Migration

In general terms, participants attributed their move to work and financial reasons ( $n = 4$ ) as well as to feelings of social alienation in the countries of origin ( $n = 4$ ). A discussion of these topics follows below.

The talk about how work and finances motivated migration centered on the topics of (a) professional and financial difficulties in their countries of origin (in Joyce's, Nora's, and Lya's instances) and/or (b) promising work opportunities in Canada (in Joyce's and Anee's cases).

Professional and Financial Difficulties. Nora, Joyce, and Lya attributed their families' move to Canada to the financial and professional challenges that the couples were experiencing in their countries of origin. Portrayals in this respect shared several similarities. First, the three participants specified that the couples' inability to make a living in their work fields played a significant role in their move. Lya, a participant who worked as an English interpreter in Ukraine, provided a good description in this regard:

...the reason of immigration, the main reason (of migration)...for us...(was that) we didn't apply our diploma, our knowledge, nowhere, because you are not paid at all ... we couldn't find any adequate job. Even if you work full-time...it was tough...very tough...I just (didn't) want to waste all my fruitful (working) years like between 20-something 'til like 50's...to be...nothing in my country...

Second, all participants described a deep concern for the couple's financial future, if they were to remain in their countries of origin. Nora, who worked as doctor in Iran, explained that "...I worked hard for getting money...but the price (of things) becomes higher and higher...many times I and my husband...worried about the future. 'We don't have any money, we don't have enough money...for the future'." Finally, Nora, Joyce, and Lya indicated that the couples' constant professional struggles in their countries of origin felt both draining and pointless. Joyce, who worked as a professor in Argentina, best illustrated this argument when she pointed out that "...it (was) a fight , just to get...a job...we were exhausted working through the system and...going nowhere, professionally."

Promising Work Opportunities. Joyce and Anee specified that their move had been motivated by attractive professional opportunities in Canada. Specifically, the two participants explained that their husbands had received alluring work offers in their professional fields in the new country. Anee, for example, described her husband's job proposal as undeniable:

...they (the Canadian employers) just...give us<sup>92</sup> the offer...(and) they...agreed for every step...salary or whatever we want, they...agreed, you know? Without an interview...So then you have no point to say no at that moment, you know?

The two accounts only diverged in the sense that, in Joyce's instance, the participant also received a promising—albeit temporary—job offer in her career field in Canada. It was the participant's hope that, in time, her provisional work arrangements would become permanent.

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<sup>92</sup> Although Anee employed the pronoun "us" in this instance, she was referring to her husband. Anee herself was not offered any work opportunities in Canada before migration.

Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, and Lya also attributed their move to feelings of social exclusion. These feelings were associated with issues of gender oppression and of divergent socio-political values.

Gender oppression. Both Nadeje and Nora specified that the oppressive social status of women in their countries of origin (Afghanistan and Iran, respectively) was one of the main reasons for their migration.<sup>93</sup> Nora, who moved to Canada voluntarily as an economic migrant, provided a vivid illustration in respect to the social powerlessness of women in Iran:

...in our country ...all of women (don't) have...real...power like a man. I was a top situation in my country...I (was) a doctor. Another man is but a simple worker. He can order me many times...because...I was a woman, he was a man. He can (order) many times... "Your scarf is not good! Your...cover body is not good."...during the...hot summer, I must put on a scarf, black or brown, very dark color, but men (are)...free...It is not fair.

Nadeje, a refugee who fled Afghanistan after the Taliban took control of the country, described the social exclusion of women in the educational and professional realms motivated her move:

...when the Taliban took power in Afghanistan...they closed the school for girls and they didn't allow...women to work, so they stop me from working...this was...one of the reasons that I left my country...

Finally, both Nadeje and Nora specified that the couples' desire that their daughters<sup>94</sup> not be subjected to the same unjust gender rules played a role in their decision to move. Nora, for example, did not want her daughter to feel like she was inferior because of her gender and hoped that, in Canada, the child would not be bound to the "many obligations" that women had in Iran, such as having to wear a scarf. And, Nadeje did not want her four daughters to be deprived of educational opportunities:

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<sup>93</sup> Note that Anee also disliked the gender inequalities in India. However, in her instance, this factor was not portrayed as a motivator for her migration.

<sup>94</sup> Nadeje had four daughters and Nora had one daughter.

P: the other reason (for the move was that) I had four girls... when the Taliban took power they said...they don't allow girls to go to school...There's no need for (girls) to be educated...

R: And that's not what you had in mind (for your daughters).

P: Oh no, not at all...they should finish university...I think it's important, very important.

Divergent socio-political values. Joyce and Lya talked about social exclusion in terms of the couples' inability to fit in their original social milieu. Specifically, they attributed this social exclusion to divergent socio-political values. Joyce, for example, explained how the couple's disagreement about the goals and values of a "very conservative" and "pro-military" Argentinean society<sup>95</sup> had led them to feel isolated, and ultimately consider migration:

...the society in the north of Argentina is very, very...conservative, in many senses...it's pro-military...the son of a former military dictator was...elected...we<sup>96</sup> were not happy with that...we are typical educated middle-class, and we do not share...the way of life, that these people have...which is mostly making money, and marry...somebody who is rich, not especially...educated...and we found very, very few people we (could) actually talk to. We had different interests...I had very few people I could...tell things I'm interested in, and share those interests...we were not happy there...so we started...reconsidering the possibility of living abroad.<sup>97</sup>

Lya described how the difficult socio-economic situation challenged the couple's social values. The participant explained that, under the new political regime, the country's economy had deteriorated ("...the economic position of Ukraine is not very good, especially... [after) the elections...it's a horrible thing"), forcing many individuals to resort to—and to accept—corruption as a means of survival. The couple's refusal to do "dirty things" caused them to feel like they were in the margins of their own society

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<sup>95</sup> Note that in this instance, Joyce refers exclusively to Argentineans living in the northern provinces of country. The participant explained that even though the couple felt at home and more socially comfortable in the southern provinces of Argentina, they had not been able to find job positions in those provinces.

<sup>96</sup> Joyce employs the pronoun "we" in this quote to refer to herself and her husband.

<sup>97</sup> Prior to migration, Joyce and her husband had lived in the U.S. for several years to pursue post-graduate studies.

("...we felt like outsiders in our own neighbourhood..."), and ultimately contributed to their decision to move.

### Feelings towards the Move

The primary emotions that marked participants' feelings towards their impending move to Canada were as follows: enthusiasm in Nora's, Joyce's, and Lya's description; reluctance and apprehension in Anee's account, and a deep sense of loss in Nadeje's description.

In Nora's, Joyce's, and Lya's instances, participants indicated that, in spite of their strong national identity ("We're 100% Argentineans," Joyce said of herself and her husband) and their love for their countries ("I...love my motherland, I love Ukraine...", Lya pointed out),<sup>98</sup> they felt enthusiastic about the move because they thought migration would significantly improve their quality of life. Nora, a participant who had visited Canada prior to migration, provided a good illustration in this regard:

...(In Iran) I was very tired ...Because all of the time I must work...You are a human...You need rest, money, hobby, enjoying (other) things...When I came to Toronto...as a tourist, I see that people are very relaxed, but in my country all of people worry. Worry about future...we can't enjoy...money...because we are all of the time thinking (about) future...saving money for future ...after we came to Canada...I see (that) the Canadian people are very relaxed...They work hard from Monday to Friday, but they enjoy...their money...on Saturday and Sunday! It's wonderful for me!

In Anee's case, feelings of reluctance and apprehension—not optimism—marked her pre-migration days. Specifically, Anee indicated that when her husband unexpectedly brought up the subject of moving ("...suddenly, one day my husband...saw...this job opportunity [in Canada] in the internet and he [said]...'I...want to apply there...'", her immediate response was "I don't want to go." In her description, the reluctance to migrate was attributed to previous negative experiences in a past

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<sup>98</sup> This is an interesting paradox: The aforementioned participants described feeling like outsiders in their countries of origin and, yet, they nurtured a strong sense of national identity and love for their countries of origin in migration.

international sojourn that lasted a few years. "... (after) my husband... did his Ph.D. (in) U.K.," Anee explained, "... I decided I never want to go (to) any other country, I just want to stay in India... my experiences (were) very, very bad...." When I asked Anee to elaborate on the topic,<sup>99</sup> the participant pointed out that the couple felt unwelcome and looked down upon in the previous sojourn. This was our exchange in this regard:

P: My experience (was) not very good there (in the U.K.)...

R: What was wrong with it? What didn't feel right?

P: Well, the people's behaviour... they think... if you are a student... like a Ph.D.,<sup>100</sup> you are nothing! You know?... suppose you are asking (them), "Where is that building? What is...?"... they are not happy to give the answers... so I feel odd, you know? We are good from back home!... We are graduate in our professions<sup>101</sup>... and we are from good... family too!... you feel very awkward when... people don't behave good (towards) you and... I finally I decided I just want to stay (in) my home country...

Although Anee felt strongly about never living abroad again, her husband eventually convinced her to move by pointing out that the work opportunity in Canada was too valuable to pass up ("... he said, 'We can't say no, Anee, because they<sup>102</sup> are agreed on every step, so now we have to go.')" and that the couple could eventually return to India. "At that moment," the participant explained, "... if I (said) no I don't want to come, that (was) my bad behavior... so... I say okay, just for three years." Thus, certain that the move would be temporary, Anee agreed to come to Canada. After a couple of years in the country, the family applied for permanent migration.

Finally, in Nadeje's narrative, the move was portrayed as eliciting a great sense of loss as the participant had to leave Afghanistan involuntarily after the Taliban took control of the country. The participant, who was not willing to discuss the topic in great detail, provided a concise, but poignant, portrayal of her feelings in the following way:

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<sup>99</sup> Anee requested that I do not describe in the thesis a particularly traumatic experience that happened during this sojourn. Thus, I will limit my discussion to the events that she felt comfortable sharing.

<sup>100</sup> Here Anee refers to her husband.

<sup>101</sup> Recall that Anee worked as lawyer before the move.

<sup>102</sup> This is a reference to Canadian employers.

...I lost my job, I lost my country...it was not easy...to leave the country where you're born, you know. And lose everything you had or made in your life...I had my good job and I had relatives and friends there...there was no choice (but) leaving...I had a good life, a pretty good life. So I wanted to stay...

In order to afford her family's plane tickets to flee the country,<sup>103</sup> Nadeje specified that she also had to sell all of her family's possessions, including her "jewelry...home, all the furnishings and expensive stuff...." Thus, in her instance, the sense of loss appeared to have been all encompassing, given the difficult circumstances of her move.

### Pre-Migration English Views

Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya discussed their pre-migration English views in terms of their level of comfort and/or knowledge of the language before the move to Canada. In Joyce's and Lya's accounts, participants portrayed English as a language with which they had great familiarity and ease. Specifically, both participants reported having varying levels of knowledge of English before the move. Joyce, for example, explained that, as a child she knew "a lot of songs and things in English" because of her mother's Irish background. Furthermore, the literature in her professional area was "mostly written English," she specified. Contributing to Joyce's proficiency in English was also the fact that she had lived for several years in another English-speaking country to pursue post-graduate studies.

Likewise, Lya pointed out that her relationship with the language began at an early age: "I just loved English...from being (a) school girl..." Her affinity for the language did not go unnoticed by her family and teachers, who continuously encouraged her to improve her skills and, eventually, embark on the field of English literature:

...my teachers...they were encouraging me constantly to improve, improve,<sup>104</sup> and my mom told me, "L., (if) you don't have anything in your mind, just go directly in that field...if you like that, just go ahead.

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<sup>103</sup> At first, Nadeje fled, not to Canada, but to a country neighbouring Afghanistan, where she lived with her family in a refugee camp for several years.

<sup>104</sup> Here Lya refers to her English skills.



After completing her university degree, Lya worked as an English teacher and as an interpreter in the private sector in Ukraine.

Unlike Joyce and Lya who seemed quite confident in their pre-migration English skills, Nora, Nadeje, and Anee deemed their abilities in the language inadequate. Nora, for instance, reported that she (and her husband) had always struggled with their spoken English: "... (at) university we learned English not very well... I and my husband can read and understand and write, but we can't speak," she said with a laugh. Similarly, Nadeje specified that she rarely had a chance to converse in the language while living in Afghanistan:

...when I got a job at the university... I had some research in English and translating from English into our language... (but) during the years that I told you, 25 years of fighting, we didn't have any chance to practice any English with anybody, we didn't have any tourist in our country because of fighting...

Finally, Anee reported experiencing a great deal of social anxiety and "shame" during a previous sojourn in the U.K. because of her difficulties understanding the language. She described one of such occasions in the following way:

...One day I'm traveling in a bus, and the bus driver said to me, "Ta." I look around (and think) "What does that mean?," and then I look (at) his face. He said, "Ta" again to me. I am very surprised, I am not feeling good, and then I came back to my seat and... I'm thinking (about it) all the way. When I (have to) go back home, (I don't take the bus) I just walk. Can you imagine? Because I don't know what's the meaning of "ta." So I just walked... I don't want to take bus again. In the evening when my husband came back from... his office... I asked him, "Today the bus driver said to me, 'ta,' two times, what does that mean?" He said, that's... simple, that's thank you!" I say, how stupid I am!... You know, I feel very shame on me... (that) was my feeling at that time...

Note that, in Nadeje's instance, the participant also offered an additional portrayal of English, which differed from the remaining four participants. In addition to depicting English as a language in which she lacked oral proficiency, Nadeje talked about English as a desirable "international language"—as a language which influenced her decision to move with her family to Canada, after she fled Afghanistan:

...English is an international language, and it's I think, it's the best language in the world...I think for me, after my language, the most important language is English. And I have interest to come to Canada because I wanted my kids to learn English...you can find people to talk in this language everywhere...

### 6.1.2 Time Segment 2: Experiences after the Move

When Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya discussed their lives in the new country, they focused their talk on both the challenges and the benefits of their migration. In Nadeje's, Nora's, and Anee's instances, portrayals of English after the move were discussed in the context of migration difficulties as the three participants viewed English as an adjustment barrier.<sup>105</sup>

#### Migration Difficulties

The most prominent migration difficulties identified by participants were as follows: living far from loved family members ( $n = 5$ ), professional difficulties ( $n = 4$ ), and English difficulties ( $n = 3$ ).

Living far away from family. Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya all agreed that living far away from their family members (especially from their parents) was one of the most challenging parts of their migration experiences.<sup>106</sup> The five participants explained that, even though their families were supportive of their migration, the move had created great sadness for all involved. Anee offered an emotional description in this respect:

We<sup>107</sup> have...very good relations...we are tight (with) each other...with my brothers and sisters...we have very very good relations...sometimes my mother...starts to cry...because she just wants to see me...I'm very close to my parents...we are very close...Even now, suppose I'm watching my wedding cassette...I start crying, you know? (participant becomes tearful)...it's very hard to leave the parents...I miss (them) a lot...my father says it's okay, you can't change destiny...but...

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<sup>105</sup> As I have specified in the section before, Joyce and Lya were comfortable with their English skills and, as such, did not seem to have any adjustment difficulties because of the language.

<sup>106</sup> Recall that, with the exception of Nora who had a sibling living in Canada (but not in Saskatoon), none of the other participants had members of their extended family living in the new country.

<sup>107</sup> Here Anee refers to her parents and siblings.

In Nadeje's, Joyce's, and Nora's cases, participants explained that the move had been especially taxing because of their specific migration contexts. Nadeje, who came to Canada as a refugee and who was unable to return to her country of origin for visits because of political and financial reasons, nurtured little hope of ever seeing her siblings and mother again—with whom she had a very special relationship<sup>108</sup>:

...I'm not happy...I want to see...my mother and sisters and brother but I can't see them any more...I miss her<sup>109</sup> and I (haven't seen) her...for...almost...eight years. We were close, very close before...we lived in the same...area...we were almost (always) together. Very close. And I was the oldest daughter...the special daughter...I'm sure she misses me lots...

Joyce, the participant whose children had always had limited contact with the grandparents because of the family's previous sojourn in the U.S.,<sup>110</sup> felt "melancholic" about the lack of intimacy between the children and the grandparents. The participant, who had been in Canada for less than four months, provided a poignant description in this regard:

P: ...They (referring to maternal grandparents) came twice (to the U.S.)... during our stay, but it's not enough in five years. We...also...visited Argentina twice...but...(the children) have problems to feel the same as we (referring to the couple) feel about our mother and our father, (the children) feel very close to us, but with the grandparents...the relationship it's a little bit more distant.

R: Is that difficult for you, that they are not as close as...?

P: Yes, yes...because I would love them to feel, you know, like, well this is my mom! You know? So you have to treat her like an old mom but...it's hard to get that feeling, if she's not every day with you and sharing (much) of your every day life. For example, we had the Teddy Bear Picnic on Tuesday (at school), and other families were with their grandparents. And it was just me...so she (referring to her daughter) says, "Oh, our picnic is very little! And our blanket, it's only two people." I said, "Yes, yes,"...So that's a hard thing.

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<sup>108</sup> Nadeje's father was deceased.

<sup>109</sup> Nadeje refers to her mother here.

<sup>110</sup> Recall that Joyce, her husband, and her three children lived in U.S. for five years, while the couple was pursuing graduate studies.

Finally, Nora, a participant whose widowed mother lived alone in Iran (all of Nora's siblings had migrated), felt great concern and sadness after her move:<sup>111</sup>

...I am worrying about many things now...I miss...my mother...after...all of her children came to another country, she is very alone and very depressed...every time I think about my mother I become depressed because she is very alone...

Professional Difficulties. Nadeje, Nora, Anee, and Lya pointed to difficulties in the professional realm as another significant migration challenge.<sup>112</sup> Nadeje's, Anee's, and Lya's narratives shared the greatest similarities in this regard. First, the three participants pointed out that they could not resume their professional lives<sup>113</sup> in Canada because their diplomas were not recognized ("...in Canada I realize that I'm a zero, I'm nil...(my) diploma is nothing," Lya stated). They explained that, if they were to work in their previous career fields, they would need to return to university to pursue their degrees anew—an option that was unviable in terms of time ("I don't want to do all of my (Law) degree...all the way...again," Anee explained) and money ("...unfortunately, I'm not twenty, I don't have time to go full-time to university, I need to have a job right now," Lya pointed out.). Nadeje and Anee also pointed to their perceived lack of skills in the language<sup>114</sup> as another barrier to renewing their educational qualifications in Canada. In Nadeje's words:

...the language (referring to English)...it's a big...important barrier for me; I can't go to university to take...classes...because I have to pass the TOEFL test to go to university...I don't have...good English...it's not enough to go to university.

Second, the three participants felt compelled to lower their work aspirations in the new country. Lya, the participant with a degree in Linguistics, decided to re-train as an

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<sup>111</sup> Nora hoped that her mother would join the family in Canada, but knew that the process of sponsoring a relative was a lengthy one.

<sup>112</sup> As I have specified before, Joyce had been offered temporary work in her professional area before the move. At the time of the interviews, the participant indicated that she was satisfied with her work in Canada; however, she hoped that in time her position would be made permanent.

<sup>113</sup> Recall that, before migration, Nadeje worked as chemist, Anee as a lawyer, and Lya as an interpreter/teacher.

<sup>114</sup> This topic will be discussed in greater detail in the upcoming section, entitled "English Difficulties."

accountant and found full-time employment in the field. Nadeje, the chemistry professor, hoped to find work as laboratory or pharmacy technician. And Anee stated that she would like to find a job in a law-related field: "I want to do something related to my own area...like in insurance companies...if I can get a job there, that's good for me...."

Third, Nadeje, Anee, and Lya all expressed dissatisfaction with their current work situation in Canada.<sup>115</sup> Nadeje and Anee felt particularly frustrated not only with their loss in professional status but also with their inability to find suitable jobs in related work fields in Canada. "...you know...I'm a working lady back home," Anee specified, "I don't like to sit in the home." And Nadeje talked about her discontentment in the work realm in the following way:

I don't have the job...that I had before (the move), and I am staying at home. And this bother me a lot...(after the move) I worked for six months...(in) Pharmacology...and...Chemistry...as volunteer...to get some Canadian experience,...(but) they didn't give me a job...I can work now...I am able to work, I can do it...but...it's difficult to find a job...

Finally, Lya, the participant who was working full-time as an accountant explained that, in spite of appreciating her work accomplishments in the new country ("It's very, very encouraging when you are in a new country and you are...not [working as]...an Extra-Food worker, it's not for me."), she did not find accounting as fulfilling as her previous profession. "...it's boring," she noted, adding that "...if I...have an option...I would prefer to do something else...."

Unlike Nadeje, Anee, and Lya, who gave up their original professional goals after the move ("...I cut it out completely," Lya said of her plans to resume her previous career), Nora was determined to re-establish herself as a doctor in Canada: "I must (work) again as a doctor...I will try again (to) become a doctor in this country." Unlike the former participants, Nora not only had the financial means to get re-trained in her field

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<sup>115</sup> Note that all three participants had been living in Canada for over three years.

but she was also willing to do a medical residency all over again, in spite of having been a specialist in Iran. The participant, who had been in Canada for less than four months, depicted her work difficulties not only in terms of missing her career (“...when people speak about surgery, doctors, many times...I miss my job... when I see the operation room in TV, or another film...on...doctors and disease, I feel I miss my job.”), but also in relation to her uncertainty towards her professional future. Specifically, Nora felt particularly concerned about her ability to pass the English language exams required of foreign-born doctors who were applying for medical residencies: “...I can’t speak English very good...TOEFL exam...[is] very difficult...before going to residency I should pass (the) TOEFL exam.”

English Difficulties. Nadeje, Nora, and Anee also identified difficulties with spoken English as another important migration challenge. In this respect, the three narratives converged in the sense that participants felt poorly about their spoken English skills. Anee, for example, repeated several times during our meetings that her English was “...not that good.” Likewise, Nadeje often apologized for her “simple...very basic” English. And, Nora thought that her English was laughable (“I think when you [will] listen to this tape, maybe many times [you will] laugh at my English...”). The talk centered around issues of phonetic and/or lexical incompetence. Nora, for instance, was self-conscious of her English accent (“...our accent is very bad and people don’t understand me...”). Anee felt unease because of her perceived inability to employ “proper” English vocabulary (“...sometimes I don’t [use] the proper words [in English]...because I’m telling you I’m not good in English...then I feel awkward.”). And Nadeje felt “bad” when her daughters, who spoke English fluently, criticized her language skills: “...they complain about my English, you know?...they say, ‘Mom, you can’t speak English, you don’t have good English. Your pronunciation is not correct.’.”

Nora, the participant was a doctor in Iran, also added that her English difficulties annulled her identity and her sense of pride as an able and educated adult. She provided a poignant description in this respect:

P: ...(in) our country, we<sup>116</sup> are adult. We are able to do many things...especially I and my husband, we guide other people, but...in Canada we are like a child. We can't speak, we can't listen, we can't telephone...We have authority in (our) country...(but) in this country I'm nothing.

R: Is that how you feel?

P: It's very bad. I'm an educated (person) in my country, but in this country many people are not educated but (they) all can speak (English), explain (themselves)...when you can't explain yourself...you look stupid.

### Migration Benefits

The discussion of migration benefits centered on the following topics: (a) promising educational and/or professional opportunities for children (in Nadeje's, Nora's, and Anee's instances) and (b) socio-emotional well-being (in Nora's and Lya's cases). Note that Joyce did not contribute to this discussion. It appeared that the participant, who was in the midst of the adjustment process (she had lived in Canada for only a few months), did not have enough time to assess what types of gains the move had brought, or would bring, for herself and her family.

Promising opportunities for the children. Nadeje, Nora, and Anee indicated that their move had been worthwhile because, in Canada, their children would have a promising future. "This country is (the) country of kids! It's good for their future!" Nora enthused. In all three narratives, the discussion was centered on the educational and/or professional opportunities that would be available to the children in the new country. Nadeje's and Nora's portrayals of the topic shared the most similarities. The two participants, who were mothers of girls,<sup>117</sup> pointed out that, in Canada, their daughters'

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<sup>116</sup> Nora employs "we" in this quote to refer to herself and her husband, whom she also thought had limited English skills.

<sup>117</sup> Recall that Nadeje had four daughters, aged 9 to 17. Nora had a nine-year old daughter and a six-year old son. She focused her discussion on her daughter.

academic and professional pursuits would not be hindered by their gender. Nora, who was strongly against the social status of women in Iran (“...women don’t have...real power...in our country...it’s not good...”), envisioned that her daughter would enjoy a bright future as, perhaps, a lawyer: “...(she) is very intelligent ...maybe ...she (will) become a lawyer because many times she has a very good answer for every question.” Nadeje, the participant who fled a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan wished that her four daughters would be able to attend university and succeed professionally: “...my big hope and happiness here... (is) for my kids...to be educated here and find good jobs.” Nadeje also hoped that the girls’ educational and professional endeavours in Canada would help them develop greater self-confidence—a trait she felt Afghan women lacked:

...the (Afghan) ladies...the girls are very shy...I remember from years ago I was very shy. After I graduated from university...got my Master’s degree...(and) got my first job teaching, it changed me a lot...I (was)...never shy again...I could speak up and express my ideas because I was a teacher...and my oldest daughter...is very shy. She is very good at school...but I hear from other people...when she does (a) presentation...she doesn’t...have the eye contact...it’s not common in our country to do the eye contact, you know?...my kids (should)...learn that they shouldn’t be shy, never...

Unlike Nadeje and Nora, whose discussion of educational and professional prospects centered on issues of gender, Anee focused her talk on the values that she admired in the Canadian school system, such as flexibility, independence, and critical thinking. Specifically, Anee felt that, in Canada, her son would be exposed to the “the best” educational experiences:

...the back-home schools are very, very strict or disciplined...you have to sit properly all...day, you have a lot of homework every day. Kids are punished if they don’t do their homework...one thing is totally different here. When the kids are small, they think (for) themselves, whatever they want to do they are free to do...In India...they pressure on the memorizing...”you memorize this, you have to do this, then you have to do that.” Here...every kid asks, “Why is this?” You know? And they have the right (to do so), I feel...In India, nobody gives an answer about why, they just push, “...you do this in that way.”...that’s what I don’t like...he can learn practically everything here...So that’s why I think it’s a better opportunity... we are giving...him...an open atmosphere...



Socio-emotional and economic well-being. Nora and Lya indicated that the ability to improve the overall quality of their family lives in a country that was socio-economically stable was one of their most significant migration gains.<sup>118</sup> Nora, who was a new arrival in the country, hoped that once the couple re-established themselves professionally, they would be able to enjoy a “relaxed” life, a life free of worries:

...I love Canada, because it's a very good country...It's very relaxed. Canadian people work hard, but (their) mind is relaxed. It's very important. When you are not worried about the future, you will be happy...You can spend money...you can...enjoy your life....

Lya, a participant who had achieved financial stability through migration,<sup>119</sup> explained that, in Canada, the couple not only led a more tranquil, but also more balanced life:

...here...you don't have any stress, any pressure, even if you have your troubles as a new immigrant, you are not struggling with...those obstacles<sup>120</sup> we had in Ukraine...we just relaxed here in...Saskatoon...In Ukraine... everyone is stressed. So much stress that they don't have time to show their emotions... sometimes they are just “hi,” “bye,” and we are talking about only... problems ...economics...crisis...But here in Canada there is more opportunity to show...your emotions...In Ukraine, there are not (as many) smiling people...like here in Saskatoon. It's very, very different...(if) you're going out and you are smiling, you might be considered an idiot in Ukraine (laughter). Like, “Why are you smiling like an idiot?!” But here it's normal.

## 6.2 Portrayals of Language Transmission Experiences

Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya discussed their language interactions with their children according to three different time segments. The first time segment related to those language interactions that took place in the initial stages of the move. The second time segment concerned either actual language experiences with the children in the present (in Nadeje's, Anee's, and Lya's instances) or anticipated language experiences with the children in the near future (in Nora's and Joyce's cases). Finally,

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<sup>118</sup> Recall that Lya's and Nora's migration was motivated by the financial and professional challenges in their countries of origin.

<sup>119</sup> At the time of the interviews, the couple owed a lovely house with a backyard pool in an upscale neighborhood in Saskatoon.

<sup>120</sup> Here Lya refers to the financial and professional obstacles that the couple experienced in Ukraine.

the third time segment pertained to participants' views of their language transmission experiences in the distant future.

At this time, I would like to highlight background information that readers should keep in mind when reading this section. First, let us recall that, in this particular group of participants, all of the children were born outside of Canada. They ranged in age from approximately six to fourteen, at the time of migration. Thus, in all instances, the children began their formal schooling in Canada shortly after their arrival. In two narratives, namely, in Nora's and Lya's, the children were enrolled in French Immersion schools.<sup>121</sup> However, when discussing language challenges, Lya and Nora focused their discussion on the transmission of English and first languages, but not French. In both cases, it seemed that French was viewed as a language of certain transmission as the children's French teachers had assured participants that their children would have no trouble learning the language.

The participants who had more than one child—Nadeje, Nora, and Joyce—often discussed their language transmission experiences without making any distinction between different children. Whenever a distinction was made (for example, if aspects of language transmission experiences varied depending on the child), I took note of it in the following text. Readers should also recall that all of the husbands in this group shared the same national and language background as participants; that is, they were co-nationals and spoke participants' first languages. All five participants portrayed their partners as being able to communicate in English as well. Finally, keep in mind that in the five narratives, participants specified that the children's grandparents lacked fluency in English and that they still lived in their countries of origins.

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<sup>121</sup> Nora had two children: The oldest, a ten-year old girl, was enrolled in English school; the youngest, a six-year old boy was attending French immersion. The couple did not enroll their oldest child in French immersion because they thought the child might have difficulties catching up with her classmates' French skills .

### 6.2.1 Time Segment 1: Language Transmission Experiences in the Initial Stages of the Move

Nadeje's, Nora's, Joyce's, Anee's, and Lya's language transmission accounts began—not at the time of the birth of their children like in the narratives described in plots 1 and 2—but before or shortly after their arrival in Canada. At that time, the primary language concern in all of the five narratives related to the transmission of English. The talk in this respect centered on the following topics: (1) the children's English skills before migration, (2) the children's English difficulties shortly after the move, and (3) English language strategies. The discussion of what was at stake in the transmission of English was intricately connected to participants' talk about their children's English challenges and/or the strategies they employed to help them improve their English. For the sake of clarity, I present this topic separately at the end of this section.

#### English Skills at the Time of Migration

In all of the five narratives, participants portrayed the children as lacking appropriate English skills in the initial stages of their move. While Nora and Anee specified that their children knew absolutely no English before the move, Lya, Nadeje, and Joyce, explained that their children (or at least one of the children, in Nadeje's and Joyce's cases) had minimal understanding of the language. Lya, for example, depicted her daughter's English skills in the following way:

...when we got to Canada what she could...say (was) "My name is B., I am six years old, I am from Russia." She couldn't really understand what people say. That was a problem. But she knew alphabet, she knew the simple structure of the sentences, and she could count up to ten. So just the basic, basic things...

In Nadeje's and Joyce's cases, the participants specified that while their oldest children arrived in Canada with minimal English skills<sup>122</sup>, their youngest could not speak English at all. "The first one, she could speak a little bit of English, but the three others...they didn't know English at all," Nadeje said of her four daughters who were approximately 14, 10, 9, and 7 at the time of their move. In Joyce's case, the participant pointed out that while her youngest children, who were six and eight, were "completely non-bilingual" at the time of the move, having fluency only in Spanish, her ten-year old daughter, who was once "perfectly bilingual" in both languages had now only a "little English." "O...knew, for example, some grammar and she could understand some movies," Joyce explained, "but you know, she was not articulate (in) English either."

In Lya's and Joyce's descriptions, participants also explained that, even though they had attempted to help the children with their English before the move, they were unsuccessful. Lya, for example, indicated that whenever she tried to teach her six-year old daughter the language, the child was just not interested: "...I was trying to teach her, just a few words or rhymes or poems or just some funny songs...she was not very interested...she was just indifferent...." Joyce, the participant whose three children had had exposure to English in the first few years of their lives (recall that she lived in the U.S. with her family while pursuing her doctoral studies), explained that, after the family's return to Argentina, the couple found it difficult to nurture their English skills:

...we...(wanted) the kids (to) keep bilingual...but it didn't work...because we are not native speakers, and because...the social pressure was so high (not to speak English).

### English Difficulties

All five participants specified that, in the early stages of their move, English was a language of social and/or academic discomfort for their children. Nadeje, Anee, and

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<sup>122</sup> Joyce indicated that even though her children had varying levels of English skills from a prior sojourn in the U.S., they had lost their much of these skills by the time of their arrival in Canada.

Lya—participants who had been in Canada for over three years and whose children had already overcome their English problems—did not discuss the topic at length and provided general portrayals in this respect. Anee, for example, indicated that, shortly after the move, her six-year old soon kept “pushing” her to come to his new school because of his English difficulties. “...he wanted me to remain there (at) lunch time...he wanted to see me there more and more,” Anee explained, “because he (didn’t) know English.” Lya explained that her daughter, who was six at the time of the migration, was quite reluctant to interact with other English-speaking children: “...she was shy and she (didn’t) have any confidence because she couldn’t speak English at that time.” And, Nadeje, whose four daughters commenced their schooling two weeks after the move, simply stated that her children, who were 6, 8, 10, and 14, experienced several “problems” at school, because they lacked English skills. Although Nadeje did not elaborate on what the problems were, I gathered from our discussion that they involved basic communication difficulties with English-speaking teachers and peers.

Nora and Joyce—participants who had been in Canada for less than three months and whose children were in the midst of their English struggles—discussed the children’s English challenges greater detail than did Nadeje, Anee, and Lya. In their narratives, they depicted English as a language of social and/or academic discomfort in the sense that the language created a sense of inequality and frustration for the children in the school realm. Joyce provided good descriptions in both respects. First, she described how her ten-year old daughter, who arrived in Canada with some English skills, felt different from her English-speaking peers because of her language limitations:

...she can communicate (in English)...it’s...not perfect as she would like to, because she would like (it) to be perfect...but her accent is wonderful, she has a very nice accent...but she feels that...she is not completely considered equal by her classmates, because she says that the other day, for example, the teacher asked something and she understood completely, and she took a few minutes to think, and another...classmate said, “Oh, Mr. T., she can’t understand!”...so she feels uncomfortable...she feels that she’s not still quick enough...answering...

Second, she described, in a very light-hearted fashion, how her six-year old son's almost complete lack of English fluency caused the child to feel frustrated in the school realm:

P: ...the boy...you have to see that...he is completely lost...have you seen the movie, "Lost in Translation?"

R: No, I haven't seen that yet.

P: You have to see that movie, because it's exactly what happens to H. You know, people talk to him (in English), and he watches, like...somebody who is trying to make a major effort to understand the situation, and then he asks questions, and...somebody translates and...he's lost in that class. You can watch that he is looking around...trying to figure out the whole thing (laughter) ...the other day...he says in Spanish "Mom...you have to understand how I feel, it's all that noise, all the day! And I can't understand!" (laughter) You know...for him, most of (English) is noise, be-e-e-e-e...it's really frustrating for him...

In two of the five accounts—in Nora's, and Lya's narratives—the children's English discomfort appeared to have been particularly challenging for participants.<sup>123</sup>

Lya, for instance, talked about her early days in Canada as being "horrible" because of her daughter's reluctance to speak and interact with other English-speaking children.

And, Nora described how her daughter's English-related academic and social difficulties became a source of distress for both child *and* mother:

P: And my daughter, last night, (was) crying...and I asked her, "Why are you crying?" and she told me, "I forgot multiplication, I knew it in my country but I can't answer to my teacher, all of students can answer...but I forgot that." And I was very sad and I asked her many times in Farsi language about multiplication. She knew it, but she can't answer.

R: So she knows it in Farsi, but not in English.

P: Yes. Because I think she knows English number, but... she (is) nervous and can't answer... the teacher.

### English Transmission Efforts

With respect to English transmission efforts, Nadeje's, Nora's, Joyce's, and Lya's narratives shared the most similarities. Specifically, all four participants indicated that, even though they wanted their children to remain fluent in first languages after the move,

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<sup>123</sup> Although Nadeje, Anee, and Joyce did not discuss this topic directly, my sense was that, in their instances, the children's English difficulties also caused them a great deal of anxiety as they too were keenly aware of the challenges that their children faced because of their language limitations.

they felt compelled to focus their attention on the transmission of English given the children's English-related social and/or academic difficulties. The primary variation in this respect across narratives related to how much effort was put into the transmission of English.

In Nadeje's and Lya's instances, the two participants (who had been in Canada for over three years) pointed out that their initial months in the new country were marked by their intense attempts to help their children learn English—attempts that only subsided once the children mastered the language. Nadeje, the participant who moved to Canada as a refugee and who did not have hopes of returning to Afghanistan considered the transmission English so critical that she began teaching her daughters the language immediately after their arrival in Canada—even before the family could find appropriate housing in the new country: “They...(were) learning the (English) alphabet, the letters... when we stayed...for eight days in a small hotel...when we arrived here.” In following months, Nadeje described spending a great deal of time ensuring that her daughters were developing the appropriate English skills required for their success in their new academic environment:

...I helped them to learn English...with...reading, spelling...and almost all subjects, you know? If I didn't know a word's meaning...I (would) grab a dictionary and...find the meaning...and explain to them...and I helped them with homework and tests...now they are doing well...I don't have any problem with them.

Lya, the participant whose daughter was “shy” in interactions of English-speakers, explained that her worries towards her child's social well-being in Canada caused her to be very “pushy” with the transmission of the language:

...I was maybe too pushy (with English)...I was struggling with myself because I wanted the best for her...and I was trying to tell her, “...don't be scared, don't be afraid, just open your mouth and talk. Whatever you say, it's acceptable, everyone will understand you, if you will try. If you will not, no one will (understand you)...

She added that her English transmission efforts were intensified after the child was placed in a classroom with younger children, because of her English limitations.<sup>124</sup> In order to help her child “jump over” a grade and join a classroom with peers of the same age, Lya established a rigorous English training program, with the help of her daughter’s teacher:

...I must say that I was very pushy, very strict to B. (her daughter), in terms of English...I was trying to show her how to study... because she needn’t be lost. She could take the dictionary and...find easily what she needs to do...she needed to write...and to read constantly on a regular basis...and I told M. (her daughter’s teacher) “Could you please load B. with (English) homework, extra, extra, extra, everyday?” and she gave her lots of books, lots of exercise to write, and I was just pushing her and...I told her, “B., do you want to be with...kids ...younger than you are, all the time? Because you are seven...and they are six...do you want to play with (little) girls all the time or you want to grow up?” ...so she jumped over to grade two and then I noticed she was doing great in languages.

Nora and Joyce, participants who had been in Canada for approximately three months and whose children were in the midst of English struggles, were still trying to figure out the best ways to help their children improve their English. As a result, their portrayals of English transmission efforts were more fragmented than Nadeje’s and Lya’s depictions. What I gathered from our discussion, however, was that Nora and Joyce, who were initially adamant that their children only employ first languages at home (“...I...try to be very clear that at home we speak Spanish,” Joyce specified), were now allowing some English to be spoken in the home environment in order to help their children build confidence in their English skills. Nora, for example, pointed out that she did not find it bothersome that her six-year old son had begun to employ English to greet the family—a behaviour that infuriated her husband: “Yesterday my son, when he came back...home he told, “Is everybody home?” (laughter) (but) my husband

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<sup>124</sup> Recall that Lya enrolled her child in French immersion and that, even though her daughter had no knowledge of French and English before the move, she was not worried about the child’s ability to learn French.



became angry...". Likewise, Joyce allowed English to be spoken in the home environment whenever the children had to prepare for presentations at school, such as "Show and Tell."

Although Nora and Joyce wanted to help their children improve their English skills, I gathered from our discussions that the two participants were not going to embrace the transmission of the language as wholeheartedly as Nadeje and Lya did. The hesitation that I noted appeared to be related to Nora's and Joyce's experiences in their co-national networks in Saskatoon.<sup>125</sup> Specifically, both participants explained that co-national friends had warned them that the language that merited attention was—not English—but first languages. Nora's account provided the best illustration in this respect:

They (referring to co-national friends), many times speak about that. (They say,) "I made a mistake...we came to Canada we wanted more practice...(in) English at home...for me, for my wife, for my son, we thought it was better to speak English...but after all of us learned English...we...parents didn't forget (Farsi). But the children forgot the native language...for them speaking English is easier...and they can't explain themselves in Farsi."

Finally, Anee's narrative diverged from the previous four accounts in the sense that the participant (who had been in Canada for over three years) did not have to nurture English at home because of her son's startlingly fast English acquisition. Although like the four others, Anee felt initially worried about her son's English acquisition, she explained that her concerns were dissipated in short period of time because of the child's extraordinary progress in the language:

P: ...(in the beginning) he knew small words like "thank you"...but...within two months there was a big change in him. He spoke English very fluently, he read books a lot, a lot. And (that) first summer, I think he read 170 books, in a summer-reading program.

R: In English, all in English.

P: Yeah, in English, all in English, everything was in English...And I was very surprised! He picked up so fast...

R: So he was only what, six years old?

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<sup>125</sup> Note that, in Nora's instance, the husband's strong desire that the children only be exposed to Farsi at home also affected the participant's ability to focus on the transmission of English.

P: Yeah, between five and six at that time...I was very surprised and that was good...he knew everything and he was comfortable...

### Stakes in the Transmission of English

As the previous discussion on the children's English difficulties demonstrated, all narratives appeared to converge in the sense that what seemed to be at stake in the transmission of English was not only the children's ability to feel comfortable and function in their new environment—as illustrated, for example, by Anee's description of her son's insecurities at school or by Nora's portrayals of her daughter's academic frustrations—but also their capacity to form bonds with, and become part of their new group of peers—as shown in Lya's discussion of her daughter's reluctance to interact with English-speaking children and in Joyce's talk about her daughter's sense of being different from her peers at school. In other words, in the early stages of the move, English was depicted as a language that was critical to the social and/or academic well-being of the children in their new country.

Nadeje's and Lya's talk about their intensive English transmission efforts in the last section also offered additional perspectives on what was at stake in transmission of the language. Nadeje, the participant who made the transmission of English her first order of business upon her arrival, seemed to associate the transmission of the language not only with the short-term academic success of her children, but also with the children's ability to enjoy the educational opportunities that had motivated her migration. As readers recall, the participant moved to Canada with the single purpose of helping her daughters become educated (a goal that would have been unattainable in the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan). Thus, in her instance, the mastery of English was a prerequisite for the children to succeed in their future educational and professional endeavours in their new country.

Lastly, in Lya's case, the transmission of English appeared to be related not only with the child's social well-being in the new country (as described on p. 28), but also with the participant's view that, if her child did not master the language quickly enough, she would become "infantilized" (my quote). As discussed previously, Lya asked the child's teacher for "loads" of English homework so that the child, whom she described as being "very mature," could skip a grade and be placed in a classroom with peers who shared her maturity and intellectual levels. In fact, one of the arguments that Lya employed to convince her English-shy daughter about the importance of learning the language was that others in Ukraine would make fun of her if she remained in the classroom with younger children: "I told her that 'if you...come to Ukraine, everyone will be joking at you because you are too...childish.'"

#### 6.2.2 Time Segment 2: Language Transmission Experiences Three Years after the Move and Anticipated Language Transmission Experiences with Non-Canadian Born Children

As I have underlined above, in the initial stages of the move to Canada, Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya worried primarily about the transmission of English. When the five participants began to focus their discussion on a second segment of time, their narratives all converged in the sense that language concerns shifted from English to first languages. In this respect, there was an important narrative nuance across the five accounts: While in Nadeje's, Anee's, and Lya's instances, Time Segment 2 referred to first language worries that participants were experiencing *in the present*, three years after their move, in Nora's and Joyce's descriptions, it related to first language concerns that the two participants *envisioned* in the near future (after all, these two participants had only been living in Canada for a few months). In the next sections, I will detail these two specific language transmission portrayals separately.

## Language Transmission Experiences Three Years after the Move

Three years after their arrival in Canada, Nadeje, Anee, and Lya specified that their primary language concerns no longer pertained to the transmission of English, but to the maintenance of first languages. Specifically, all three participants specified that, in the present, their children had not only mastered English, but that they were also losing some fluency in first languages.<sup>126</sup> In the next sections, I will explore these themes in detail, focusing on participants' portrayals of the following topics: (1) the children's language skills three years after the move; (2) the children's language preferences, behaviours, and attitudes; (3) language worries and strategies; and (4) the stakes involved in the maintenance of first languages.

### The Children's Language Skills

In respect to language skills, Nadeje's, Anee's, and Lya's narratives converged in the sense that, approximately three years after their move to Canada, these participants considered their children (whose ages now ranged from 9 to 13 years) to have greater fluency in English than in first languages. Lya, for example, pointed out that although her daughter remained fluent in Russian, English had become her strongest language. She described the child's skills in English, Russian, and French<sup>127</sup> in following way:

...she can easily start talking (in) English, without any problem...even if she's talking French, and she doesn't know the proper word too, she (uses) the English one...she is doing it spontaneously, she's not thinking...even the grammar structures...if she's speaking Russian...she makes the sentences... (in) the English structures...she just makes the exact translation of the words.

Nadeje explained that while her daughters spoke English fluently, they were no longer able to converse solely in Dari: "They can speak (Dari)...but when they speak our

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<sup>126</sup> Note that in this section, Nadeje's discussion pertains only to her younger three children (aged, 10, 12, and 13). Specifically, Nadeje indicated that, in the present, she did not have language concerns in relation to her oldest daughter (age 17) because the child was quite fluent in both English and Dari.

<sup>127</sup> Recall that Lya's daughter was attending French immersion.

language, they sometimes mix our language and English.” Finally, Anee explained that while her son understood Hindi perfectly, he had difficulties speaking the language:

...he understands everything...(but) when we make a phone call (to grandparents), he starts “(Hindi spoken),” which means “I’m good here,” and then “hmm, hmm, I forget, I don’t know,” (and) he starts English again...

### The Children’s Language Preferences, Behaviours, and Attitudes

Nadeje, Anee, and Lya specified that their children preferred English to first languages. When I asked Anee, for example, if English was her nine-year old son’s preferred language, she emphatically replied “Oh yeah, oh yeah.” Similarly, Nadeje pointed out that her three younger daughters, aged 10, 12, and 13, “...like English better than our language,” and Lya specified that her nine-year old daughter often tried to engage her in English conversations: “...she...starts talking (in) English...and she knows for sure that I will understand her 100 percent. But I know the tricks, and I told her, “B., no English, just Russian at home....” In spite of this commonality, the three narratives varied in regards to participants’ views of their children’s language behaviours and attitudes.

In Nadeje’s and Anee’s instances, participants specified that, in spite of employing first languages with the children, the children rarely interacted with them in those languages. Rather, they employed English most of the time. “...when I ask them something in our language, they answer me in English...when they ask me something, most of the time they ask me in English [chuckles]...,” Nadeje stated. In addition, the two participants pointed out that their children often questioned the value of keeping first languages in their new environment. Anee provided a clear illustration of her nine-year old son’s behaviour and attitude towards Hindi:

...I’m talking to him in Hindi all the time...Well, unluckily, he doesn’t want to give the answer in Hindi...So one day, I say, “I., I want to talk to you...Why don’t you speak Hindi?...You speak Hindi, I., you have to speak Hindi.” On that he said to me, “Can you tell me with whom I (can) speak Hindi? All my friends speak English. All other people here speak English.” Well, I say, “We have some

community here and they have kids too, you can speak Hindi with them.” And he said, “They don’t speak Hindi! So how can I?”

By comparison, Lya indicated that her daughter employed primarily Russian at home and that the girl’s English preference had not affected her enjoyment of the Russian language—particularly the written language. “...she still remembers all the jokes, all the words, even from kindergarten...she likes to make poems...and she likes to write her own stories...,” Lya said of her child’s attitude towards Russian.

### Language Concerns and Strategies

Although Nadeje, Anee, and Lya seemed to be proud of their children’s English skills (Nadeje, for instance, pointed out that her daughters spoke English “like Canadians”), they expressed concern that, given the children’s preference for English, first languages were either going to be forgotten (“I’m worried...he [will] forget his own language,” Anee said of her son; “They shouldn’t forget our language,” Nadeje echoed, referring to her daughters) or not properly developed (“She might not be as good in Russian as she will be in English and French...[her Russian] is a little behind...,” Lya stated.).

A slight variation across the three narratives in this respect was as follows: While Nadeje and Anee worried mainly about their children’s basic communication skills in first languages (i.e., their ability to speak and understand every day Dari and Hindi, respectively), Lya was preoccupied with her daughter’s capacity to develop “advanced” Russian skills, which she described in the following way:

...she needs to be able to read, she needs to be able to write, and to communicate...(so that) she would be able to grasp...any definition, any text, any publication...in Russian...she needs to speak advanced language, grammatically correct ... she should be grammatically educated in terms of spelling, in terms of the structure of sentences...

In order to address first language concerns, all the three participants indicated that they consistently employed first languages with their children, even when the

children spoke in English with them. Anee and Lya were also able to rely on the support of first language networks in Saskatoon to help their children maintain and develop their first languages skills. In both cases, the children attended weekly first language classes. "...he attends a Hindi school here...every weekend, every Sunday...he does everything there in Hindi," Anee said of her son, adding that, as part of the language curriculum, the children not only had to do Hindi homework, but that they also participated in Hindi plays for the first language community. In Lya's instance the participant indicated that, in addition to the weekly classes in the Russian school, her nine-year old daughter also received formal Russian instruction at the university: "...every Saturday we go to Russian club, and we have our studies at the university, so she studies Russian (there) as well...." I gathered from our discussion that Lya, the linguist, reinforced much this Russian learning at home, as she reported spending a great deal of time refining her daughter's Russian skills:

...I'm just trying to correct her and...to have more pure Russian for her, more grammatical Russian because it's very important when a person...speaks different languages...to make it...advanced, so...she needs to have it now too...

By contrast, in Nadeje's case, the participant explained that even though weekly Dari classes were available in Saskatoon, financial difficulties impeded her daughters from participating:

...we have two classes at Open Door Society to teach them our language. But...my kids they don't go there because...it's a little bit expensive for me, if I take four of them, including me it cost me almost \$16 a day or so, so I can't do that, right now.

Besides the financial challenges, Nadeje also seemed to experience more difficulties than Anee and Lya finding other first language resources in Saskatoon. While Anee and Lya could easily access first language books or movies ("...we...have lots of friends...[in Saskatoon who] have got good [Russian] libraries at home. And our friends can always send us books...and we've got lots of movies in Russian, tons of...movies," Lya

specified), Nadeje was unable to find Dari reading materials for her daughters: "...it's difficult to find books here. Like simple books. I can borrow books from the library, but it's difficult." Thus, unlike Anee and Lya, Nadeje relied primarily on herself to teach her children her first language.

### First Language Stakes

As the previous discussion shows, in the present, the maintenance of first languages were at the center of Nadeje's, Anee's, and Lya's language concerns. And, what motivated participants to keep on teaching their children their first languages in spite of their children's overt preference for English, and in Nadeje's and Anee's cases, the children's resistance to first languages?

First languages as languages of intergenerational family bonds. In Anee's and Lya's accounts, the transmission of first languages was associated with the participants' desire to maintain intergenerational family bonds—particularly between grandparents and the children—in the context of migration.<sup>128</sup> Anee, for example, portrayed Hindi as a language that was critical to the grandparents' ability to nurture a relationship with the couple's son after the family's move to Canada:

Because my reason he knows Hindi (is that) when he talks to his grandparents, they don't know English at all...At least...I understand what he is saying, what he wants...but the grandparents, they don't know. And they don't feel good when... they don't talk to him directly...the grandparents are more interested in the grandkids... they love (them) more than their own (kids)...so even if you say, "he's fine here, he's doing this, he's doing that," they don't believe in you. You know? They want to talk to him directly...they feel happy when they talk direct to the kid...they just say these words to us, "You...please you keep remember Hindi to him."...So that's why I want (him) to know the back home language too.

In Anee's account, the maintenance of intergenerational bonds through Hindi applied not only the grandparent-grandchild relationship, but also to the participant's own

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<sup>128</sup> It is possible that Nadeje did not discuss the topic in the same manner because she did not have much hope of reuniting with her Afghan relatives in the foreseeable future, given her refugee status and also her financial difficulties.



relationship with her parents. "...that's the main reason, the grandparents, I don't want to hurt anybody, you know? Suppose, they are thinking, 'they moved to Canada and they don't talk to us...' I just want to carry on that language," Anee specified.

And, Lya talked about the Russian language as being pivotal to the continued intimacy between her daughter (who was the only grandchild on both sides of the family) and her Russian grandparents, who were also not fluent in English:

...(she is) very close, yeah, very close, to each of them, very close...we are trying to keep in touch...every phone call she is able to talk to them (in Russian)...and they are sharing...they are all sending parcels. B (the daughter) packed for grandma this special gift, and her grandma sent her...stuffed toys...they have their own world created between themselves.

First language as a language of national connections. Both Nadeje and Lya seemed to associate the transmission of their first languages with their children's ability to remain connected with their national origins. While in Lya's narrative, the connection seemed to pertain primarily to interactions with co-nationals in Ukraine, in Nadeje's account, the link appeared to relate the children's ability to reconnect with Afghanistan, their country of origin, in the distant future.

In Lya's instance, the participant specified that the proper transmission of Russian was critical to her daughter's ability communicate and interact with Russian-speaking co-nationals in Ukraine:

...and I'm encouraging her to keep Russian just for that reason also. I even tell her, "B. (referring to daughter), imagine that you are coming to Ukraine and nobody can understand you, because you are not speaking proper Russian, you're just mixing up words and you are picking up some (words) from English, some from your...imagination of Russian, but it's not grammatically correct."

In Nadeje's case, the participant—who had little hopes of going back to Afghanistan in the foreseeable future because of her refugee status and financial difficulties—explained that, if her children kept the language, they might be able to return to their country of origin some day to work as, perhaps, English teachers! "Maybe...they study here and they go to Afghanistan...in the future to be an English

teacher...and, it will be great if they could speak our language...besides... English. It would make it easier,” Nadeje explained.

### Anticipated Language Transmission Experiences in the Near Future

Nora’s and Joyce’s talk about how they envisioned their language transmission experiences in the near future included two main topics: (1) anticipated first language concerns and language strategies and (2) stakes in the continued transmission of first languages. Note that, in the two narratives, the near future seemed to refer to participants’ views of their family life in Canada in the next year or so.

Anticipated First Language Concerns and Strategies. Nora and Joyce envisioned that, in the next few years, they would be mainly concerned about the maintenance of their first languages. Specifically, the two participants anticipated that the children would begin to experience difficulties communicating in first languages: “I like my children don’t forget native language,” Nora stated; “English is...a language that I find beautiful...[but] not for my family life,” Joyce specified.

In the two narratives, portrayals of anticipated first languages challenges seemed to be shaped by Nora’s and Joyce’s language experiences in their co-national networks in Saskatoon. Nora, for example, had noted that the children of Iranian friends who had been in Canada for several years were only able to understand—but not speak—Farsi:

...for them (referring to the children) speaking English is easier...they can’t explain themselves in Farsi...they can’t speak with us...they can understand (Farsi), but they can’t speak...

And Joyce stated that co-national friends often warned her that, eventually, her children would not only lose their Spanish skills, but also their Argentinean culture:

...another Argentinean told me, “Oh you will see...you will see. Like in the future they (referring to Joyce’s children) will get worse...they will complain (about Spanish)”, and she told me, “Oh you will see,” not only related to the language, but also related to customs...for example, we (don’t) like to eat at different times, but to sit together at the table. And they said, “...many houses they don’t do that here, they have different schedules...so they do it each other’s own time. They open the fridge and they get what they want.” And I said, “Well, I don’t like that. I

like...to have meals...seated all together.” And they said, “Well, let us see, let’s wait and see.”

In regards to anticipated first language strategies, Nora’s and Nadeje’s narratives were brief. Specifically, the two participants simply stated that, once their children overcame their English difficulties, they planned on reinforcing the rule that only first languages be spoken at home. “...I know that...as their English gets better...they will include more (English) words, and...talk to you in English...but I will try to be very clear that at home we speak Spanish...,” Joyce specified. Joyce, but not Nora,<sup>129</sup> also indicated that, as a precaution, she planned on enrolling her children in weekly Spanish classes, in order to help the children keep both their Spanish language and culture:

...my guess is that...they will maintain their language...but, in any case, I decided that on Saturdays they will be attending a Spanish school, from 9 til’ 12. So there they read and they speak in Spanish with other people from the community, from Chile, from Ecuador, from Colombia, and they...learn, not only the language but the culture itself.

#### Stakes in the Maintenance of First Languages

And what was at stake in the continued transmission of first languages for Nora and Joyce? In Nora’s description, the participant indicated that the couple not only viewed Farsi as inextricably linked to the children’s Iranian identity, but also as essential to the their sense of satisfaction towards their Iranian origins:

...I like my children (to) learn English as soon as possible, because it’s a tool for living in this country. But, it’s very important for us they don’t forget native language...my kids can’t change Iranian origin, they are Iranian. All of the time, if (a) person asks them, where are you from, they must...and it’s not changeable... they must tell they are from Iran...for their self-satisfaction is better they can speak Farsi, because their native language is Farsi. If (they) tell, “I’m from Iran,” and can’t speak Farsi...they may be feeling bad about themselves...when they become adult and they can’t speak native language, (they) maybe feeling bad...

By contrast, in Joyce’s account, the maintenance of Spanish appeared to be essential to the couple’s ability to nurture essential aspects of Argentinean culture in the

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<sup>129</sup> I don’t think that Nora had given much thought about the possibility of enrolling her children in Farsi school at that time.

context of migration, such as family intimacy during mealtimes. This was our interesting discussion in this respect:

R: So what is it about the (Argentinean) culture you want (your children) to keep...and learn? (You said) language is one. What else?

P: Language is one. And, I don't know, a lot of things that may be related somehow with the language...For example...in Argentinean culture, the food is very important. You spend more than 40 minutes to eat...you spend a lot of time, and you take time for your dessert, and time for what we call the "after meal." So I understand, that in the dynamic that we have (here)...we can't do that during the week...but if we have some time at night, then we sit and we talk at the table, and they (referring to the children) tell all the things they want to tell you about school, about Mr. S. about Mrs. T., about Mrs. M...everything that happened, and it's through the language and the food that we talk and interact...I see it's a typical situation for a Spanish picture...I can't imagine...talking (about) a lot of those details in English, because...English is mostly (a) language that I relate to...my scientific (writing)...my job...for the very private space...you prefer your home language...

### 6.2.3 Time Segment 3: Language Experiences with Non-Canadian Born Children in the Distant Future

In respect to anticipated language experiences in the distant future, Nadeje's, Nora's, Joyce's, Anee's, and Lya's accounts were brief and somewhat fragmented. Specifically, participants discussed in passing the following topics: (a) future language interactions with the children ( $\underline{n} = 5$ ), (b) the outcomes of language efforts ( $\underline{n} = 5$ ), (c) additional language goals ( $\underline{n} = 3$ ), and (d) the intergenerational transmission of first languages ( $\underline{n} = 3$ ).

My impression in regards to the general nature of the talk was that the five participants preferred to focus the discussion on language transmission experiences in the past, present, or near future. This is not to say, however, that the distant future was unimportant to them as all participants appeared determined to carry on their first language transmission efforts so that, in the long-term future, the children would have fluency in both first languages and English. "So, in the future, do you see yourself...speaking Spanish with your kids...?" I asked Joyce. "Yes...it will also be a

goal to keep them (speaking Spanish)...” she replied. “...my main goal (is) to keep the (Russian) language alive for her,” Lya echoed, referring to her child.

In Nadeje’s, Nora’s, and Lya’s accounts, the participants also indicated that they would like their children to speak an additional, and in Lya’s instance, two additional, languages besides first languages and English. Nora, for example, had enrolled her younger child in French immersion so that the boy (who was six at the time of migration) could be fluent in Farsi, English, and French.<sup>130</sup> Nadeje indicated that, in addition to Dari and English, she also wanted her children to learn Russian—a language that the children had been exposed to when the family lived in a Russian refugee camp prior to their move Canada. “So your hope is that in the future, they will speak both English (and Dari)?” I asked the participant. “Well, not both, maybe three languages...I hope they should go to university...and study, and learn, and follow Russian language...” And, Lya stated that her daughter (whom she described as “doing great in languages”) might be including Spanish to her language repertoire, which already included Russian, English, and French (recall that her child attended French immersion):

R: So, what languages do you see her speaking in the future?

P: Three at least, French, English, and Russian hopefully. If she would like to, she can study Spanish...Right now, I know that she is trying to study Spanish a bit.

Although Nadeje, Nora, and Lya did not discuss the topic at length, my impression was the three participants associated the transmission of multiple languages with promising work opportunities for the children in the future. Lya, for example, specified that, if her daughter knew multiple languages, “...she will have better opportunities in the future...if she would like to pick up a government job, for example, she will have the privilege....”

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<sup>130</sup> As I have specified previously, Nora did not place her oldest daughter (who was 10) in French Immersion because she thought the child would not be able to keep up with classmates who had been learning the language since kindergarten.

Finally, only Nadeje, Joyce, and Lya addressed my questions concerning whether or not they envisioned their children passing on first languages to future grandchildren.<sup>131</sup> The three accounts diverged in the following manner: Nadeje depicted the intergenerational transmission of Dari as unlikely (“Oh no, I’m not sure about that,” Nadeje replied, when I asked her if she thought future grandchildren would speak Dari); Joyce portrayed the transmission of Spanish as likely (“When they have their own kids, do you think they’ll be speaking Spanish with their kids?” I asked. “I hope they will. I’m not sure...but I hope they will. I think it’s a good thing,” the participant replied), and Lya did not consider transmission of Russian to grandchildren as possible (“I don’t have any hope that she will speak Russian to her kids...”, the participant said of her daughter).

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<sup>131</sup> Nora and Anee could not even fathom that distant of a future at the time of the interviews.

### 6.3 Summary and Discussion

What I consider to be one of the most interesting aspects of Nadeje's, Nora's, Joyce's, Anee's, and Lya's narratives was that—in spite of the many variations in personal backgrounds—the five participants depicted their language transmission experiences in strikingly similar ways. Specifically, Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya—participants of disparate national origins, cultures, socio-economic status, and migration trajectories—all described journeys that began with an intense concern towards the transmission of English and that ended with marked worry towards the future of first languages.

In all accounts, the stakes involved in the transmission of English seemed to be intricately connected to a maternal concern that the children feel comfortable and function, both socially and academically, in their new English-speaking environment. For Nadeje, Nora, and Anee—the participants who felt poorly about their pre-migration English skills both before and after the move—these early English concerns were likely amplified given their own challenges with the language. That is, in addition to worrying about their children's capabilities to master their new English-speaking milieu, Nadeje, Nora, and Anee had to struggle with their own feelings of linguistic and social incompetence in the new country. Finally, with respect to first languages, the five narratives appeared to converge in the sense that all participants viewed the maintenance of first languages to be essential to their children's ability to remain connected to the familial, cultural, and/or national roots that were left. My hypothesis is that all of them wanted to make migration an inclusive process—that is, a process in which they could embrace life in the new country without having to completely sacrifice their family's origins.

Relevant contextual characteristics that seemed to play a critical role in how the five participants shaped their language transmission narratives were the children's initial

foreignness with the local language and culture as well as the children's age and English skills at the time of migration. As readers recall, all of the children in question were born outside of Canada and were school-aged at the time of their arrival in Canada. Shortly after the move, they began attending Canadian schools in spite of their minimal, or non-existent, English skills. The English-related social and/or academic difficulties that the children experienced in those early days were acutely experienced by the five mothers, who felt compelled to focus their attention on the transmission of English in order to help their children adjust to life in the new country. When the mothers began to realize, either through actual language experiences with the children (in Nadeje's, Anee's, and Lya's cases) or through interactions in their first language networks (in Nora's and Joyce's), that their children were likely to develop greater fluency in, and a stronger preference for, English than first languages, they felt the need to re-think and/or readjust their language transmission practices or strategies so as to ensure the survival of first languages in the context of migration.

Another shared feature of the narratives in question was that husbands appeared to be in the periphery of language transmission accounts. Nora, for example, mentioned in passing her husband's strong opposition to the use of English by the children in the home environment—a practice that the participant found acceptable in the early stages of the move. Likewise, Anee briefly pointed out that the only language disagreement between the couple concerned her husband's insistence that the family speak only English in public because of his concerns that the use of Hindi could make English speakers uncomfortable. Finally, in Nadeje's, Joyce's, and Lya's cases, participants did not mention their husbands much, except when employing the pronoun "we" in their descriptions. My impression was that, in the latter instance, participants assumed that their husbands shared the same language transmission goals and philosophies as they did.



To conclude, it was interesting to note that, in four of the five descriptions, what was at stake in the language transmission process was not only bilingualism, but multilingualism. As readers will recall, Nadeje hoped that her children would speak fluently her first language, English and Russian; Nora and Anee wished that their children speak first languages, English, and French; and Lya envisioned her child as having fluency in, perhaps, Spanish and Chinese, in addition to Russian, English, and French. “If a person knows three languages, it opens broad opportunities, even if she would like to study Spanish or Chinese or whatsoever, she can have a good background in terms of...three already known languages,” Lya specified. Even though these participants did not elaborate on the stakes involved in the transmission of additional languages, my hypothesis is that the four hoped that these other languages would give their children a competitive edge in a globalized world.<sup>132</sup> However, this assumption would have to be supported by future research.

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<sup>132</sup> It is possible that Joyce never discussed the topic because she was in the very early stages of her migration journey and was primarily worried about the successful transmission of English at the time of the interviews.

## 7. PLOT 4: DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION NARRATIVES

In this chapter, I will examine the language transmission narratives of Bia and Lena—participants whose portrayals of language transmission experiences were, in many respects, diametrically opposed to one another. The many differences that punctuated, and ultimately united, Bia's and Lena's accounts began with the participants' backgrounds. Bia and Lena were from Chile and Russia, respectively. Bia came to Canada as a teenager and had been living in the country for over 20 years. At the time of the interviews, she was nearing her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Lena on the contrary was relatively new to Canada, and had been in the country for approximately five years. She was in her mid-thirties when we met. In respect to educational experiences, Bia had technical, not university, training in the area of business. Lena, by contrast, had graduate degree in social sciences. In order to protect the anonymity of the two participants, I will not give specific details concerning their current work areas and status. For our purposes, it will suffice to say that, at the time of the interviews, both were working (Bia part-time and Lena full-time) in their chosen work fields.

The marital and family backgrounds of Bia and Lena were, for the most part, varied. While Bia's partner was Canadian-born, Lena's husband shared his wife's national origins. Bia pointed out that many of hers and her partner's immediate family, such as parents, siblings, cousins, lived in Saskatoon; Lena specified that neither she, nor her husband had relatives living in this city or country. In Lena's instance, all family members resided in the couple's country of origin. One of the only commonalities in the participants' family background was that both Bia and Lena had two sons each. Bia had an adult son who was in his twenties and an eight-year old boy; Lena had eight-year old

boy and an infant who was approximately three months old. Finally, while Bia's two children were Canadian-born, Lena's oldest child was Russian-born and her youngest Canadian-born.

Bia and Lena also depicted theirs and their family's language abilities in divergent ways. Bia indicated that she arrived in Canada with basic, but limited, English skills; by contrast, Lena specified that she had a good level of fluency in the language at the time of her move. Bia depicted her partner as monolingual, having only fluency in English; Lena portrayed her partner as bilingual, having fluency in both Russian (their shared first language) and English. Whereas Bia pointed out that most of her family members in Canada were bilingual, having fluency in both Spanish and English, Lena stated that, with the exception for her father, most of her relatives were not fluent in English. With respect to in-laws' language skills, Bia portrayed her partners' relatives as lacking fluency in Spanish and Lena depicted her husbands' family members as lacking fluency in English. Regarding the children's language skills, Bia explained that her sons grew up in Canada with speaking both Spanish and English. Conversely, Lena explained that her son only spoke Russian, until his arrival in Canada at, approximately, age 4. At the time of the interviews, Lena's infant son was being primarily exposed to Russian.

Additional differences that marked Bia's and Lena's narratives were as follows. First, even though both participants had large and well-established first language networks in Saskatoon, only Bia socialized with co-nationals and Spanish-speaking others. Lena, by comparison, had very limited contact with other Russian-speakers in town.<sup>133</sup> Second, in terms of standard of living, Lena appeared to be more financially established than Bia as both she and her husband were enjoying promising professional opportunities in their work fields.

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<sup>133</sup> This topic will be discussed in greater detail in the upcoming sections.

## 7.1 Portrayals of Migration Experiences

Bia's and Lena's depictions of their migration experiences converged in the sense that the two participants mapped their journeys according to four different time segments: (1) pre-migration experiences, (2) initial experiences in Canada, (3) returning to the countries of origin, after living in Canada, and (4) life in the present. Note that in this particular timeline, Bia and Lena not only talked about their general migration experiences but that they also described their views of first languages and English both before and after their arrival in Canada (in time segment 1 and time segment 4, respectively). The aforementioned migration and language portrayals are presented below.

### 7.1.1 Time Segment 1: Pre-Migration Experiences

Bia's and Lena's talk about their pre-migration journeys centered on two distinct, but interrelated, subjects: (1) how they viewed their impending move and (2) how they felt about their lives in their countries of origin before their arrival in Canada. Furthermore, the two participants discussed pre-migration views of English—but not first languages—in relation to the domestic sphere. These three topics—the impending move, life in the countries of origin, and pre-migration English perspectives—are detailed below.

The Impeding Move. Bia's and Lena's portrayals of their impending move were opposite to one another. Bia, a participant who came to Canada in her teen years with her family of origin as a political refugee in the early seventies, described the move as a forceful and undesirable life event that was marked by stress, fears, and a sense of loss. She provided an eloquent account in this respect:

...coming to Canada was a nightmare for myself, I didn't want to come here...it wasn't a choice...it's a long story...I was born in Chile, and because of the *coup d'état*...in 73 we had to flee the country...we endured about...nine months or so (of) dictatorship and then we managed to get out of the country. My family...tried to stay in Argentina a couple of years...and then go back to Chile, when things

were settled and the militaries were not there any more, but things didn't work out that way...my brother managed to get accepted here as an immigrant and we got rejected...(later) my brother managed to sponsor us...I was almost 18 at the time...I was afraid, I was not wanting to (go) again...to a completely different culture, different language...my main fears were because I've heard stories of people coming here and forgetting about their culture, their language. I (heard)... stories about children coming here, young, and within a year or so, they were speaking Spanish with an accent ...one of my main fears (was) that I was going to lose my identity and become somebody else.....(and) Canada was...portrayed to us as a cold country, just good to make money. Nothing else.

By contrast, Lena, a participant whose nuclear family moved to Canada in search of better professional opportunities, depicted the family's imminent migration as a voluntary and advantageous life experience. Unlike Bia, Lena came to Canada on a temporary basis at first in order to accompany her husband, who had been offered a promising term-position in his work field. She explained that even though the couple intended to return to Russia after the husband's work contract expired ("...we didn't expect to migrate..." she said), positive and successful experiences in Canada motivated the couple to make the move permanent:

We came to Canada because my husband got a job...in Toronto ...step by step, I applied for grad school, I was accepted, got some money of my own...Then we got a car, which was...a big thing for us, because we didn't have a car in our country, so then we started to travel and that was fun... we started to do sports and we started to go skiing...he (referring to son) went to day care...and you know all the things were settling down, I mean those simple routine things that...create your everyday life experience. So...then, finally we...had good friends, we had jobs, we had leisure activities, and we had...everything...we needed at that point...so our family (decided) that...we would stay in Canada.

Life in the Countries of Origin. In order to understand Bia's rejection and Lena's embrace of the move to a greater extent, I asked the two participants to elaborate on what life was like in their countries of origins before migration. The two participants provided different portrayals in this respect. Lena, the participant who moved to Canada as an adult, depicted the couple's prior life in Russia—particularly, their professional lives—as challenging and lacking possibilities:

R: ...So how was life in Russia...before you moved...?

P: Life was...I would say it was difficult...it wasn't as fulfilling...as it's here...the professional life was very sad and poor because...if you're not in business (in Russia)...you can't make money for a living...like my salary was maybe 50 bucks per month...and I was a researcher at the university ...it was a good position but it didn't give money. Same with my husband, he was a researcher and he didn't get...enough salary... it was a period when the Soviet Union crashed and... we were in kind of awkward position because as a researcher you can't sell anything except for...your knowledge... and the government didn't need your research...at one point in Russia, I thought I would never be working (in her field) again, or at least be able to make money...

Conversely, Bia's recollections of her country of origin were comprised of happy and convivial childhood memories. The participant, who arrived in Canada in her teens, described her young years in Chile in the following way:

My best memories (were)...mom being there all the time, coming home from school... there was always a cup of tea waiting...that's so nice to remember... And then friends would come to our house. Neighbors all the time, it was always the house full of people (chuckles)...my life was nice, normal...at home we didn't have TV so reading was a big part. Reading and music, and having friends and dancing and taking care of plants.

Thus, while in Bia's narrative, the participant seemed to associate migration with the loss of a cherished lifeworld ("...Canada was...too far from...the family...the childhood and...all of that. I think that was the main thing, going away from where you belong"), in Lena's account, the participant appeared to view the move as her family's chance to enjoy a more fulfilling and promising life than in Russia ("...in Russia, I don't have a future... here...I got excellent professional activity...and payment...[this is] where our life is happier, much happier than back home.").

Pre-migration language perspectives. Bia's and Lena's pre-migration language descriptions converged in the sense that both participants focused their discussion on their views of English before their move to Canada. In particular, the two participants depicted English as a language that was cultivated in the domestic realm, not in the sense that the language belonged to their families' linguistic background, but in that its transmission took place at home. The primary difference between the two narratives in

this respect was that while Lena expressed disliked towards her early English learning experiences, Bia talked about hers in loving terms.

In Lena's account, the participant indicated that her parents, particularly her father, had "pushed" her to learn English from an early age. According to Lena, her father (who had worked as an English teacher) nurtured a fondness for North American life and wanted to enable his daughter to have access to that lifeworld. For him, Lena explained, English was a "link" to the western world. The participant portrayed her parents' efforts and investment in the transmission of the English in the following way:

... instead of studying grammar, he (referring to father) would... suggest that I read...easy books, so he would give me a book and ask me to read and check in the dictionary...looking in the dictionary...helped me to remember, to memorize the words and pronunciation so then he would check what I read... he would ask me to read it loud so he would see (if) I know the pronunciation, or he would ask me to translate what I read...(and) she (referring to her mother) was very active...pushing me to study English...she was very supportive of my dad...teaching me English...

When I asked Lena how she felt about her early English learning experiences she replied with a laugh that she "hated it!" For her, English was not a special language, but simply another school subject that she was forced to learn: "... (it was) the same like Math, History, like whatever I had to study...I didn't like doing homework at all, so I hated when he (referring to her father) pushed me to study (those) stupid things."<sup>134</sup>

Unlike Lena, Bia specified that much of her pre-migration language skills were self-taught. "I loved English!" Bia enthused, adding that she had wanted to learn the language even before she could fathom the idea of leaving Chile:

...I had been studying English on my own just because I liked the language, without ever knowing I was going to end up here. So even if I went to France or China or whatever I just wanted to learn English on my own.

Thus, as the previous discussion shows, while Bia seemed to have embraced English and its transmission before her move, Lena did not.

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<sup>134</sup> Here Lena refers to English.

### 7.1.2 Time Segment 2: Initial Experiences in Canada

Bia's and Lena's portrayals of their initial experiences in Canada shared more similarities than differences. First, the participants' recollections of their early days in the country were quite positive. Bia, for example, pointed out that "...the nicest memories I have are of the time when we came here...." And, Lena recalled how she fell in love with Canada at first sight:

So when we...came to Canada and I called them (referring to her parents)...and I said, "Oh I like it! Really, I loved it. I went to a mall, and...you know, all the lights! And all the stuff! And clothes! And...everything! So I came home, called, "Oh I love it! I love Canada! (laughter). And he (referring to her father) said, "Oh, I was sure you would love Canada!

Second, both Bia and Lena described their adjustment process as a smooth and rapid process. Bia attributed the ease with which she adjusted to life in Saskatoon (her first place of residency in Canada) to her ability to nurture her Chilean roots and remain connected with Chile in the context of migration:

...after we came here, I don't know how long that feeling lasted,<sup>135</sup> I think it lasted just one day maybe or less, you know? Of being afraid of...you know?...very fast I realized that I was wrong all along, and I could keep my language, I could keep my values and culture...I think that was one of the first things I liked about Canada, seeing that you could be yourself...you can acquire other things without having to reject anything of your own...and it was even nicer because...being here, I knew more about what was happening in Chile than...in Argentina...there (was) more access to...news, in general...

And, Lena felt that camaraderie of a Russian and international community in Toronto (where the couple first moved to) helped her family's transition:

...in Toronto...we made friends from Russia at the beginning and later on, when I started at the university I (made)...friends with international students...and that was easy again<sup>136</sup> because we had common experiences...transition...adjustment ...our friends...had the same...Soviet European type of cultural experiences.

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<sup>135</sup> Here Bia refers to her fears that she would lose her culture, language, and identity in the new country.

<sup>136</sup> Here Lena refers to the adjustment process.



Interestingly, she also pointed out that (what she viewed as) the Canadian reserve and discretion helped her feel comfortable and relaxed in her new environment:

...in Russia...it (was) always very stressful because...from one point people are...more open to each other. At the same time, they are more intrusive...and they are more judgmental...they...judge you from...how you look...what you're worth...what you have, what kind of a house, a car, and they show it to you. Like here, even if people judge you, they won't show it to you...many Russians say 'oh these people (referring to Canadian-born people), they smile at you but they think bad things about you'... but even if they think [that], it's nice that they don't show it you...I remember I felt inferior a lot (in Russia)...here I felt under-attended...No pressure!

### 7.1.3 Time Segment 3: Returning to the Countries of Origin after Living in Canada

Bia's and Lena's portrayals of their return to their countries of origin were generally similar. Specifically, both participants elaborated on (1) their longing for the countries of origin, (2) their experiences in the countries of origin, and (3) their decision to stay in Canada permanently. Each of these topics is detailed below.

The longing for the countries of origin. After describing their initial migration experiences in Canada, Bia and Lena focused their attention on the time when they longed for their countries of origin. Bia, for instance, indicated that in spite of feeling very welcome in Canada (“...so many people greeted us in a nice way. They were helping us...the Canadian people were welcoming us with open arms...it was...(a) very, very beautiful time...”), she nurtured a great desire to return to Chile:

P: ...I always wanted to go back. I always wanted to go back, it was...it was my main goal at that time...

R: What was the motivating force to go back?

P: (Pause) I think that mainly because I didn't choose to leave...I left (Chile) ...“unwanting” to...it was just...the fact...that you have to leave not because you don't love your country but...because your safety is in danger...And you're taught from a very young that this is your country, you're supposed to love your country, and this is where you belong...

Similarly, Lena, the participant who had found the Canadian reserve quite suitable at first, indicated that, after a year in Canada, she deeply missed the intimacy of

the Russian social interactions: “I missed Russia so much... how [Russian] people are warm and open and emotional and how people here are more isolated and distant.”

As a result, the two participants made the journeys back. Bia returned to Chile after having lived ten years in Canada, with the goal of living in that country permanently. And, Lena departed for Russia approximately one year after her arrival in Canada for a month’s visit. Both participants traveled with their oldest children<sup>137</sup> and, in Lena’s instance, the husband also accompanied the family.

Experiences in the Countries of Origin. Notwithstanding Bia’s and Lena’s different travel objectives, portrayals of experiences in the countries of origin were rather similar. Specifically, in both narratives, participants spoke of a discrepancy between their *idealized* and their *actual* homecoming experiences. Bia, who moved back to Chile searching for family<sup>138</sup> and memories of her childhood (“It was my family I was looking for...when I was away from Chile...all my memories were of...my childhood.”) specified that, instead, she encountered a foreign landscape marked by decade-long political troubles:

...when I went back ten years later the trees were taller, you know? (laughter)  
...things looked different and the streets were narrower and everything was smaller...I wanted to stay there, I moved to stay, but as soon as I put my feet there I realized that it wasn’t going to be so easy. The dictatorship was still there...

In addition, Bia pointed out that she was never able to readjust to life in her original country:

...after two years (in Chile)...I didn’t have anything, I had no money, I still was just going around in the same circle...it was very hard. I had no family...I had cousins...aunts...but it was not the same... and for a while I was kind of feeling shy about talking in public because then, in many places... you go and you have to ask what you want...it’s not like a...supermarket, you go and you grab whatever you need and take it to the teller. You have to ask what you want. And I

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<sup>137</sup> The participants’ youngest children had not been born at that time.

<sup>138</sup> Recall that Bia’s most immediate family (e.g., mother, siblings) lived in Canada and that her extended family resided in Chile.

had...an accent that was not Chilean, so they would just turn and look at me and I would feel kind of...I didn't like that, you know?

Similarly, Lena explained that rather than experiencing Russian warmth and intimacy, she felt "stressed" and "insecure" during her month-long stay in Russia. When I asked the participant to explain her feelings, she pointed to a "traumatic experience" during that particular visit:

...we (referring to her family) had a very traumatic experience...when we went to the airport to go back to Canada from Russia, the officers found that we don't have a picture of my son in my passport, which I had to have because...from the age six, every child has to have his picture in (the) parents' passport and if there is no picture then it's not a valid document so the child can't go abroad. So they won't let us go, and that was so traumatic...because I already started to miss Toronto and I wanted to go back...in Russia...I was already stressed and depressed. And when they didn't let us go I felt so insecure and so bad and it was so horrible... so it was a week delay, but that gave me this...fear...I still have this fear, what if I go to Russia and they won't let me out!...that they can do whatever they want to me, and I can't...do anything...

Thus, as this discussion shows, in both accounts, Bia's and Lena's homecoming experiences seemed to have been marked by significant difficulties.

The decision to stay in Canada. Bia and Lena indicated that their return experiences motivated them to live in Canada permanently.<sup>139</sup> An important subtlety between the narratives in this respect was that while Bia struggled with such decision, Lena did not. Specifically, in Bia's instance, the participant pointed out that, even though she left Chile voluntarily at that time ("...this time was my decision," she said), the choice to do so was filled with dilemmas concerning the upbringing and well-being of her child:<sup>140</sup>

Once I was there (in Chile), I had to ask myself, am I being selfish now? With my son? By keeping him here and depriving him of all the things that he could

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<sup>139</sup> Note that in Lena's instance, I was not able to pinpoint the exact moment when the couple decided to stay in Canada since they were already living in the country before their official migration. However, my impression was that the couple's difficult experiences in Russia during their visit to that country played a key role in their resolve to stay.

<sup>140</sup> I never asked Bia how old her son was at that time, but I gathered from our discussion that he might have been five or six years old.

acquire in Canada? Number one...he was missing very much my nephew and my niece because they were like his brother and sister for him...he was going to school in the country and...it was really bad... And plus it was awful to be telling him all the time, don't speak this, don't say that, it is dangerous, and so on, when he grew up here being taught to give his opinion and fight for his rights...you know? So it was, again, decision time, a hard one. We were both crying when we left the airport (in Chile), but it was the right thing to do...And when I left, I was thinking, what am I doing with my child? Am I taking him to exile or am I bringing him back to his country? (laughter) It was hard, it was hard.

By contrast, Lena pointed out that she was happy and relieved to leave Russia and resume life in Canada:

...when I came back to Canada...I felt the happiest person in the world...I felt very stressed (in Russia)...And when I came to Canada, I felt so secure and so...relaxed...it (was) like a huge stone...fell off your shoulders, that's the feeling of lightness and easy breathing that (I had)...

Note that in this quote, when Lena mentions Canada, she was referring to Toronto, the couple's first place of residency in Canada.

#### 7.1.4 Time Segment 4: Life in the Present

In time segment 4, the present, we find Bia and Lena living in Saskatoon. At this point in their narratives, the participants talked about the following aspects of their migration experiences: (1) their relationship with Saskatoon, (2) their assessment of life in the present, (3) their relationship with their cultural and national backgrounds, and (4) their current views of first languages and English. With few exceptions, the two accounts were mostly divergent in all respects.

Relationship with Saskatoon. Bia and Lena talked about their relationship in Saskatoon in terms of their emotional, or lack thereof, connection with the city. Bia, the participant who had been living in Saskatoon for over 20 years and who had several members of her immediate and extended family in town, spoke of the city lovingly and called it her "home:"

I like living here...it's a lovely city. I love this city...Many times people here would ask me, 'When are you going home?' Or 'Have you been home for a visit? When was the last time you were (in Chile)?' And for me...this is home, you know...

By contrast, Lena, who had lived in Saskatoon for just over a year,<sup>141</sup> felt emotionally detached. Her relationship with the city, she explained, was a pragmatic one:

...maybe it's just my stage of development (but)...Canadians...especially in Saskatoon, they are so attached to this place, and for me, I just choose the...better school, better job. When I talk to people in Saskatoon, they just love Saskatoon...because that's their home...they have this feeling of home here, which I don't have. I have the feeling of home but that's mostly, you know, the most comfortable place, useful, helpful in my career...

Assessment of life in the present. Bia's and Lena's views of their present lives also differed in the sense that whereas Bia portrayed her life as fulfilling and joyful, Lena depicted hers as restrictive and isolating. Bia indicated that, despite her tumultuous journey to Canada, she had been able to realize many of her goals and achieve happiness:

...I feel very lucky because in many ways I've done, in different ways...most of the things I wanted to do. Now I have children, I teach, I have my family together, I love them, they love me, we have a beautiful type of relationship, in spite of so many obstacles, you know, that came along the way. So I feel a very happy type of person, a happy woman, like very satisfied with all ...my little goals, you know? That's the way I see myself. Happy.

On the contrary, Lena specified that, while she had thoroughly enjoyed her life in Toronto, she felt "trapped" with respect to her current life in Saskatoon:

...in Toronto it was more...exciting...I felt anything (was) possible, lots of things could be done whereas in Saskatoon I don't feel that many...options, so it kind of feels more trapped...less perspective here....less air to breath...

When I asked the participant to elaborate on her feelings, this is how she replied:

...we don't have friends here...we don't have Russian friends...(the) Russian community doesn't seem much fun here compared to Toronto because...you have less choice of people...we don't have anyone, except for our very good (Canadian-born) neighbors...(and) my son is not well in school, actually. That's because probably in a small city kids...have this tight relationships...in Toronto, at least they changed kids in the class every year...but...here they don't do that. And kids are together since kindergarten, and when a new child comes, he's a foreigner...so it's stressful for me to see how he is struggling now with his new school...kids in his class... already...have old friends...little groups of friends and he is kind of in...but he's not...fully accepted.

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<sup>141</sup> As I have specified before, Lena had lived in Canada for five years, four of those in Toronto.

Thus, in Lena's account, the participant's dissatisfaction with her present life seemed to be intricately connected to the lack of social support and social isolation experienced by the family in their new city.

Relationship with cultural and national origins. Bia's and Lena's portrayals of their relationship with their cultural background and national origins were intricately connected, but divergent. In Bia's instance, the participant pointed out that in spite of feeling disconnected from the country Chile<sup>142</sup> ("...it's distant. It's distant...that's what time starts doing, you know, like detaching you...from the place, from everything...," she said of her relationship with her country of origin), she had remained close to her Chilean cultural heritage. Throughout the years, the participant was not only involved with the creation of the Spanish school ("I started trying...to find [Spanish] material, newspapers, whatever there was that came to my hands in the written form... And within two years we were able to create the Spanish school for children here."), but she also devoted much time helping co-nationals settle in Canada and showcasing Chilean culture. Bia's strong connection with her cultural roots was also apparent in our meetings, which took place in her home: During the interviews, soft Chilean music played in the background and beautiful Chilean art was displayed around the house. Not surprisingly, when I asked Bia how she viewed her nationality after all the years that she had lived in Canada,<sup>143</sup> she promptly replied that she was as Chilean as she was Canadian:

R: So who are you now? What is your nationality now?

P: (Without hesitation) I'm a Chilean-Canadian (laughter). I'm a Chilean-Canadian woman, yes, yes both...I have both.

Bia's unyielding commitment to her Chilean roots was a sharp contrast to Lena's detachment from her Russian origins. Specifically, in Lena's instance, the participant

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<sup>142</sup> It seemed that, in all of her years in Canada, Bia had only been back to Chile once or twice. Even though the participant expressed a desire to return for a visit, the trip was too costly for her.

<sup>143</sup> Recall that Bia arrived in Canada at the age of 17 and was now close to her fifties.

explained that, since her “traumatic” visit to country of origin (described on p. 13), she had not only changed her views of Canada and Russia, but that she had also become “anti-Russian.” This is how she portrayed this transformation:

...I felt so horrible that month (in Russia) so when I came back to Canada...since that time, I kind of gradually switched my perception of Russia and Canada into opposite. What was good turned bad, what was bad turned good, and the more I stay here, the more I am anti-Russian...which is kind of bad to say...but...I am...anti-Russian as it is now.

During our discussion, Lena also made statements such as “...We are not so proud of our country usually...” and “...(the) history of Russia...I’m not very proud of that as well...” to illustrate her relationship with her country of origin. As I will discuss in the upcoming section concerning language transmission experiences, Bia’s embrace and Lena’s rejection of their national and cultural origins played a significant role in their language transmission experiences with their children.

Language views in the present. Bia’s and Lena’s portrayals of language views in the present related both to the private and public realms. Whereas the private sphere seemed to relate to the intimate space where relationships with loved ones (such as children or husbands) took place, the public arena concerned non-intimate social interactions with English-speaking others in the community of Saskatoon.

With respect to the private realm, Bia’s and Lena’s narratives converged in the sense that both participants talked about their first languages as “a language of feelings” (their expression); that is, as the languages in which they were best able to express intimate emotions such as love, sadness, or motherly concern, for example. “...I would say Russian would be intimate, private language and English would be the language of...outside world communication...” Lena said, adding with Russian she was able to “differentiate...tiny feelings” from one another. “...I have more variety of expressing myself in Russian,” she said. Similarly, Bia depicted Spanish as a language that enabled emotional eloquence:

...my feelings, I can express them much better in Spanish than English...if a child falls, and I'm going to comfort him, I can come up with a thousand words in Spanish, but...what am I going to say in English?... "How are you doing, sweetie, are you okay honey?"...I have nice words in English, but I have nicer words and more feelings in Spanish...in Spanish it'll just come up from my heart...

In respect to the public realm, Bia's and Lena's language depictions diverged in the following ways: Bia portrayed Spanish as a language that elicited intolerance or admiration in others (particularly, English-speaking others); and Lena described Russian and English as languages that made her feel socially uncomfortable.

In Bia's account, past and present were juxtaposed when the participant discussed her contrasting perspectives of Spanish. In the early eighties, Bia said, the dominant social stance in Saskatoon towards Spanish was of intolerance. "...we speak English here, you're not at home...English is the language to speak here," was the typical reaction of English-speaking others, the participant pointed out, whenever she and her family spoke Spanish in public. In her narrative, Bia recalled the hostility of day care workers towards her son and other Spanish-speaking children in their care because of the use of Spanish:

And here comes...an interesting story for your research. He (referring to her adult son) was going...to day care with (his cousins). And Spanish was their language...So they would meet at day care and play in Spanish. And they were told not to (speak in) Spanish, many times. And once...they were having lunch and they were talking again in Spanish, and one worker told my son, "If you speak Spanish once more, you're not going to eat lunch today." And that's what happened...it was unfortunate because there were many other children (in the same situation)...there were about two more whose first language was Spanish too, but they wouldn't open their mouth, they wouldn't say anything, not even in English, because they didn't know much.

In the present, Bia specified that, for the most part, the general attitude of others<sup>144</sup> towards bilingualism or multilingualism was no longer of intolerance, but of admiration:

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<sup>144</sup> Here Bia seems to refer to individuals in the community general, not only English-speaking others.



...I can see a difference, in 20 years...it's great! It's good! Like children are being told "Wow! What a great thing is to know so many languages. It's great to be polylingual!" You know?

In Lena's narrative, the participant depicted Russian and English as languages of social discomfort in the sense that she felt uneasy employing either language in public: "...in public I'm uncomfortable...unless I'm silent..." Lena said with laugh. She explained her language-related social awkwardness in the following way:

Well, in English I'm uncomfortable because...persons (are) paying attention and my English...I have an accent and I'm embarrassed of this accent and not being able to say things fluently and easily so I feel awkward. And in Russian I guess I feel awkward as well because (laughter) I'm different (laughter), so there's no way I would feel comfortable (laughter)...

Note that Lena—but not Bia—also talked about Russian and English in respect to the more specific realm of her educational/professional training. As readers will recall, Lena had pursued both of her Master's and Ph.D. degrees in English. In this particular sphere, the participant offered a remarkable portrayal of English and Russian as the languages of her "educated" and "primitive" selves, respectively:

...well, I guess I would perceive Russian as...a language that is a real, real, simple way of expressing yourself. Something close to the animal world...And English is a lot more...educated or more complicated way of saying things...or...expressing yourself ...although some things are easier to say in English just because of English structure...but still English is a language which I would use...to be educated and very intelligent...whereas...Russian...is a language of simple, straightforward expressions...the language that I use to express how I feel...So in Russian, it would be something very primitive and close to...nature. Whereas in English it would be...intellectual, elaborated...a lot of education to express, so it's more difficult. And...since...I love intelligent culture and knowledge, I would...desire to express myself...to learn to express myself in English because...simple things and natural and close to nature things, they are good, but they are not as desirable for me.

Lena's association of English and Russian with a cultured and a simple self, respectively, was striking to me not only because of her choice of metaphors, but also because of its contrast with her previous language portrayals in the private and public realms. As readers will recall, in the private realm, Russian was described—not as a "simple" language—but rather, as a language of expressive variety and intimacy.

Furthermore, in the public arena, English was portrayed as a language of social discomfort—and not as a language of a desirable and intellectual self.

## 7.2 Portrayals of Language Transmission Experiences

Bia's and Lena's descriptions of their language transmission experiences could be mapped onto five distinct time segments.<sup>145</sup> In the first time segment, the participants talked about language transmission experiences that took place in the initial stages of their move. In the second, they spoke of language transmission transformations that occurred around the time of their return to their countries of origins. In the third, the two described significant language events that happened in the years preceding the birth of their second children. Note that, up to this point, participants' focused their discussion of language transmission experiences on their first-born children. In the fourth time segment—the present—Bia and Lena elaborated on their current language approaches with their oldest and youngest children and also described the outcomes of their language transmission efforts thus far. Finally, in time segment 5—the future—the two participants briefly specified how they envisioned the survival of their first languages in the long-run.

At this point, I would like to remind readers of relevant information that they should keep in my when reading this section. First, recall that Bia moved to Canada involuntarily at first (she was a political refugee) and that Lena looked forward to her family's migration to this country. As the following discussion will show, participants' feelings towards their move to Canada seemed to play a significant role in their initial language transmission decisions and experiences with their first-born children.

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<sup>145</sup> Even though Bia had lived in Canada for a longer period of time than Lena (she had been in the country for more than two decades and Lena had lived here for over five years), her most significant language transmission experiences could be described according to the five different time segments that I propose in this section.

Second, bear in mind the national origins and age of the children in question. In Bia's instance, the two children were Canadian-born; the oldest was in his twenties and the youngest was eight. In Lena's case, her eight-year old son was Russian-born and her three-month old baby was Canadian-born. In both accounts, the order of birth was of significance in the sense that language experiences with the first-born children influenced the subsequent language approaches with the second-born children.

Third, note the school status of the children in question: At the time of the interviews, Bia's adult son had finished his schooling and her eight-year old boy was attending French-immersion school; likewise, Lena's eight-year old son was attending a French-immersion program and her infant son was at home. In spite of having at least one of their children enrolled in French-immersion schools, Bia and Lena discussed primarily language challenges associated with the transmission of first languages and English. Like previous participants (e.g., Lya, Nora), these two did not seem to have any concerns towards their children's ability to learn French.

Finally, while in Bia's instance, the language transmission narrative is told from the perspective of the mother (Bia preferred not to include her partner's views in the discussion), in Lena's account, it is presented from the perspective of the couple. In the latter case, the pronoun "we" is employed much more often than the pronoun "I," and my impression was that Lena seemed to assume that she and her husband shared the same language transmission views.

### 7.2.1 Time Segment 1: Language Transmission Experiences in the Initial Stages of the Move

Before delving into Bia's and Lena's portrayals of language transmission experiences in the initial stages of their move, it is important that I clarify to the reader how this particular time period was depicted in the two narratives. Whereas in Bia's description, this early phase related to the participant's first five years in Canada, in

Lena's account, it referred to the participants' first few months in the country. These distinct representations can be easily understood if we consider that Bia had lived in Canada for over two decades and Lena for approximately five years. As I have specified above, participants' discussion of language transmission experiences in this particular time segment related solely to their first-born children, as the youngest children had not been born at this time. In this timeframe, Bia and Lena talked about (a) initial language transmission goals and language transmission stakes and (b) language interactions with the oldest children.

Language transmission goals and stakes. Bia's and Lena's depictions of language transmission goals and stakes in the early stages of the language transmission process were opposite to one another. Whereas Bia focused on the transmission of Spanish and depicted the language as critical to her son's ability to function in Chile, if mother and child were to move to that country; Lena emphasized the transmission of English and portrayed the language as essential to her family's adjustment to life in Canada.

Bia described her intent to pass on Spanish to her Canadian-born child as given, as something that had never required much thought:

R:....when you were pregnant, did you think about language...?

P: No, I always knew I was going to teach him Spanish...(there) wasn't much thinking about it, you know? It was the thing to do. You know what I mean?

R: You...never even considered...the other option<sup>146</sup>.

P: No...

In Bia's account, what seemed to be at stake in the transmission of Spanish in the early stages of migration was the participant's desire to one day resume life in Chile with her child ("...I was going to teach him Spanish...because I wanted...to go back with him

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<sup>146</sup> Here I refer to the possibility of Bia only focusing on the transmission of English.

...”). From our discussion, I gathered that, at that time,<sup>147</sup> Bia worried that her child would not be able to learn Spanish in living in Canada (“...there weren’t...that many cases that I could see firsthand...of children being born here and being fluent in both languages. It was hard, you had to work at it harder...”) and thus have difficulties adjusting to life in her country of origin.

By comparison, Lena, the participant who expected to lead a more fulfilling life in Canada, specified that, in the initial stages of their move, the couple’s primary language goal for their family was, not the maintenance of Russian, but the mastery of English.<sup>148</sup> In her account, the transmission of English was depicted as essential to both the couple’s *and* their child’s ability to function in their new environment.

...since we came to Canada, both me and my husband were interested...in professional career, and everything had to be in English, so the emphasis for us (was) to learn more English and Russian was not important. The same for our son...he had to go to the (English) day care, preschool, so he had to stay a lot of time out of the house, so he had to learn how to communicate...

Language interactions with first-born children. The discussion of language transmission interactions with the oldest children included the following topics: (a) participants’ language practices, (b) the children’s language behaviours, and (c) level of satisfaction with language interactions.

Concerning participants’ language practices, the two accounts converged in the sense that Bia and Lena spoke primarily their first languages with their oldest children in the initial stages of the move. Bia, for example, indicated that for the first five years of her son’s life she used Spanish with the child “90% of the time.” English was only spoken, she said, when story-telling in Spanish was unsatisfactory:

R: So did you always speak Spanish with him?

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<sup>147</sup> Note that the time period in question here refers to the late 1970’s and early 1980’s.

<sup>148</sup> As readers recall, Lena portrayed her family’s English skills upon their arrival in Canada in the following way: The couple had reasonable conversational skills in English and their four-year old son lacked fluency in the language.

P: Most of the time...Now I had to teach him some English...the stories in Spanish...the old ones...they are horror stories, most of them. And I found there were so many nice stories in English...

Similarly, Lena specified that she (and her husband) employed mainly Russian with the oldest child (who was approximately four at the time). However, unlike Bia, who spoke Spanish with the goal of teaching her Canadian-born son her first language, Lena said that she conversed mainly in Russian with her son (who was born in Russia) because it was “easier” to employ that language than English.

In regards to the language behaviour of the oldest children, Bia explained that her oldest son spoke with her in Spanish “most of the time” in the first four or five years of his life. By contrast, Lena specified that, shortly after her family’s arrival in Canada, the couple’s four-year old boy became quite fond of the English language—a preference, she explained, that was strengthened by the child’s attendance of English day care and pre-school.

When I asked the two participants to elaborate on how they felt about their children’s language behaviours at that time, both depicted the parent-child language relationship as satisfactory. Bia, for example, described her early language interactions with her son as peaceful: “...at that time we didn’t have much (language) conflict because he was with me most of the time.” And Lena explained that she and her husband welcomed their son’s use of English, not only because it enabled the child to master the language of the new country (“...it was important for us (that) he would learn English...”), but also because it helped the couple improve their own English skills:

P: ...he started to speak English at home, and we didn’t stop that because...it was fun at first and then it was a good learning experience because he spoke English much better. He brought better English from his day care and preschool than we got from our books and...studies. So...from him we heard the pronunciation...(of) how things could be said in English, like “wake up”...or “move up”...

R:...yes, phrasal verbs.

P: Yeah, phrasal verbs, exactly...we had no idea about these phrasal verbs, but they are so important here...so we learned those little things which are used in

common language which you can't get from the books...So we never stopped him from speaking English, although we replied in Russian always because it was easier for us to reply in Russian.

### 7.2.2 Time Segment 2: Language Transmission Experiences around the Time of the Sojourns in the Countries of Origin

A noteworthy part of Bia's and Lena's language transmission journeys takes place around the time of the participants' sojourns to their countries of origin.<sup>149</sup> Specifically, both Bia and Lena indicated that significant changes in their language transmission experiences happened during this period of time. An important nuance in the narratives in this respect concerned the timing of the language transmission transformations in question. Bia, for example, spoke of changes in her language transmission focus and practices both *during and after* her stay in Chile. By comparison, Lena described how the couple's language practices and goals for their child prior to their month-long visit to Russia were further strengthened shortly *after* this trip. The latter participant also specified how the transmission of French became part of the couple's language goals after the family's trip to Russia. Finally, note that, in both accounts, participants' views of what was at stake in the language transmission process in this time span were embedded in their discussion of the aforementioned topics. A detailed description of all these language matters follows below.

Changes in language transmission experiences during the stay in the country of origin. Bia, the participant who had been dedicated to the transmission of Spanish in Canada, specified that, after she moved back to Chile with her son, her attention shifted to the maintenance of English:<sup>150</sup> “...(in Chile) I tried to keep English for him<sup>151</sup>...the other side of the coin, eh?” When I asked her to elaborate on this change, Bia replied

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<sup>149</sup> For specific information about Bia's and Lena's return to their countries of origin with their oldest children, see section 13.2.3. “Time Segment 3: Returning to the Countries of Origin.”

<sup>150</sup> Recall that Lena never discussed the topic of language transmission in this specific timeframe.

<sup>151</sup> Here Bia refers to her oldest son.

that her child's ability to remain connected to his Canadian roots and background was what was at stake at that particular time:

R: So why did you want him to keep his English?

P: Because it was his language, he was Canadian...if he wanted to come back to Canada one day, you know, I couldn't just say, "Okay, forget about your language or about part of your past," you know.

In order to help her son maintain his English skills, Bia began to communicate in English with the child, but her efforts were unsuccessful because her son refused to converse in English while living in Chile:

P: ...we stayed there (referring to Chile) for two years. The first year I tried to keep English for him...But it was hard, he didn't want to.

R: He didn't want to speak English?

P: No, because nobody else spoke English around, so what was the point? So it was very hard for me, and after the first year I gave up.

Thus, in Bia's narrative, the participant spoke of a reversal in language transmission views and stakes across space and time: In Canada, the participant had considered Spanish as a language of potential extinction and emphasized its transmission in order to help her son's establish a connection with his Chilean background;<sup>152</sup> in Chile, however, English—not Spanish—becomes the language that requires nurturing, and its maintenance is highlighted so that the child does not forget his links to his Canadian roots and heritage.

Changes in language transmission experiences after the return to Canada. Both Bia and Lena described changes in their language transmission journeys following their sojourns to their countries of origin. Bia, the participant who had focused her efforts on the transmission of English while in Chile, indicated that after her return to Canada, the maintenance of Spanish became, once again, a priority. Back in Canada, she explained, the viability of Spanish was jeopardized not only because her son (who was about

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<sup>152</sup> See earlier discussion in the section entitled "Language Goals and Stakes."



seven) developed a preference for English, but also because the family's school and work schedules greatly affected the child's exposure to the language:

And then, of course, my child in no time at all was speaking in English and then starts the battle, because once they go to school and they are there for so many hours a day, and you're working all day. It's hard to keep up (with Spanish).

In order to help her son maintain his Spanish skills, Bia devised a set of language strategies which included, for example, formal Spanish lessons ("I enrolled him in the Spanish school.") and Spanish-only days ("Saturdays at home was Spanish.").

Lena, the participant who had been favoring the transmission of English prior to the family's visit to Russia, indicated that following the trip to her country of origin the maintenance of Russian was further neglected by the couple. "Russian was kind of forgotten...", she pointed out, adding that she and her husband began to employ English (in addition to Russian) in their interactions with their son: "...when we came we didn't speak English at all with him...not at all...then...gradually...we started to respond a little bit in English."

When I asked Lena to explain the reasons underlying these subtle—yet significant—changes, she mentioned two "unhappy" experiences "with the Russian language" that had caused a great deal of stress for the family in the aftermath of their visit to Russia. First, Lena pointed out, Russian became detrimental to her son's ability to re-adjust to his Canadian surroundings:

I remember I was a little stressed because...after speaking Russian in Russia he (referring to her son) came back (to Canada) and he had difficulty returning to the English tradition and culture and language...he was...stressed and frustrated in school...after returning and I was frustrated as well because he didn't want to go school. He was...uncooperative and unhappy. So when he finally got back into...English language and stuff, I was glad...

Second, she specified, her child endured ridicule by his peers because of his Russian name which she described as "awkward," "too long," and "unpronounceable" to English speakers. "...kids started to tease him..." she said, adding that the stress brought about

by the situation prompted the couple to change, not only the boy's first name, but also the family's surname to a more "palatable" (my expression) Anglophone version. The events surrounding this renaming process were described in the following way:

P: ...when he was in Toronto, in grade 1, he invented his first and last name...unexpectedly, the teacher called or I saw her and she said, "Why is your son calling himself something like "John Smith"?...and I said to him (referring to son), "Why do you call...? "Oh," he said, "that's my first and last name! (laughter)...that's going to be my last and first name from now on." Well, later on he stopped doing that...(but) his name we transferred to F., and now he is F...  
R: So did you formally change the first name?  
P: No, not formally...just informally...(but) his last name, that was formally changed... so we got passports with the different (English) spelling of our...last name...so his last name now spells a little shorter than it was before...it's English spelling...and so F. is happier because before they made fun because he had the longest name ever and difficult to pronounce.

As the preceding discussion shows, in Lena's narrative, what seemed to be at stake in the nurturing of English—and neglect of Russian—upon the family's return to Canada was a parental concern for the child's emotional and social well-being in context of migration.

Finally, in Lena's instance, the participant also mentioned briefly that, sometime after the family's return to Canada, the couple decided to enroll their son in a French Immersion program:

We chose for him a French school at one point because we lived in a...poor and immigrant area, and the (English) school there was not a good school...And someone said "Well, there is a French Immersion program...all kids from more or less ambitious parents go there."...So we sent him to French Immersion...

After realizing that the child was able to excel in both English and French, Lena pointed out that the transmission of the latter language became, in addition to English, a definite language goal: "...we decided...that he's going to stay in French Immersion... there is no question he's going to continue there...."<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Note that neither Lena nor her husband spoke French. She said, however, that the couple tried their best to help the child learn the language, by looking up words in a dictionary, etc.

In sum, the primary changes in Bia's and Lena's language transmission experiences after their return to Canada were as follows: Bia re-focused her efforts on the transmission of Spanish; and Lena began to emphasize the transmission of English and French at the expense of Russian. "There's English, there's French, and there's a little bit of Russian at home...", was Lena's description of the language hierarchy in her household at that time.

### 7.2.3 Time Segment 3: Language Transmission Experiences before the Birth of the Youngest Child in Canada

The third segment of Bia's and Lena's language transmission journeys refers to the years that preceded the birth of their second children in Canada. This time span, which was loosely defined in both narratives, seemed to encompass the years between (a) the late (not early) months that followed participants' sojourn to the countries of origin and (b) the time before the birth of the youngest children in Canada. In this time interval, Bia's and Lena's oldest children were enrolled in school and their ages ranged from approximately seven to fourteen (in Bia' instance) or from six to nine (in Lena's account).

The noteworthy language transmission events that were attributed to this period of time differed in both narratives: Bia described yet another transformation in her language transmission practices and philosophy; by contrast, Lena talked about her son's declining first language skills and the couple's reaction to this language event. In both descriptions, views of what was at stake in the language transmission process at that particular time were part of the discussion.

A transformation in language transmission practices and viewpoints. Bia, the participant who had been determined to ensure the transmission and maintenance of Spanish after her stay in Chile, described a partial, yet remarkable, change in her language transmission practices and views in the years that followed that trip. Specifically, she indicated that even though she had remained devoted to the formal and

informal transmission of Spanish during those years (e.g., she continued to insist that Spanish be the primary language of communication between mother and son and made sure the child attended Spanish lessons), she felt compelled to include English in the mother-child language repertoire in certain situations, such as those involving the English lifeworld of her son. Thus, for example, the use of English between mother and son became both acceptable and desirable whenever the child wanted to share news of his school day in English:

...if they come home from school...and they want to tell a story, you cannot say 'do that in Spanish.' That happened in English and it's so hard for them to translate...

The insightful moment that redefined Bia's language transmission practices and underlying philosophy was depicted by the participant in the following way:

R: So did you always speak Spanish with him?<sup>154</sup>

P: Most of the time...but...one day, I was thinking about it and realized that he was kind of living in two worlds. And I thought "I'm not being part of the fun part in his world." If I'm living in Spanish...if I'm not talking in English to him...well, they (referring to son and cousins) would be singing...funny English songs like...the hokey pokey...and I (would) feel like I'm not part of that, because I'm not sharing that with him. Or even (an English) joke, or anything! ...so I chose to do that too (referring to speaking English) with him...because I felt I was going to be left outside of one part of his world...(by) using English...you are becoming part of that world too...

As this quote illustrates, what appeared to be at stake with the (controlled) inclusion of English in the mother-child language interactions in this particular time segment was Bia's desire to access to, and participate in, all of her son's lifeworlds.

The decline in first language skills. Lena, the participant who had neglected the maintenance of Russian and emphasized the transmission of English and French following her visit to her country of origin, indicated that the years following her trip were marked by a decline in her oldest child's spoken Russian skills. During those years, she explained, her son lost much of his spoken fluency in the language:

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<sup>154</sup> Here I refer to her oldest son.

...since we didn't stop him, he continued speaking English with us, and what happens...it (was) hard for him to say things in Russian, because he used to express that in English and learned that in English...he lost that language quality and quantity...

When I asked Lena about how the couple reacted to their son's progressive loss of his Russian abilities at the time, she replied that the couple was not fazed by it because Russian had become an "undesirable benefit:"

...Russian is...a benefit, but it's not a desirable benefit, because we don't see our son living in Russia...That would be unhappy for me because...there's a mandatory military service for boys from 18 years and...they have to go in...(the) Army service for two years, and that's a very cruel and very hard experience, like boys could die. They are humiliated... between 18 and 28, that's when they take them in the Army, so between the age 18 and 28 I don't want him to be in Russia at all... still...he listens to Russian and he visits sometimes...but I'm sure...he (won't) be able to read, you know, those Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, whatever is the pride of Russians. But that's still okay with me, I'd rather have him...healthy in Canada than...have this whole cultural advantages but poor and sick in Russia.

Therefore, in Lena's narrative, what appeared to be at stake in the couple's decision to accept their son's declining Russian abilities was a parental concern towards the child's long-term safety and well-being.

#### 7.2.4 Time Segment 4: Language Transmission Experiences in the Present

In the present, we find Bia and Lena as mothers of not one, but two children each. As readers recall, at the time of the interviews, Bia's oldest son was in his twenties and her youngest was eight years old. By comparison, Lena's children were about eight years old and three months old, respectively. As such, in time segment 4, for the most part, the talk about language transmission experiences included both to the oldest and the youngest children. In the two narratives, participants focused their discussion on the following topics: (a) current language transmission approaches with the oldest and youngest child and (b) the outcomes of the language transmission process.

Language transmission approaches. Bia's and Lena's description of language transmission approaches in the present focused on the language strategies that were being employed with the first- and second-born children. In this respect, the two

accounts diverged in the following way: While Bia espoused the same language transmission stance for both of her sons, Lena did not. When discussing this subject, Bia and Lena also specified the rationale underlying their current language transmission viewpoints.

In Bia's instance, readers will recall that since her sojourn to Chile more than a decade ago, the participant had been employing a more flexible and inclusive view to language transmission in regards to her first child (who was now in his twenties). Specifically, the participant spoke primarily in Spanish with her oldest son, but also conversed in English whenever the English lifeworld of the young man was concerned. With the youngest son, the eight-year old boy, Bia reported using the same strategy: She nurtured the formal and informal transmission of Spanish (e.g., she insisted on Spanish being the primary language of communication between mother and son and had the child enrolled in Spanish lessons), but was also receptive to the use of English depending on the context (e.g., English was used when singing English childhood songs, reciting English rhymes, etc.) The primary change in language transmission experiences this time, Bia explained, was that she no longer worried that the partial inclusion of English in mother-child language interactions would jeopardize the transmission of Spanish:

I'm much more confident with the second one (referring to youngest child)...I'm more relaxed. I'm not so strict as to say, "Okay, this is just Spanish, period..."Because I know...that it's just a matter of...developing both (languages) at the same time.

When discussing the rationale underlying her current language approach with her two children, Bia employed a "culinary" metaphor (my expression) to explain her inclusive language transmission views:

...how would I explain this...you can separate them (referring to English and Spanish)...(but) it's better to combine them, not to make them like two different worlds. It's like just one (world) with the two languages involved, you know? Instead of saying these are two opposite things, it's just one thing, with both

included. Because I think that's what Canada is all about, inclusion...let's not separate, let's include everything...it's a salad. It's a salad. You've got everything there, but you can see everything...it's not a melting pot, where you cannot taste it...they (referring Spanish and English) are together...a carrot and a tomato...you can distinguish them if you look at them...they are different...So I think it's fine to talk to them (referring to both children) in English too.

In Lena's narrative, the participant's past language transmission stance—namely, that of nurturing the transmission of English and French at the expense of Russian—remained the same in the present only in relation to her oldest child, her eight-year old son. "...he's too busy with (English and French)...," Lena replied when asked about the maintenance of Russian, adding that "...he's learning French instead of learning Russian." When explaining the reasons underlying the couple's decision to continue to downplay the transmission of Russian, Lena not only referred to the couple's future plans for their first-born son, but also to a language transmission insight that occurred after our first meeting:

...me and my husband have...that...our son's (referring to oldest child) future is going to happen in Canada or the States...at least not in Russia...I don't like what's going on in the country (referring to Russia) ...after talking to you, I thought that our attitude for the language learning and keeping for our son (is) caused by our perception of our country...I never put these two things together, but I think that our rejection of our country as it is now, has the most to do...with the thing that we don't push our son to speak Russian...

Thus, as this quote shows, in Lena's account, the language transmission process in regards to the oldest child in the present seemed to have been partially influenced by the couple's relationship with their country of origin.

In respect to the infant son, Lena's portrayal of her language transmission approach was fragmented, vague, and lacked a rationale. Specifically, the participant pointed out that even though she only conversed in Russian with her three-month old baby ("...I speak Russian with him for sure...it's just natural...it's a private intimate language so...I speak Russian."), she was at loss as to how she would proceed linguistically with that child:

...I'm totally confused what's going to happen with N...I guess I will just let go and I...I'm not going to push anywhere above the...limits of being comfortable myself and seeing my child being be comfortable.

Although Lena did not posit any explicit links between her language experiences with her first- and her second-born child, my impression was that her language transmission uncertainties towards the second child stemmed from her current language experiences with the *oldest* child. Specifically, I wondered if Lena's apparent discomfort with the outcomes of the language transmission process in regards to her oldest child in the present had led her to re-think her language transmission approaches with the youngest child. This topic is discussed in greater detail in the section below.

The outcomes of the language transmission process. Bia's and Lena's portrayals of language transmission outcomes included an assessment of (a) the children's current language skills and (b) the children's relationship with first languages and/or English. Note that, while in Bia's instance, the talk about the aforementioned topics pertained to both of her children, in Lena's account, it related only to her oldest son (who was eight), as her youngest was an infant at the time the interviews.

Before proceeding with the discussion, however, I would like to remind readers of the types of language interactions that were taking place between participants and the children in question in the present time. In Bia's narrative, Spanish was the primary language of communication between mother and children and English the secondary. In Lena's account, language matters seemed to be reversed: The participant reported using (a) English-only or (b) Russian followed by English with her oldest child, depending on the context. For example, for discussions pertaining to school she conversed only in English ("...when he is asking to explain something, like school questions—that totally we cannot explain anything in Russian...He doesn't catch it...so we have to explain in English."). But when expressing maternal feelings, she employed



Russian followed by English (“I guess I use both languages for expressing my love and my attitude...my first impulse would be to say in Russian, and then translate it.”).

Bia’s assessment of her sons’ current language skills was that the two children were balanced bilinguals; that is, that they were as fluent in Spanish as they were in English. “They can speak, no problem, in both languages,” she said. In addition, she pointed out that the children’s relationship with Spanish was a positive one: Both seemed to enjoy the fact that they had learned Spanish in addition to English. The adult child, Bia explained, became particularly aware of the benefits of knowing Spanish after a trip to South America:

My first son...he went to Brazil...and Peru...oh he was so happy,<sup>155</sup> like they don’t believe you, you know, if you told them, “Gosh, you guys...Spanish is good!...this is good background.” They don’t believe you that much until they have to go there and experience it themselves. Same thing happened to my niece. She went to Cuba...she was born here too, never been to a Spanish-speaking country. Went to Cuba last year and oh! She was...”Wow! This is great!”

And her eight-year old son, she continued, felt pleased that the school system valued his knowledge of Spanish:

...he’s being rewarded (at school)...he was asked this year to teach Spanish to his group, to his course, to his classmates. You know? ... He has been all the time like, “Wow! That’s great!”

After finalizing our interviews, I left Bia’s home with the impression that she was quite satisfied with outcomes of her language transmission efforts thus far. First, she thought that it was a “blessing” that the children had could switch the conversation from Spanish to English and vice-versa without any difficulties. Second, she seemed pleased that her sons, particularly her youngest one, had embraced Spanish—not English—as the “natural” language of communication between mother and child:

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<sup>155</sup> Here Bia refers to the fact that her son was happy that he could communicate in Spanish in Peru and understand Portuguese-speaking Brazilians without too much difficulty.

...it's like natural, it comes natural.<sup>156</sup> And if he (referring to youngest son) decides to talk to me in English, many times I just go and don't say anything, and then he corrects himself easily...or sometimes we were arguing and they would start arguing in English. So okay, I'm going to answer (in English)...and then they would say right away "Okay, don't talk to me in English!"...What is it that they...like Spanish better coming from me?...that's probably because it's more natural.

Finally, Bia seemed to be proud of the fact that the siblings never conversed in English and that her oldest child became a partner in her enterprise to nurture transmission of Spanish:

R: So do they speak in Spanish with each other? Or in English?

P: All the time, all the time in Spanish...It's like a rule, they...I don't think they ever, ever speak in English, I don't think...It's like...so strong in both of them, especially my oldest son, he really wanted him (referring to youngest child)...to know Spanish, that he decided that he was not going to talk to him in English, ever.

By contrast, in Lena's instance, the participant viewed her eight-year old son as having insufficient skills in both Russian and English. With respect to Russian, she explained that her son had not only lost much of his written and spoken skills, but also a great deal of his understanding of the language:

...when we came to Canada he was able to read in Russian, yes, he knew how to read...and he spoke fluently. But then slowly he stopped reading and gradually less and less talking and now it's less and less understanding...this year and last year, we (referring to couple) started to respond more and more in English...stuff which is in just the house, little routine things...he knows (in Russian)...yesterday...he...got this high score (at school) and I said...in English "I'm proud of you." Did I say anything (in Russian)? No, I can't say it in Russian, he doesn't know the word "proud" in Russian...

The participant added that, as her son's Russian skills worsened over time, so did his relationship with the language. Not only did the child refuse to speak Russian, she said, but he also felt upset when others, such as Russian-speaking co-nationals in the community, pressured him to do so:

...he's frustrated when he's forced to speak Russian...the Russian community...pushed us into...going to this Russian school, like "all kids go to

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<sup>156</sup> Here she refers to the use of Spanish in mother-child interactions.

Russian school, why your son is not going to Russian school, go to Russian school.” So we started to go to the Russian school...(and) he would just refuse (to go)...He was struggling...and he didn’t like it...so he stopped going...

Similarly, in regards to English, Lena did not feel that her son’s spoken skills were in par with those of Canadian-born children. In spite of having spent half of his life in Canada (he arrived around age four and was now eight) and of embracing English, the child lacked the nuanced English vocabulary and spoke the language with a Russian accent, she said:

R: Is...it fair to say that English is his preferred language...right now?

P: It is! It is his preferred language. The sad thing is that his English is still...his vocabulary is not as rich as it should be for English-speaking eight-year olds, I think...I’ve heard how other English-speaking kids, like native kids...spoke and...they use more...different adjectives and words to express themselves...he doesn’t. Or at least when he communicates with me, he doesn’t use that variety... and...he has a slight accent (speaking English)...he has a “veh”...in his pronunciation more like “vuh.” He doesn’t catch that...girls in school in his class would correct him...and he says, “And they correct me and I don’t hear what’s the difference.”

Lena’s feelings towards her son’s lack of understanding of Russian and vocabulary/pronunciation shortcomings in English seemed to be of sadness and concern, respectively. Concerning Russian, Lena appeared to be mourning the fact that she was no longer able to employ (only) Russian in her language interactions with her son to express herself, particularly her maternal feelings:<sup>157</sup>

...it’s really sometimes...unpleasant when I can’t talk to my own son, with...the only language I know the best and I could express the best, and he doesn’t understand me...but, well, I kind of can stand it, I can learn other ways to be close to him...

And, in relation to English, Lena seemed to be worried about the teasing that her son was enduring at school because of his accent when speaking English:

And...lately, kids at school started to tease him...to make fun of his (English) pronunciation...He was very upset, at the beginning of the year, he was very,

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<sup>157</sup> Recall Lena’s earlier depiction of Russian as a language of emotional expressiveness and intimacy in relation to the private realm.

very upset. He was crying, actually, and I had to talk to the teacher, and I said, “Do you know that kids are making fun of his accent?”...kids...they are very cruel and they make fun of those things a lot...here in Saskatoon he has mostly native speakers as friends...so hopefully his pronunciation will improve a little bit...

To summarize, Bia's and Lena's portrayals of the outcomes of language transmission experiences in the present were opposite to one another in all levels. First, Bia viewed her children as having adequate fluency in her first language and English, and Lena did not. Second, whereas Bia described her children's relationship with her first language as rewarding, and Lena depicted her eight-year old son's relationship with Russian as frustrating. Finally, while Bia seemed to have fulfilled her language transmission goals, namely that the children be as fluent in Spanish as in English, Lena seemed to be struggling with her son's declining understanding of Russian and difficulties with spoken English. My feeling from the interviews was that these undesirable language challenges with the oldest son led Lena to feel uncertain about how to proceed linguistically with the youngest child.

#### 7.2.5 Time Segment 5: Language Transmission Experiences in the Future

Bia's and Lena's portrayals of language transmission experiences in the distant future focused on whether or not participants envisioned their children speaking their first languages later in life. In this regard, the two narratives were brief and divergent: While Bia could not predict if her two sons would keep their Spanish language heritage, Lena anticipated that her eight-year old son might re-establish his declining Russian skills.<sup>158</sup>

Bia, the participant who had nurtured the transmission of Spanish in her household for over two decades now, specified that she was neither concerned nor certain about the viability of Spanish in the long run. “I don't care, to tell you the truth...I don't know...depends where they choose to live...,” was her succinct reply when I asked her how she envisioned her children's Spanish abilities in the distant future. My

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<sup>158</sup> Lena was unable to elaborate on the language future of her infant son. “I'm totally confused what's going to happen with N.,” she said.

interpretation of Bia's voiced disinterest in the topic was not that there was a sudden lack of regard for the long-term survival of Spanish, but, rather, that the participant considered her language "trans-mission" (my expression) completed. As the participant had explained to me at an earlier time in our interviews, in the future, the fate of her sons' Spanish language heritage would lie in their own hands:

...my philosophy for (teaching Spanish)... was that...how to put it briefly...we owe that to our children. It's our duty as grown-ups, to teach what belongs to them. And later...it's going to be their choice, as to what to do with it...

Finally, Lena, the participant who had been purposefully neglecting the transmission of Russian in regards to her oldest son, hinted that, in the long-term, the child might be able to re-gain his Russian abilities:

I kind of tell myself, well, he has some basics of Russian, he was living in Russia for four years of his life, and that's the most sensitive period in language acquisition, so hopefully...at older age, he would be able to catch up the language.

### 7.3 Summary and Discussion

In broad terms, Bia's and Lena's migration and language transmission narratives were opposite to one another in many regards.<sup>159</sup> The general tone of Bia's language narrative, for example, was that of a mother who worked tirelessly to ensure the transmission of her first language to her Canadian-born children in the context of an (originally) involuntary migration. For Bia, Spanish was critical to the well-being of her sons in the sense that she associated the transmission of the language with the children's rightful claim to, and understanding of, their Chilean background. In her words:

...we're talking here about language (but)...it's more than that; it's about where they (the children) come from, so they know that, that's their right, in my mind. To know so that they have a clear picture of where they are going to.

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<sup>159</sup> Because Lena found it difficult to elaborate on language experiences with her infant son, I will base much of the discussion below on how she depicted her language transmission experiences with the oldest child.

Later in Bia's account, it was interesting to note how the participant's decision to embrace the notion of multiculturalism, or cultural pluralism, changed her language transmission philosophy and practices: In addition to Spanish, English was rightfully integrated into the mother and children language repertoire.

By comparison, the overall theme in Lena's narrative (at least in relation to her oldest child) was that of a mother and father who forfeited, to a great extent, the maintenance of their first language in favour the transmission of English and French—the official languages of Canada. Specifically, it seemed to me that Lena's desire for cultural assimilation in the new country, for both herself and her family, played a significant role in her decision to emphasize the transmission of English in particular. More often than not, Lena associated the transmission of English with her oldest son's social and emotional well-being in the context of migration and related maintenance of Russian to the child's unhappiness and social difficulties in Canada. In fact, the participant even linked the transmission of Russian with the possibility of death, when she discussed, for example, the couple's desire that their son should not return to Russia in the future for the mandatory military service.

Bia's and Lena's narratives also opposed one another in the sense that while Bia's language transmission journey seemed to finish in triumph, Lena's language transmission experiences appeared to end negatively. Specifically, Bia not only depicted her sons as having excellent fluency in both Spanish and English near the end of her account, but she also spoke of her children's enjoyment of their Spanish language heritage. By contrast, Lena portrayed her son as having insufficient skills in Russian and English. She also seemed to bemoan the fact that much of the communication between mother-child could no longer be done in the language of family intimacy: Russian. As the participant explained during our interviews, she was generally uncomfortable speaking in English (“I have an accent and I'm embarrassed of this accent...”)

employ Russian with the oldest child if she could (“I’d rather talk to him in Russian than English.”). My hypothesis is that Lena was particularly bothered by her oldest child’s *loss of understanding* of Russian—an outcome that she did not seem to anticipate when the couple began to forfeit the maintenance of that language in favour of the transmission of English (and French).

In spite of the aforementioned differences, there were several similarities in Bia’s and Lena’s accounts that further united their narratives. First, the two participants seemed to view their first languages as the authentic languages of mothering, when they described Russian and Spanish as the languages of “feelings.”<sup>160</sup> That is, for both participants, motherly intimacy, love, and concern were best expressed in their first languages—not English. As such, from my analytical perspective, what seemed to be at stake in Bia’s vigorous nurturing of her children’s overall Spanish skills, and in Lena’s hope that her oldest son would at least retain his understanding of Russian, was the participants’ desire that their children have access to a “full” mother; that is, to a mother who was able to communicate with her children not simply with words, but also with her full body and soul.

Second, Bia and Lena both elaborated on how their children’s need or desire for cultural alignment played a significant role in the language transmission process. When Bia returned with her oldest son to Chile, for example, the child favored the Spanish language and strongly rejected his mother’s year-long attempts to nurture the transmission of English. Likewise, Lena’s first son’s preference for the English language and culture (recall the passage when boy changed his Russian name to “John Smith”, for instance) contributed to the decline of his Russian skills. Thus, in both cases, the participants illustrated the intersubjective nature of the language transmission process,

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<sup>160</sup> See Bia’s and Lena’s portrayals of first languages as languages of intimacy in the private realm in the fourth time segment of the Migration Trajectories section.

by pointing out how their children's language resistance challenged or modified the path of their language transmission journeys.

Third, it was interesting to note how Bia's and Lena's language constructions and relationships with their national and/or cultural backgrounds influenced their language transmission practices accordingly. Bia, the participant who nurtured a very loving relationship with the Spanish language and her Chilean background, favoured the transmission of Spanish. Her determination to pass on Spanish to her first child did not even seem to be challenged in the early 1980's, the time when she depicted Spanish as a language that elicited social intolerance and hostility. On the contrary, Lena, the participant who rejected her Russian origins and who appeared to have a complicated relationship with Russian (recall her portrayals of Russian not only as a language of family intimacy, but also as a language associated with her oldest son's inability to adjust to his Canadian environment) forfeited to a great extent the maintenance of Russian after migration, but seemed to nurture hopes that the boy may regain his full understanding of the language eventually.

Fourth, both Bia's and Lena's accounts resonated in the sense that the manner with which the mothers' described their relationships with their first languages and English appeared to mirror the way with which they talked about their *children's* experiences with these languages. This was particularly evident in Lena's account. For example, when describing her childhood in Russia, the participant talked about how her Russian-born father "pushed" her to learn English. Coincidentally, in the telling of her language transmission experiences with her own son, she specified that English was the language that was emphasized for the couple's Russian-born son. She also spoke of her social discomfort with English in the context of migration (e.g., she disliked her accent). This topic was also discussed in relation to her son: The child was depicted as feeling upset about his Russian-accented English in the school setting. Finally, she described



her rejection of, and negative feelings about, the Russian language in relation to the English-speaking world. This talked resonated with her depictions of her son's refusal to converse in Russian. In a similar vein, Bia talked about how she came to embrace both Spanish and English throughout her language transmission journey. In her narrative, she also explained how both of her Canadian-born children came to enjoy and cherish the languages of their Canadian and Chilean backgrounds.

Finally, Bia's and Lena's language transmission journeys with the first-born children seemed to have influenced their subsequent language experiences with the second-born children. Bia, for example, specified that she felt less threatened by the inclusion of English in the mother-child repertoire with her second child than she did with her first child. And, Lena, who had a well-established language plan for her oldest son, seemed to be at loss when discussing her language transmission plans for her infant child. Specifically, it appeared to me that Lena was in the process of re-evaluating her prevailing language transmission viewpoints because she was discontent with the fact that her oldest boy had lost much of his understanding of Russian. My hypothesis is that Lena wanted her youngest son to be able to at least understand her first language. However, this assumption would need to be confirmed by future research.

### PART III: CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, I focused my attention on the details (or “exotic minutiae,” as Geertz [1977, p.491] would put it) of the language transmission narratives, which were generated from the ethnographic encounters. In the third and final part of the dissertation, I will offer a global synthesis of data. That is, I will also establish connections among the data, the literature review, and the theoretical literature. If I may borrow Geertz’s (1977) terminology again, I will elaborate on the interplay between the ‘experience-near’ (i.e., mothers’ portrayals of their language transmission experiences) and the ‘experience-distant’ (i.e., the conceptual or theoretical lenses employed to examine such depictions) aspects of the interpretive process.

This section is comprised of five chapters. In the first chapter, I will examine mothers’ portrayals of their long-term language transmission goals and experiences and explore what appeared to be at stake in the transmission of multiple languages. Good’s (1994) discussion on the ‘subjunctivizing tactics’<sup>161</sup> will offer the theoretical lenses for this analysis.

In the second chapter, I will elaborate on participants’ depictions of their negotiations with those in their local worlds whom they deemed to play a significant role in the language transmission process, taking into account the formulations of ‘intersubjectivity’ (Kleinman, 1995, 1999), ‘strategies and tactics’ (de Certau, 1988), ‘resistance’ (Kleinman, 1999) as well as Godbout’s (1998) discussion on the theory of social exchanges.

In the third chapter, I will address the dynamics of the language transmission narratives across contexts and time. Specifically, I will examine two interrelated topics:

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<sup>161</sup> With the exception of the Godbout’s (1998) theory of social exchanges and of Kleinman’s (1995, 1999) conceptualization of experience and intersubjectivity, which were detailed in the Introduction section of the thesis, all other concepts specified in this paragraph will be elaborated upon throughout the text.

(1) depictions of the objects of language transmission (i.e., English and first languages) across the sample and (2) portrayals of the language transmission process across plots. Godbout's (1998) formulations about the logic of the gift and of the market will be employed in this discussion. In this chapter, I will also specify which contextual factors appeared to play a prominent role on the shaping of the different language transmission plots.

In the fourth chapter, I will offer a reflection on language transmission as 'moral experience' taking into account (a) the eventfulness of first language transmission experiences and (b) the moral 'appropriateness' of diverse language transmission stances and practices depicted here. Turner's (1986) conceptualization of 'an experience' as well as Kleinman's (1995, 1999) and Shweder's (1991) formulations of morality and ethics will be employed in this section.

Finally, I will present the limitations of this study and the directions for future research in the fifth chapter. Note that links between (a) the literature on language transmission reviewed in the introduction (including the literature on societal discourses towards bilingualism and multilingualism in North America presented in the Methodology chapter) and (b) the findings of the study will be presented throughout the five chapters, whenever appropriate.

## 8. MOTHER'S DESIRE FOR MULTILINGUALISM AND THE SUBJUNCTIVE NATURE OF LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION

“To be in subjunctive mode is...to be trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties.” (Bruner, 1986 cited in Good, 1994)

In spite of the many variations in their language transmission narratives, mothers in the sample appeared to share the same long-term language transmission goal for their children: They all wanted their children to grow up in Canada having fluency in more than one language. Specifically, while five of the thirteen participants hoped that their children would grow up with fluency in at least first languages and English, eight desired for their children to acquire a third language such as French, or perhaps even a fourth language, in addition to first languages and English. Nara's (plot 1) and Lya's (plot 3) narratives provided good illustrations with respect to the desire for multilingualism. Whereas Nara hoped that her Canadian-born baby daughter would grow up with fluency in Korean, English, French, and perhaps even Spanish, Lya focused her efforts on ensuring that her 10-year old Ukrainian-born daughter acquired advanced oral and written skills in Russian, English, and French. Thus, in this research, language transmission was a matter of *and/and* and not of *one or the other*.

In spite of having the transmission of multiple languages as a long-term objective, at one point or another in their narratives, mothers expressed uncertainty about whether or not their language transmission goals would be realized. Lucia (plot 1), who hoped that her Canadian-born baby would grow up with fluency in Spanish, English, and French, illustrated this aspect of the language transmission accounts well when she pointed out that if she and her husband did not manage to convey “the

importance...about languages” to their daughter, the child would probably become a monolingual English speaker in the future. In order to cope with the possibility of not being able to fulfill the goal of multilingualism, mothers appeared to employ in their narratives what Good (1994) has described as “subjunctivizing tactics” (p. 157). The term, which originally appeared in Bruner’s work (1986), relates to the narrative devices that individuals employ to broaden or influence narrative outcomes when the future is perceived to be uncertain, hazardous, or undesirable. Some of the common subjunctivizing tactics aimed at lifting the constraints of reality identified by Good include the following: (a) juxtaposing independent or contrasting plots within a larger narrative in order to enable multiple endings for the same story, (b) making narratives provisional so as to bring about the possibility for change, (c) keeping time horizons open in order to portray the future as a potent source for transformations, and/or (d) highlighting the quest structure of stories to bring attention to potential solutions for challenges.

In this research, mothers seemed to subjunctivize their narratives in the sense that the trans-*mission*, or quest, aspect of their language experiences was emphasized in all accounts. Specifically, mothers appeared to be determined to ensure a bilingual or multilingual—as opposed to English monolingual—future for their children no matter the challenges or obstacles that they faced. The persistence in the multilingual language transmission pursuits was not only illustrated when mothers such as Katya (plot 2) indicated that they would never cease to persuade their children that having two languages was better than only one (“I’ll always try to convince him of that...,” Katya said of her Canadian-born son), but also when mothers attempted to ensure that their children receive formal instruction in, and adequate exposure to, the languages they wanted their children to learn. For example, 7 of the 13 mothers indicated that they had enrolled or planned to enrol their children in French Immersion programs and 7 reported

that their children were either attending weekly first language classes and/or participating in varied social activities with others in their first language networks.

In narratives such as those of Lucia and Olga (plot 1), Nadeje (plot 3), and Lena (plot 4), mothers also seemed to subjunctivize their accounts of language transmission not only in the sense that (a) they presented different—and often competing—versions of their language transmission experiences, but also in that (b) they depicted the future as an untapped, but nonetheless efficient, source of change. Lucia, for example, oscillated between an account in which her Canadian-born daughter would grow up resisting first language transmission efforts and ending up as a monolingual English-speaker and another in which the child would develop an appreciation of different languages and become trilingual, with fluency in Spanish, English, and French. Olga expressed disbelief that her Canadian-born son would be able to acquire proper Russian skills but yet appeared to feel confident that the child would eventually speak Russian and English fluently (She could “not imagine” that her child would become a monolingual English speaker, she said). Similarly, while in some parts of her narrative, Nadeje described her Afghanistan-born daughters as resisting her Dari transmission attempts, showing a strong preference for English, and lacking skills in any language other than English, in others she portrayed them as girls who would become trilingual with skills in Dari, English, and Russian. Finally, Lena’s description of her language transmission journey with regards to her oldest Russian-born son included both a version in which (a) the child would lack Russian skills and speak English with an undesirable accent and another in which (b) the boy would speak English and French fluently as well as possibly regain some of his lost Russian skills. In all these cases, participants did not attempt to resolve or explain the contradictions between opposing language transmission scenarios and/or did not elaborate on how the desirable language transmission changes would come about. By doing so, they made the telling of their narratives provisional and, as a

result, allowed for the possibility of more desirable endings in their language transmission accounts.

And what seemed to be at stake in the transmission of multiple languages? In all accounts, multilingualism appeared to be primarily associated with one level of experience: promising work and life vistas for the children. A common expression employed by mothers in this regard was that the acquisition of multiple languages would “open many doors” for the children in the future. When asked to elaborate on what types of doors they envisioned opened, participants also appeared to employ subjunctivizing tactics in their narratives in the sense that they were elusive with their answers; they would not specify the possibilities that they envisioned. It was as if they wanted to keep the range of future opportunities for their children as open as possible. In this respect, it is possible that, at least in part, current academic discourses on bilingualism popularized by the media—namely, knowledge of different languages are associated with promising work opportunities and financial rewards—may have influenced narratives in this regard. It appeared that the search for a multilingual education for the children (through enrolment in French Immersion programs, for example) seemed to be associated with the mothers’ desire to help their children, who were in a liminal position in the new country, gain access to an advantageous positioning within Canadian society.

Also, it is interesting to note that, in terms of Berry’s acculturation model (1980, 1990, 2003), what appeared to be at stake in the quest for multilingualism was not only integration, but success in a globalized world. As I specified, in some cases, mothers wanted their children to have fluency not only in first languages, English and/or French (the two official languages of the new society), but they also wanted them to acquire skills in languages that they considered to be valuable in a globalized world, such as Spanish. Even in the instances in which the languages in question were first languages, English, and French, it appeared that it was more than successful integration what was

at stake: The goal was to ensure that the children would have a competitive edge in an increasingly globalized world. As one mother pointed out, if her child learned Russian, English, and French, she could enjoy work opportunities in Canada, the U.S., Ukraine, or France. Thus, it appeared that the logic of the market (described in the Introduction) seemed to guide to a great extent the quest for multilingualism.

Note that, in the ten instances in which English was portrayed as a barrier to the mothers' professional and/or social inclusion in Canadian society, it is possible that the idea of multilingualism may also have been associated with mothers' desire that their children have access to social and/or professional opportunities that had been denied to them in the new country. The best illustration of this argument was provided in Nadeje's account. The participant, who had to give up her professional aspirations in Canada, because of the difficulties in having her educational credentials recognized, specified that she was determined to help her children develop fluency in Dari, English, and Russian because she wanted them to be able to pursue all educational and professional opportunities that they wished in their lives.

To conclude, Good's (1994) conceptualization of subjunctivizing tactics was a useful analytical tool not only in respect to the particular ways in which mothers described their multilingual language transmission quests, but it also helped me identify what were some of the stakes involved in this pursuit.



9. LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION AS AN INTERSUBJECTIVE ENTERPRISE:  
RESISTANCE AND COUNTER-RESISTANCE IN THE IMMEDIACY OF THE LOCAL  
WORLDS

As I have specified in the introduction of this study, the topic of minority or second language transmission and use has, in the past, been examined from a theoretical angle that endorses a dichotomy between the social and psychological factors at play in the language transmission process. In this literature (e.g., Landry & Allard, 1992; Landry, Allard, & Deveau, 2007; Landry & Bourhis, 1997, Tannenbaum, 2003), the relationships of power between migrant and non-migrant groups as well as the situational and historical particularities that inform the process of language use and transmission tend to be neglected. This standpoint, which appears to have dominated the field of bilingualism for several decades, seems to have been called into question in the recent past by researchers who employ a post-structuralist or social-constructionist approach (e.g., Woolard, 1998; Pavlenko, 2001) to the study of minority and majority language use and transmission. As I specified in the Introduction, these researchers have underscored the importance of considering the power relationships between minority and majority language groups as well as situational and historical variables in the study of minority language transmission. In other words, these authors argue for a socially contextualized—as opposed to decontextualized—examination of the phenomenon.

The current research adds to the growing body of literature that challenges the self/society dichotomy in the sense that it examines language transmission from an 'intersubjective' standpoint (Kleinman, 1995, 1999). That is, this study offered an in-

depth examination of the contextual embeddedness of personal language transmission experiences by showing how mothers' social interactions in their 'local worlds' (Kleinman, 1999) shaped and re-shaped their language transmission practices and experiences across time and contexts. As the following discussion will show, from the viewpoint of mothers in the study, language transmission was not an idiosyncratic or individualistic process, but rather a social enterprise—one that involved social exchanges with others in the private and public spheres of their local worlds.

Given the intersubjective nature of the language transmission process, the question of who controls, or who is involved, in language transmission matters was also an integral part of language transmission narratives. In particular, the topics of resistance and counter-resistance with respect to language transmission practices and goals were highlighted in all participants' accounts. Specifically, mothers talked about the many obstacles that they encountered, or expected to encounter, in their language transmission journeys and of the strategies that they deployed, or anticipated to employ, in order to remain in control of their language transmission. Before proceeding, however, I would like to describe how Kleinman's (1995) conceptualization of 'resistance' and de Certeau's (1988) theorization of 'strategies and tactics' will be employed in the discussion.

In his analysis of the experience of chronic pain, Kleinman (1995) speaks of two modes of resistance: resistance to political power and resistance as an existential process. While he relates the former to forms of noncompliance against oppressive relationships in the political realm, he depicts the latter in terms of the obstacles that individuals encounter in the course of their existence. As an existential process, Kleinman argues, resistance is resistance to the flow of lived experience:

...people come up against *resistance* to their life plans and practical actions...Resources are limited...(t)he mobilization of force is often inadequate, insufficient to achieve success in critical negotiations...misfortune strikes...Aspirations give away gradually or...in a moment. Loss, fear, menace derail life projects.

The concept of resistance is relevant to this study in the sense that the flow of mothers' language transmission plans and journeys appeared to have been interrupted by a variety of barriers and challenges. For example, mothers such as Miwako (plot 2) and Anee (plot 3) indicated that they would have preferred to communicate with their children in their first languages outside the domestic realm, but did not do so because they felt that the sound of their first languages created discomfort for English-speaking others. The general theme here was that the sound of Japanese was "harsh"<sup>162</sup> for English-speakers. Thus, in this instance, the question of the politics of non-official minority language transmission in Canada appeared to be embedded in the talk of resistance as an existential process. Likewise, all five mothers in plot 3, for instance, indicated their children's actual (or envisioned) unwillingness to employ first languages at home was (or would be) a significant language transmission barrier. In these cases, the politics of minority languages in Canadian society also seem to be intertwined with personal experiences of language transmission, given some participants' reports that their children did not understand why they should learn and/or maintain first languages if the majority of people in Canada spoke English.

Michel de Certeau's (1984) differentiation between tactics and strategies was also useful in the sense that it helped me understand how mothers addressed resistance to their actual or envisioned language transmission plans and goals. Specifically, in the book entitled 'The Practice of Everyday Life,' de Certeau set out to examine the manners with which "consumers"—whom he broadly described as the individuals who are the users (as opposed to makers) of the dominant cultural and economic orders—appropriate and manipulate the established order of things as they are conveyed through the media, politics, urban development, commerce and so forth. He argued the

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<sup>162</sup> This was Anee's (plot 3) expression.

process of “consumption” (i.e., the ways of *using* the products that are imposed on them by the dominant order) could be understood, at least in part, according to the notions of strategy and of tactics. He defined a ‘strategy’ in the following manner:

I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations of exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers, competitors, enemies...) can be managed...it is an effort to delimit one’s own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other. (p. 36)

According to de Certeau (1984), a strategic move entails open resistance to particular social or political forces and an overt negotiation of power relations. The idea of two “armies” from enemy territories confronting each other would be a good illustration of this concept. In this instance, both parties have will and power and a base as well as a spatial location, where they can capitalize on their advantages and prepare their expansionist moves.

By contrast, de Certeau (1984) defined tactics in terms of covert—as opposed to overt—resistance. A tactic, he argued, relates to the ways with which the weak resist the imposed socio-political order by giving the *illusion* of the subjugation or submission. He referred to the example of the Spanish colonizers and the Indigenous population to illustrate the concept:

...the ambiguity that subverted from within the Spanish colonizers’ “success” in imposing their own culture is well known. Submissive, even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often *made* of the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept...their use of the dominant social order deflected its power, which they lacked the means to challenge; they escaped without leaving it. (de Certeau, p. xiii)

Thus, tactics relates to counter-manoeuvres that not only take place within the “enemies’ field of vision” (p. 37), but that also make use of the enemies’ arsenal of weapons. Thus, unlike the users of strategies who engage in open and visible power negotiations, users

of tactics partake in negotiations that are *invisible* (or quasi-invisible) to their enemies “...continually (turning) to their own ends forces alien to them.” (p. xix)

As the following discussion will show, in the narratives in this study, mothers depicted themselves as users of strategies—but not tactics—in their language transmission negotiations with others who offered resistance to their plans. For the most part, they spoke of a world that was governed by a climate of overt—as opposed to covert—negotiations of power with respect to language transmission matters. In spite of the difficulties and obstacles in their language transmission journeys that they encountered in many fronts (e.g., at home when the children refused first languages, in public, when English-speakers were viewed as disapproving of the families’ use of first languages), they seemed to position themselves as individuals who were both able and willing to fight for the control of cherished language transmission goals. By depicting themselves as fighters of their language transmission causes, the mothers appeared to challenge the views that the position of the dominated (which was their position as migrants in a new society) necessarily implies docility or passivity.

A particularly prominent strategy employed by all mothers to annul or weaken the threats to their first language and/or English transmission plans and efforts was that of designating specific social spaces in which only one language—but not the other—would be allowed. For instance, in plot 1, the plot in which mothers were fearful that their young Canadian-born children would become English monolinguals, the home environment was postulated to be an almost exclusively first language-speaking domain with participants ensuring that their young Canadian-born children had as many music, videos, and/or books in first languages as possible. In plot 3, the plot in which the children were depicted as rejecting first language transmission efforts, some mothers talked about how they took their children to first language programs in the community, not only to carve out another social space in which first languages would be dominant,

but also to keep the children in close contact with these languages by making sure that they were at least listening to the sounds of first languages. Note that in some accounts, this strategy also concerned the English language. In the instances in which participants moved to Canada with non-English speaking, school-aged children (e.g., the narratives in plot 3), mothers wanted to ensure that they created proper social spaces within and/or outside their homes so that the children could learn the new language.

The children, on the other hand, were at times depicted as using counter-strategies in the language transmission process in the sense that they were portrayed as defying or breaking important language transmission rules devised by the mothers and/or fathers. For instance, some children were described as speaking English at home even though the home environment had been designated a first language-speaking place only. Another child portrayed as conversing in English with peers in the family's first language network and also in the context of first language classes, to the mother's dismay. Because this display of resistance towards their mothers' first language transmission plans depicted as being overt and visible and not covert (e.g., the mother would talk in first language to the child and the child would respond in English), the operation at stake here also seemed to be that of strategy as opposed to tactics, as per de Certeau's (1984) conceptualization of the terms. Thus, in the cases in which the mothers indicated that their children had developed the ability to express their language desires vocally (e.g., in Miwako's and Katya's instances in plot 2 as well as in the narratives in plots 3 and 4), at one point or another, participants portrayed their children as having an active and powerful voice in language transmission matters.

In the following sections, I will elaborate further not only on the language transmission negotiations between mothers and their children, but also on their language transmission interactions with others in the family and public spheres, taking into

account the notions of 'resistance,' 'strategy,' and 'tactics.' Variations and similarities across narratives will be explored in these respects.

### 9.1 The Family Realm: Language Transmission Negotiations with Husbands, Children, and Grandparents

In the family sphere, mothers identified their husbands, children, and/or the children's grandparents as the parties who were most influential in the language transmission process. The specific ways with which mothers across the sample portrayed the influence of these groups on their language transmission experiences and practices as well as their language transmission negotiations with them are presented below.

Negotiations with Husbands. With the exception of Bia (plot 4) who declined to discuss the role of her partner, the remainder of the sample indicated that their husbands had significant influence in their language transmission experiences. Specifically, these mothers described their partners as playing a key role in the setting of language transmission goals as well as in the establishment of specific language transmission practices. In plot 1, for example, Nara's description of her husband's *urging* her to converse only in Korean with the couple's Canadian-born daughter (recall that he feared that the child would not have sufficient exposure to the language growing up in Canada) was a good illustration of how mothers perceived the fathers' influence in the creation of language transmission practices. In Miwako's and Nora's cases in plots 2 and 3 respectively, participants' portrayals of their (co-national) husbands' strict first language transmission practices (according to participants, their husbands never spoke English with their children so as to discourage them from speaking the language at home) offered another example of the prominent role that fathers played in setting language transmission rules in the domestic realm. Finally, in Lena's case in plot 4, the

mother attributed the critical decisions to (1) focus on the transmission of English and (2) allow English to become a part of the parent-child interactions to her partner at first.

The finding that mothers considered their husbands' language transmission viewpoints as an influential part of the language transmission process resonates with previous studies that take into account the role of the parental unit in the transmission of languages (e.g., Killian & Hegtvedt, 2003; Mushi, 2002; Okita 2001), but contrasts with literature that (a) positions women from minority groups as "the guardians of the home language" (e.g., Burton, 1994), (b) describes first language maintenance as mainly "women's work" (e.g., Chinchaladze & Dragadze, 1994), and/or (c) attributes the responsibility of the "death/shift" of minority languages to mothers (Constantinidou, 1994). In the context of this research, participants depicted language transmission as a process in which both parents were actively engaged.

And how did mothers depict their language transmission negotiations with their husbands? In eight of the twelve instances, participants portrayed them as harmonious—that is, lacking power struggles—not only in the sense that husbands were not perceived to be an obstacle to envisioned language transmission plans but also in that they were seen as supportive of the mothers' strategic language transmission moves. For example, in plot 1—the plot in which mothers were intent on focusing their short-term and long-term language transmission efforts on first languages, but not English—participants explained that their monolingual English-speaking, Canadian-born husbands had not only considered the transmission of English to be unproblematic, but that they had also strongly encouraged them to speak primarily first languages with their Canadian-born children both inside and outside the family realm. Also, in at least four of these eight cases (i.e., Kasumi's in plot 2, Nadeje and Joyce in plot 3, and Lena in plot 4), the pronoun "we" was frequently employed by mothers in their language transmission descriptions so as to convey the couples' agreement with regards to language



transmission goals and/or practices. Thus, in the instances above, language transmission negotiations were described as both symmetric and unproblematic with respect to husbands.

By contrast, in four narratives—in Miwako’s and Katya’s (plot 2) as well as in Nora’s and Anee’s (plot 3)—mothers indicated that their language transmission interactions with their husbands were marked by varying levels of visible power struggles. In these instances, opposition or disagreement appeared to relate—not to long-term language transmission goals (the couples were in agreement that the children should grow up with fluency in at least two languages, participants said)—but rather to short-term language transmission practices, stances and/or rules. In Miwako’s and Katya’s accounts in plot 2, for example, participants spoke of the couples’ divergent language transmission concerns and practices at the outset of their journeys. Similarly, in Nora’s and Anee’s narratives, mothers talked about marital disagreement with regards to what rules should guide the family’s language transmission practices in the private and public spheres, respectively.

The manners with which these four mothers depicted the ensuing language transmission negotiations with their partners were varied. In Katya’s instance (plot 2), the mother reported that she successfully resolved the couple’s language disagreement in *her favour* by calling her Russian husband’s attention to the poor Russian skills of the children of co-nationals in their first language community. In this case, the mother depicted her strategy as successful in the sense her partner had embraced her language transmission stance as his own and discouraged the child from speaking English at home.

In Anee’s narrative (plot 3), the participant reported acquiescing to her husband with regards to language transmission practices *outside* the family realm, only. Specifically, Anee indicated that she eventually came to agree with her husband’s

decision that their family should converse only in English in public spaces after he pointed out to her the discomfort and suspicion of English-speakers in relation to their family's use of Hindi. Interestingly, at a later point in her account, the participant depicted this viewpoint, namely that Hindi was a "harsh-sounding" (her expression) for English speakers, as her own. Thus, Anee's portrayal of her language transmission negotiations with her husband appeared to be opposite to Katya's: While in the latter case, it was the wife's persuasion skills that set the tone for the family's language transmission practices, in the latter, it was the husband's.

In Nora's account (plot 3), the participant offered a more nuanced depiction of the language transmission negotiations between herself and her husband. Specifically, Nora depicted her partner as someone who was adamant that not a word of English be spoken at home. Nora, however, felt strongly that the children (who were Iranian-born and who lacked English skills upon their arrival in Canada) should be able to practice their English at home *on occasion*, but not always, until they developed appropriate fluency in the language. To avoid marital conflict, Nora allowed the children to practice their English with her in the home environment whenever the children's father was absent from home. Thus, in this instance, the mother's strategic move was more veiled in nature in the sense it was exercised in a clandestine fashion. Yet, there was no invisibility in the mother's actions in this instance as the participant explained that her partner was fully aware of her opposing language transmission viewpoints.

Finally, in Miwako's description (plot 2), the participant specified that both she and her partner employed each their own strategies with respect to language transmission matters. The mother, who felt worried about the transmission of both English and Japanese at the outset of her journey, explained that she conversed with her oldest Canadian-born child in both languages at home and in public and that her co-national husband, who was concerned about the transmission of Japanese, spoke that

language only with the child. Thus, in this case, the participant depicted the couple as sharing the view that the combination of opposing language transmission practices would be beneficial for the child.

Negotiations with the children.

“One of the children, Carlos, also stated (in Spanish) that when he grows up he will speak only English because ...*los Ninja Turtles hablan ingles* (the Ninja Turtles speak English)” (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 291)

The children’s actual or anticipated language behaviours and preferences were given a place of prominence in all language transmission accounts, and especially in those instances in which the children’s social life extended beyond the frontiers of the domestic realm, such as those in plots 3 and 4 (cases in which the children were school-aged) and in Miwako’s and Katya’s narratives in plot 2 (instances involving preschooler who had begun participation in English day care or preschool programs). With the exception of Nara in plot 1,<sup>163</sup> the general theme across narratives was that the children resisted, or were expected to resist, first language transmission attempts to varying extents.<sup>164</sup> For these mothers, the children’s increasing autonomy and participation in English-speaking society as they got older marked the outset of their children’s objection to first language transmission plans.

A common theme across the ten narratives in question was that the children viewed, or would view, their mother’s first languages as undesirable and/or useless in the context of their lives in Canada and that they would try to resist first language transmission efforts. Lucia (plot 1) and Nadeje (plot 3) offered useful illustrations of the

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<sup>163</sup> Nara did not anticipate her Canadian-born toddler daughter resisting her first language transmission attempts.

<sup>164</sup> Note that that none of the mothers depicted their children as resisting the acquisition of English. Lena, in plot 4, indicated that her son had *difficulties* with English (e.g., the child spoke the language with a Russian accent), but portrayed the child as wanting to embrace the language.

topic. Lucia, for example, expressed fear that her Canadian-born daughter would not want to communicate in Spanish in the future because she might embrace the standpoint of other children in her first language community that Spanish was “garbage.” And Nadeje (plot 3) described how her Afghan-born daughters often asked her why they should know languages other than English if they lived in Canada.

Another resistance theme that was prevalent in eight of these ten accounts was that the children openly challenged (or were expected to challenge) to varying degrees the rule of employing only first languages with their first language-speaking relatives (e.g., including mothers themselves, fathers, or grandparents) and peers. For instance, some of the counter-strategies employed by the children included the following: (a) replying in English when asked a question in first language (e.g., Lya, plot 3); (b) trying to converse in English with first language-speaking grandparents living outside of Canada and with first language-speaking peers in co-national networks (e.g., Anee, plot 3); and (c) requesting that bedtime stories be read in English (e.g., Katya and Miwako, plot 2).

These findings—namely, that children of linguistic minorities tend to show a preference for the dominant language—is not surprising as it has been well-documented in past literature (e.g., Harding & Riley, 1986; Imbens-Bailey, 1996; Okita, 2001; Wright, Taylor, & Macarthur, 2000; Zhou, 1997). Pavlenko (2002), for example, has argued that the devaluation of bilingualism and praise for English as the language of the powerful and desirable (e.g., Spiderman, Barbie, Little Mermaid and the likes all speak English) by North American media plays a significant role in minority language attrition among children:

Appropriating the voices of superheroes allows these children to represent powerful identities, thus, initiating the process of ‘becoming the other’ in a society that doesn’t value bilingualism or the Spanish language...the youngest learners... attend to and appropriate the most powerful discourses in their immediate environment (p. 291).

In addition, the argument that many mothers in this study did not perceive the social environment in Canadian society, particularly in Saskatoon, as very conducive to the long-term survival of first languages is consistent with the literature on the social standing of non-official minority languages in Canada and in the Prairies reviewed in the Methodology section. As argued by some authors (e.g., Li, 2003), these languages are not necessarily viewed as valuable in mainstream Canadian society, in spite of the constitutional rights of linguistic minorities in the country.

What was quite interesting however, were the nuances in participants' talk regarding their plans to counter their children's actual or anticipated resistance to first languages attempts. In this respect, the twelve narratives varied in the following way: While in nine accounts, mothers intensified efforts to retain control of their first language transmission plans, in two descriptions, participants reported conceding varying degrees of control to their children in this matter.

In Miwako's and Katya's instances in plot 2 and in the five narratives in plot 3, for example, participants indicated that their children's actual or anticipated resistance to first languages had motivated (or would motivate) them to strengthen their first language transmission efforts which included one or more of the following: (a) discouraging the children to speak English at home by consistently replying in first languages, (b) increasing the family's participation in social events in first language networks, (c) highlighting to the children the advantages of bilingualism in globalized world, and/or (d) enrolling the children in first language classes offered by co-national communities in Saskatoon. It appeared that, for these mothers, at that particular time in their journeys, the transmission of first languages was non-negotiable irrespective of their children's actual or anticipated resistance or objections. My hypothesis in this regard is that the apparent inflexibility of this language transmission stance might have been related to the

fact that these mothers were in earlier stages of their language transmission journeys (in all these cases journeys lasted less than five years) and, as such, still had not been challenged enough by their children. It is possible that, over time, the children might have been able to gain greater control of language transmission matters, as they seemed to have done in the cases of the two participants whose language transmission paths spanned a longer period of time: Lena and Bia (plot 4).

In Bia's and Lena's narratives, mothers depicted their children as persuading them to deviate from their language transmission plans. In Bia's account, language transmission experiences with the oldest Canadian-born son (who developed a strong preference for English after commencing school) compelled the participant—who initially depicted herself as being steadfast in her decision *not* to allow English in the mother-child interactions—to *add* English to the mother-child language repertoire. What convinced this mother to make English (in addition to Spanish) a legitimate part of her language exchanges was the realization that her oldest child (who was born in Canada) was unable to convey his excitement about his day at English-speaking school or his delight for particular English songs and games in Spanish. Because Bia wanted her son to be able to express himself in an authentic manner and because she also wanted to be a part of her son's English lifeworld, she lifted the prohibition that only Spanish be spoken between mother and child. Finally, in Lena's description, the oldest son's his lingering difficulties with English as well as his desire to fit in his new English lifeworld (he was Russian-born) seemed to compel the participant to communicate more often in English (a language that she was uncomfortable with) than in Russian with the child. Recall that, even though Lena had prioritized the transmission of English in her journey, this did not mean that she expected or wanted to embrace English as a language of mothering, which she reluctantly did. Thus, in both Bia's and Lena's cases, it appeared that the children's *incapacity* to employ first languages (in Bia's description) or English

(in Lena's narrative) effectively in certain contexts played an important role in the shaping of language transmission practices.

The role of grandparents.

“...for the gift serves above all to establish relations...and a relationship with no hope of return...a one-way relationship, disinterested and motiveless, would be no relationship at all...” (Godbout, 1998, p.7)

Readers will recall that at the outset of this research, I set out to examine to what extent the transmission of first languages would be guided by the logic of the gift. Specifically, I was interested in finding out if the transmission of first languages would be associated with mothers' desire to give continuity to cultural and social bonds—especially intergenerational bonds with co-national grandparents<sup>165</sup>—in the context of migration. In addition, I wanted to explore whether or not mothers experienced this forming of social bonds through first language transmission and maintenance as an obligatory freedom. That is, I wanted to examine if mothers had a sense of filial and/or parental duty in matters of first language transmission.

In this study, the topic of first language transmission as an intergenerational enterprise was discussed by eight of the thirteen mothers. In the five narratives in which the topic did not receive attention, the following situations applied: (a) co-national grandparents were either deceased (Lucia's account in plot 1) or unable to interact with the children because of the refugee status of the family (Nadeje's instance in plot 3); (b) participants were recent newcomers to Canada and did not have time to reflect on the topic to a great extent (in Nora's and Joyce's narratives in plot 3); and (c) concerns towards the well-being of the child in the English-speaking environment prevailed over

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<sup>165</sup> The term `co-national grandparents` refers to both (a) maternal grandparents and/or (b) paternal grandparents in those narratives in which husbands shared the same national origins as mothers.

the issue of intergenerational transmission (Lena's description in plot 4). It is possible that if the context had been different, these five mothers might have focused their talk on the topic of intergenerational language transmission as well. However, with exception of Lena, note that in the aforementioned instances, the obligation to transmit the language that was inherited by the grandparents, the first language, was still a part of the language transmission narratives. That is, the obligation to transmit the gift did not end because the grandparents were deceased or were no longer able to interact with the grandchildren. Even in Lena's case, the transmission of Russian had been resumed after the birth of her second child in Canada. These findings are consistent with Goodbout's (1998) assertion that the cycle of relationships guided by the logic of the gift is uninterrupted across time, crossing different generations.

In the eight descriptions in which the matter of intergenerational language transmission was discussed, all mothers indicated that both (a) a sense of filial duty as well as (b) a desire to (re-) establish family bonds that were challenged by the advent of migration played a significant role in their decision to nurture and/or maintain their children's first language skills in the context of migration.<sup>166</sup> Specifically, it is interesting to note that participants' talk about their sense of filial duty or obligation towards their parents and/or relatives in the countries of origin resonates with Godbout's (1998) argument that in primary social relationships (such as those taking place within the family realm), a "...state of indebtedness is the normal state." (p. 32). For these mothers, it was of the utmost importance that their children (Canadian-born or not) be able to communicate directly in first languages with co-national grandparents who lacked fluency in English (or who preferred to employ first languages with the grandchildren)

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<sup>166</sup> Note in addition to filial duty, many participants also specified in their language transmission narratives that the transmission of first languages was associated with their ability to give their children other gifts such as access to non-Canadian roots, culture, and lifeworlds. This topic will be discussed in the upcoming sections.



and who, for the most part, still lived in their countries of origins. For example, Anee's description (plot 3) of how she whispered Hindi words and phrases to her English-loving son during telephone conversations between the child and her parents so that her son could communicate *directly* with his grandparents illustrated well the function of intergenerational first language transmission in the context of migration. Olga's (plot 1) assertion that her Russian-speaking parents had the "right" (her expression) to communicate with their Canadian-born grandchild in their first language was a good example of the mothers' sense of filial obligation with regards to first language transmission. And, Miwako's talk about her feelings of sadness and shame after she realized that her Canadian-born daughter was unable to converse with Japanese-speaking grandparents in that language highlighted the moral implications of neglecting first language transmission.

Finally, note that in none of the narratives specified above, participants portrayed co-national grandparents as being forceful with respect to the nurturing or maintenance of first languages in the context of migration. With the exception of Miwako (plot 2) and Anee (plot 3), who indicated that co-national grandparents (maternal and paternal in Anee's instance and only paternal in Miwako's case) had expressed appreciation towards their continued first language transmission efforts, in all of the remaining cases, participants portrayed their first language transmission negotiations with co-national grandparents as implicit: They were passing their first languages to their children, not because their parents (or co-national in-laws) had pressured them to do so, but because it was something that they felt they needed, and also wanted, to do. In this respect, findings illustrate Godbout's assertion that the context of gift relationships is guided a a paradoxical logic: *Voluntary* reciprocation is *required* if social bonds are to be sustained.

In the four accounts in which the children had English-speaking, Canadian-born grandparents (in Lucia's, Nara's, and Olga's cases in plot 1 and in Bia's instance in plot

4), the topic of intergenerational language transmission was briefly discussed by three of the four mothers.<sup>167</sup> In these narratives, the talk was focused, not on filial obligation, but on the grandparents' resistance (or lack thereof) to the mothers' first language transmission practices. In two descriptions (Nara's and Bia's), mothers specified that their Canadian in-laws were not only supportive of their attempts to teach their grandchildren first languages, but that they also were proud of the grandchildren's bilingualism. By contrast, in Olga's account, the participant depicted her children's English-speaking grandparents as offering great opposition to the use of Russian in family gatherings. (The language created discomfort and suspicion for them, she said.) In order to address her in-law's resistance, Olga reported recruiting the help of her Canadian-born husband, whom she said convinced his parents to accept (albeit reluctantly) the use of Russian between herself and the couple's children during family reunions. In her narrative, Olga portrayed this intervention as effectively strengthening her language transmission stance in relation to her extended family in Canada.

To conclude this section, I would like make two important observations: First, taken together, participants' portrayals of the roles of grandparents in the language transmission process contribute to the literature in the sense that they offer an "experience-near" perspective, to quote Geertz (1977, p. 481), to a body of literature that tends to examine the topic of intergenerational language transmission from a purely statistical standpoint (e.g., e.g., Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stults, 2002; Chow, 2001; Li, 2001). In spite of offering invaluable—and often sobering—information about the rate of survival of minority languages across generations in multilingual societies (e.g., Li's 2001 analytical review of Canadian censuses, for example, indicated in spite of the increasing multilingual diversity in Canada's migrant population, less than 6.2 per cent of native-

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<sup>167</sup> In one description, Lucia's, the Canadian-born grandparents were deceased.

born Canadians are able to speak a non-official mother tongue), a statistical standpoint fails to shed light on the meaningfulness of the stakes involved in an intergenerational language transmission quest. This research also brought to the foreground some of the ambivalence and moral dilemmas associated with the intergenerational transmission of first languages that is not examined in statistical analyses. For example, some participants such as Miwako (plot 2) and Anee (plot 3) seemed to feel torn, at times, between (a) the transmission of first languages and the creation of intergenerational bonds with co-national grandparents and (b) the transmission of English and the nurturing of meaningful social ties between the children and significant others such as English-speaking friends and peers in Canada.

Second, I would like to call attention to complex system of exchanges across generations that were *simultaneously* at play in the process language transmission. To begin with, the giving of first languages was associated with the gift of communication and, consequently, the establishment of meaningful relationships, between grandparents and children. Additionally, embedded in first language transmission, there was the gift of civilization in relation to the world of the countries of origin and the hope that, as a result, the children would have the capacity to stay bonded with the culture, history, or traditions, for example, of the countries of origins. Finally, as discussed in the results section, in some cases (e.g., Nadeje's and Lya's in plot 3), the giving of first languages was also associated with the gift of prosperity; that is, with the children's ability to develop economic bonds to the countries of origin, should they wish to pursue professional opportunities in the countries where their mothers were born.

## 9.2 The Public Sphere: The Role of First Language Networks, the School System, and the Local Community in Saskatoon

The topic that generated the most discussion across the sample with regards to language transmission experiences in the public realm concerned the social exchanges

that mothers engaged in (a) their first language networks, (b) the school system, and/or (c) the local community in Saskatoon.<sup>168</sup> Portrayals of these social exchanges are presented below.

First Language Networks. The role of first language speech communities in the retention of minority languages in multilingual societies has been well-documented in research (e.g., Clément & Noels, 1992; Hogg & Rigoli, 1996; Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Landry and Bourhis' 1997 model of the determinants of additive and subtractive bilingualism<sup>169</sup> has been particularly influential in this regard, as I argued previously. As I explained in the Introduction, this model postulates that minority language use and retention are positively correlated with one's perceptions of the salience—that is, the ethnolinguistic vitality—of their first language communities in the dominant society.

In this research, all 13 participants seemed to consider their first language speech communities in Saskatoon to have relatively high ethnolinguistic vitality in the sense that they reported having access (if they wished) to an array of formal and/or informal social activities with first language-speaking others in Saskatoon. However, in comparison to previous literature, this study offered a more nuanced picture of the role of first language communities in mothers' language transmission experiences.

First, in 11 of the 13 narratives, mothers offered specific examples of how their engagement in minority language networks had facilitated (or would facilitate) the pursuit of their first language transmission goals. For instance, these participants indicated that the weekly first language classes and/or the social activities (e.g., cultural celebrations, parties) offered by their first language networks not only increased their children's

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<sup>168</sup> Note that with the exception of two mothers, Nora (plot 3) and Bia (plot 4) who mentioned Canada's multiculturalism policy in passing when talking about their language transmission experiences in public, none of the other participants discussed this topic. In the final part of the conclusion, I will discuss this finding to a greater extent.

<sup>169</sup> While additive bilingualism refers to one's ability to retain both their first and second language skills, subtractive bilingualism relates to the loss of a first or second language.

exposure to those languages outside the family realm, but also created opportunities for the children to practice and improve their first language skills. In addition, they also reported benefiting from language transmission advice regarding, for example, what should be the focus of their language transmission efforts, given by more experienced co-nationals who had been in similar language transmission situations in the past. Note that three of the four Russian-speaking mothers (Olga in plot 1, Katya in plot 2, and Lya in plot 3<sup>170</sup>), also depicted the Russian language network in Saskatoon as a being a particularly useful source of first language support because of the “devotion” (Katya’s expression) of its members to the cause of Russian maintenance and transmission. (None of the other mothers in the group depicted their first language-speaking fellows in this particular manner). Thus, for these participants, first language transmission seemed to be viewed as a collective, as opposed to individual, enterprise.

Second, in this research, some portrayals of the role of minority language networks in the transmission of first languages were ambiguous, and not as straightforward as the aforementioned model of ethnolinguistic vitality seems to suggest. Specifically, in accounts such as Lucia’s and Olga’s (plot 1) and Anee’s (plot 3), mothers described their social exchanges in their first language communities as both facilitating *and* hindering the first language transmission process. Lucia and Olga, for example, expressed worry that the negative stance towards first languages espoused by some of the children of co-nationals would be passed on to their Canadian-born children in the context of the children’s interactions with their peers in the network. And Anee explained that her Indian-born son’s resistance to speaking Hindi was accentuated by the fact that most of his playmates in the Hindi-speaking community never employed the language to communicate with each other. According to participant, her child often questioned the

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<sup>170</sup> Recall that Lena (plot 4) chose not to participate in her first language network. I will specify how this participant depicted her relationship with her first language community below.

value of maintaining his Hindi skills in Canada if he could not even employ the language with his Indo-Canadian friends. Therefore, in these three cases, mothers reported experiencing both support *and* resistance from others in their minority language communities with respect to their first language transmission pursuit: While support was attributed to the adults in the network (who taught the first language classes and offered language transmission advice), resistance was depicted as coming from the children of these first language-speaking others (i.e., their children's peers).

Finally, Kasumi (plot 2) and Lena (plot 4) offered the most unusual portrayals concerning the role of their minority language communities in the language transmission process. In Kasumi's case, the participant indicated that co-nationals in the Japanese-speaking community had warned her that she should worry about the transmission of English (but not Japanese) in order to prevent her Canadian-born child from having social difficulties upon his entry in the English-speaking Canadian school system. This piece of advice appeared to have been eagerly embraced by Kasumi not only because of her own English-related social difficulties in Canada, but also because of the evidence offered by the other mothers in the network with regards to their children's difficulties in the school realm. Thus, in Kasumi's account, we have (1) an inverted description of the role of the first language networks in the language transmission process, given the mother's indication that her minority language community had encouraged her to focus on the acquisition of the *majority* language as well as (2) an interesting example of the use of fear (incited in part by first language-speaking others) as a language transmission negotiating strategy.

Unlike the mothers in the sample who considered their participation in first language networks to be (completely or at least partially) helpful in respect to their language transmission pursuits, Lena reported feeling stressed and pressured in her interactions with Russian-speaking others in Saskatoon. In her narrative, this mother

attributed her sense of discomfort to a clash of language transmission standpoints: While she viewed the acquisition of English as more important than the maintenance of Russian, her co-nationals espoused the opposite language transmission stance. As a result, Lena specified that Russian-speaking others in the network pressured the couple to enrol their oldest Russian-born son in Russian lessons and chastised them for not doing so. In order to retain control over her family's language transmission matters, Lena indicated that both she and her husband decided no longer to participate in activities taking place in their minority language community; that is, the strategy deployed to resolve the conflict in this case was withdrawal from the situation. To conclude then, in this particular narrative, the role of the first language network was depicted not as advantageous, but rather as *detrimental* to the language transmission process.

The Canadian school system. The children's actual or anticipated interactions in the Canadian school system were, unquestionably, one of the main factors informing participants' language transmission practices. The role of the school system was described in the following manners: (a) ten mothers associated their children's insertion in the Canadian school environment with resistance to first language transmission attempts and use in the family realm; (b) one (Lena, plot 4) specified that entry in the school system had negatively affected the transmission of English; and (c) another (Bia, plot 4) posited that the school environment was supportive of her first language transmission plans.<sup>171</sup>

In the ten accounts in which the school sphere and its English environment were depicted as interfering with first language transmission plans, participants portrayed the school realm as a powerful force that went against the flow of first language transmission

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<sup>171</sup> Nara in plot 1 did not discuss the topic as she did not envision her Canadian-born daughter as having first language difficulties because of school in the future.

plans.<sup>172</sup> That is, in these cases, the talk did not relate to specific examples of social interactions in the school that created resistance. Comments such as this one made by Bia (plot 4) "...once they begin school, the battle (for first language maintenance) starts..." illustrated the conversation in this regard. As the war metaphor employed by Bia suggests, the school system was depicted as a force to be reckoned with in matters of first language transmission. The language transmission strategies that these mothers employed (or planned to employ) in the battle against the English-speaking school environment were similar to ones described in the previous section concerning the role of the children in the language transmission process: (a) discouraging the children to speak English at home by consistently replying in first languages, (b) increasing the family's participation in social events in first language networks, and/or (c) enrolling the children in first language classes offered by co-national communities in Saskatoon.

In Lena's case (plot 4), the mother explained that the school realm had created resistance to the transmission of English. She offered a concrete example of the types of social interactions at school that interfered with her oldest Russian-born son's acquisition of English: the teasing by English-speaking schoolmates. According to Lena, her son was often criticized because of his Russian-accented English (an accent that the child could not even recognize, much less correct, according to her). This teasing created stress for her son, especially in light of the child's rejection of the Russian language and his great desire to embrace his English lifeworld. To minimize her son's suffering, Lena reported recruiting the help of the child's teacher, who advised the English-speaking classmates to stop with the teasing. She depicted this intervention as somewhat effective but still portrayed herself as powerless in relation to this matter given her

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<sup>172</sup> This statement also applies to the cases in which the children were attending (or were expected to attend) French Immersion schools. In these situations, French was never depicted as a language that interfered with first language transmission, but English was.



inability to help her child resolve the problem (she too had an accent and could not correct his pronunciation).

Of the twelve mothers who described the role of the school system in language transmission, Bia (plot 4) was the only one who depicted the school realm (in the early 2000's) as supportive of her Spanish transmission efforts. According to this participant, the English-speaking teachers at her youngest Canadian-born son's school admired the child's first language skills and even requested his help to teach the language to his classmates. It was a contrast, Bia said, to how English speakers reacted to the Spanish language in the early 1980's when her oldest Canadian-born son was attending school.

Finally, note an important nuance concerning the school system in relation to (a) the five narratives of the mothers who moved to Canada with school-aged children who lacked fluency in English (i.e., those in plot 3) and (b) the three accounts of participants whose toddlers were expected to have little exposure to English at home (i.e., the mothers in plot 2 who were married to men who shared their national and first language backgrounds). In these eight cases, the child's entry in the Canadian-school system was expected to strengthen first language transmission practices in the *distant* future. In the short-term, however, these mothers specified that the school realm had prompted them to emphasize the transmission of English because the mastering of the language was inextricably connected, not only with academic success in the new environment, but also with their children's ability to form meaningful social bonds with English-speaking others, such as classmates and teachers.

Descriptions of interventions employed aimed at facilitating the children's language transition into the Canadian school system in the aforementioned cases included one or more of the following: (a) allowing the children to converse in English at home so that they could practice their newly acquired English skills ( $n = 6$ ), (b) having one of the parents in the family speak English with the children ( $n = 3$ ), (c) enrolling the

children in English-reading book clubs ( $n = 1$ ), (d) enrolling the child in English-speaking day care ( $n = 1$ ), and/or (e) teaching the children English before or after migration ( $n = 2$ ). Note that the only instance in which a child was depicted as resisting the mother's English transmission efforts was Lya's (plot 3). In this case, the participant specified that her Ukrainian-born daughter was disinterested in learning English before, but not after, the move to Canada.

To conclude, take note that none of the mothers who had enrolled (or planned to enroll) their children in French immersion elaborated on the role of the French-speaking environment in regards to the language transmission process. In these narratives, it was the English-speaking lifeworld of the children in these schools that received their attention during the interviews.

Local community in Saskatoon. Ten of the thirteen mothers discussed the role of the local community in Saskatoon in language transmission practices with their children.<sup>173</sup> For the most part, but not always, the local community in Saskatoon referred to English-speaking others in public spaces in the city, such as restaurants or grocery stores. The talk in this regard concerned two distinct, yet interrelated, topics: (1) perceptions of the status of first languages in the local community in respect to English-speaking others and (2) the pattern of first language use with the children and/or husbands in public in light of these perceptions.

Out of the 10 mothers in question, four—Olga, (plot1), Miwako (plot 2), Anee (plot 3), and Lena (plot 4)—depicted their first languages as having a negative social standing in the local community. The general theme across these narratives was that first languages raised suspicion and disapproval and/or created unease in English-

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<sup>173</sup> Lucia and Nara (plot 1) as well as Kasumi (plot 2) were mothers of children younger than 18 months and the topic may not have been as relevant for them since the home environment was the primary lifeworld of the children.

speaking others. Note that in the three of these four cases, portrayals did not seem to be based on explicit language comments made by others, but, rather on mothers' *impressions* of how English speakers reacted to the use of their first languages in public. Miwako and Anee, for example, based their views that their first languages (Japanese and Hindi, respectively) raised suspicion in English speakers on their interpretations of the "looks" (Anee's expression) of English-speaking others when their families employed first languages in places such as restaurants or grocery stores. Similarly, Lena (plot 4) grounded her observation that English speakers disapproved of Russian in the North American film portrayals Russian as the language of the "mafia." Finally, in Olga's situation (plot 1), the view that Russian created unease for English speakers seemed to be based on her experiences with her Canadian extended family, who disapproved of her first language transmission practices with her children.

And what kind of strategies did these four mothers employ in light of their assessment of the social status of their first languages in Saskatoon? Anee (plot 3) talked about strategic retreat. Specifically, she said that her family refrained from using Hindi in public at all times, even in situations in which the conversation concerned only the family—a practice that made her feel very uncomfortable, but which she viewed as necessary. Miwako (plot 2) explained that she talked, but refrained from disciplining, her Canadian-born daughter in Japanese in outings for fear that others would think that she was "abusing" the child. And, Lena described that her strategy was silence, as she felt poorly about both Russian and her Russian-accented English. By not talking, it seemed to me that Lena acted like a chameleon in the new country as others would not be able to identify her national origins if she remained silent. In this respect, her narrative reminded me of Kristeva's (1991) assertion about the migrant's complex relationships with his or her languages in the dominant society: "Thus, between two languages, your realm is silence" (p. 15).

Finally, of the four, Olga (plot 1) was the only mother who appeared to make use of defiance as a strategic move: She specified using Russian with her children in outings at all times. Contrary to Anee, Miwako, and Lena who reported adjusting their language transmission practices to make them suitable to the public realm, Olga explained that she was determined to continue to use Russian with her children in public, even if it created discomfort for English-speaking others or herself. Thus, in these four narratives, the themes of partial or complete subjection (in Anee's, Miwako's, and Lena's cases) as well as of overt defiance (in Olga's instance) were part of the portrayals of first language transmission practices in the local communities.

The remaining six participants (Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Bia,<sup>174</sup> Katya, and Lya) portrayed their first languages (Dari, Farsi, Spanish,<sup>175</sup> and Russian<sup>176</sup>) as having a positive social standing in the local community. The common thread in these accounts was that bilingualism was considered an asset in Canadian society and/or in a globalized world. In Katya's (plot 2) and Lya's (plot 3) narratives, the mothers based their depictions on their social interactions with English speakers. Specifically, Lya's and Katya's explained that English speakers at restaurants or grocery stores, for example, often congratulated them on their use of Russian with their children saying that their children would benefit from growing up bilingual. This finding was particularly interesting in light of Olga's (plot 1) and Lena's (plot 2) portrayals of Russian as a language that elicited *negative*, not positive, responses in English-speaking others. As I examined the data more closely, I began to wonder if the *national backgrounds* of these four Russian-speaking mothers may have informed their contrasting first language transmission experiences. Specifically, while Olga and Lena were from Russia, Lya and Katya were

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<sup>174</sup> Note that in this discussion, I am considering Bia's assessment of the status of Spanish in the 2000's—not in the early 1980's.

<sup>175</sup> Joyce and Bia both had Spanish as their first language.

<sup>176</sup> Katya and Lya both had Russian as their first languages.

from Ukraine. Given that (a) Ukrainian heritage seems to be particularly strong in the province of Saskatchewan and that (b) at times, participants' use of Russian in public appeared to be accompanied by questions regarding their national origins, it is possible that the Russian spoken by the Ukrainian nationals may have been viewed more favourably than the Russian spoken by Russian nationals. However, further research would be necessary to support this argument.

In Bia's account (in plot 4) as well as in Nadeje's, Nora's, and Joyce's narratives (all in plot 3) the talk about the social standing of first languages seemed to rely on the available social discourses about multiculturalism in Canadian society. The best example was offered by Nora, who explained that she was never conscious of speaking Farsi in public because, unlike the U.S., Canada was "a multicultural country" that wanted its migrants to retain their culture and language. Likewise, Bia employed the metaphor of a "salad" (her expression) when conveying her view that all languages had a rightful place in Canadian language "menu" (my expression). Note that in these four cases, the use of first languages in public seemed to take place in neighbourhoods that were populated by large numbers of migrants and/or international students. Thus, it is possible that the specificity of their social milieu—a social space in which linguistic diversity seemed to be a common part of social life—may also have shaped the mothers' first language viewpoints in regards to the public sphere.

Finally, in all of the six accounts in which first languages were described as having a positive standing in the local community, mothers reported employing their first languages with their children and/or their families in public without hesitation.

To conclude, I would like to make a few observations concerning how portrayals of the social standing of first languages in this study may be related to governmental and academic discourses on multiculturalism in Canadian society. As I specified in the literature review, governmental discourses regarding Canada's cultural and linguistic

diversity tends to be positive, depicting multiculturalism as “...an already achieved ideal” (Day, 2000, p. 27). As a result, Day has argued, in spite of the occasional and understandable intolerance towards those migrants of non-European origins, individuals may think that all is well in the world of Canadian multiculturalism. In fact, a recent online report issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada entitled The Current State of Multiculturalism in Canada and Research Themes on Canadian Multiculturalism 2008 – 2010 illustrated Day’s proposition. In this document, research evidence is presented to support the view that the establishment of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988 has succeeded in fostering an environment of acceptance and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity in the country:

At the individual level, surveys indicate that multiculturalism provides a locus for the high level of mutual identification among native-born citizens and immigrants in Canada. In many countries, native-born citizens with a strong sense of national identity or national pride tend to be more distrustful of immigrants, who are seen as a threat to their cherished national identity...But the fact that Canada has officially defined itself as a multicultural nation means that immigrants are a constituent part of the nation that citizens feel pride in.

While the depictions of first languages as a valuable asset in Canadian society offered by a sub-section of the sample in this study may resonate well with the proposition that multiculturalism (and by default multilingualism) in Canada do work, the portrayals of first languages as languages that create suspicion and disapproval in English speakers provided by the other group of mothers do not. For example, Lena’s (plot 4) portrayals of Russian as the language of the “mafia” or as the language of “primitive self” (English was as the language of the “cultured,” she said) suggest that Said’s 1979 commentary about the “positional superiority of the Western world” (p. 7)—that is, the notion that non-European peoples, cultures, and languages are viewed backwards and underdeveloped—may continue to be relevant to the study of language transmission in Canada several decades later.

By the same token, the finding that some of the mothers in the study viewed the social status of their first languages as *positive* in the English-speaking environment and did not consider first language use in their local communities to be problematic adds a layer of complexity to some academic discourses of migrant integration which posit that migrants in Canadian society feel pressure *to conform* to Anglophone (and to a lesser extent Francophone) culture and language. For instance, in an article entitled “Deconstructing Canada’s Discourse of Immigrant Integration,” Li (2003) has posited that if one examines the subtext of the dominant political, immigration, and academic discourses on migrant integration, one will find that the maintenance of cultural specificities in the new social milieu, such as first languages is deemed to be “detrimental to the interests of immigrants and the well being of Canadian society” (Li, p. 12).

While it is possible that the sub-section of the sample who spoke positively of their first language transmission experiences may eventually end up feeling the need to conform to the English language and culture (e.g., if the mothers who lived in culturally diverse neighbourhoods moved to a primarily Anglophone area of the city) and redefine their views of first languages (from valuable to devalued), at that particular stage of their language transmission journeys, the social status and use of first languages was not deemed to be problematic. In addition, the notion of linguistic conformity to the majority language does not seem to be completely applicable to the language transmission narratives in this study, if we consider that (1) the common and broader language transmission goal across the sample was that of bilingualism or multilingualism and (2) in spite of facing a variety of obstacles in their language transmission journeys, mothers never seemed to cease to pursue their language transmission ideals.

In brief, note that the goal of the discussion here is *not* to refute the evidence offered by the literature on migrant integration specified above, especially given the

small sample size in this research and the fact that, for the most part, the language transmission journeys of the mothers in question spanned a relatively short period of time (less than five years). Rather, my objective here was to highlight the contextual nuances and variations regarding the topic of language transmission and migrant integration that are often missing when experience-distant—as opposed to experience-near—approaches are utilized in the examination of the phenomenon.



## 10. LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION AS A PLURAL AND DYNAMIC PROCESS

As indicated in the introduction of the thesis, two important goals in this study were to (1) explore mothers' constructions of the languages in the language transmission process (i.e., the objects of transmission) and (2) examine how they portrayed their language transmission experiences with their children in the context of migration (i.e., the transmission of the objects). In the following sub-sections I will provide an overview of the data with respect to both topics and establish a link between findings and pertinent literature and/or theory, whenever appropriate.

### 10.1 The Plurality of English and First Language Constructions

In order to understand mothers' language transmission experiences, it was important that I explored their viewpoints with respect to both first languages and English—the primary objects of the language transmission process in this research. Rather than offering a single and fixed depiction of either language, all mothers in the study described these languages in plural and dynamic ways: They talked about first languages<sub>es</sub> and Englishes<sub>es</sub>. Further analysis of the data showed that these multiple depictions varied across time (e.g., before and after the move to Canada) and social space (e.g., family, work, school spheres). Thus, the current study differs from previous literature that employs de-contextualized and rigid dichotomies between “heritage” and “non-heritage” languages (e.g., Chow, 2001) or “minority” and “majority” languages (e.g., Hogg & Rigoli, 1996), by highlighting the contextual nuances that are at play in one's relationships with their first and second languages. A global picture of these English and first language portrayals is presented below.

Portrayals of English. Table 10.1 (see p. 332) offers a summary of the images, values, and metaphors that were associated with English across social context and time. One of the noteworthy findings illustrated by this table relates to participants' depictions of their relationship with English before and after the move. Specifically, it seems that, prior to migration, English was viewed as a language of relative social comfort or familiarity by some mothers because they (a) considered themselves to have good academic knowledge of the language ( $n = 8$ ), (b) had employed the language in their work sphere ( $n = 4$ ), and/or (c) had varying levels of exposure to the language in the family realm while growing up in the countries of origin ( $n = 3$ ). After the move to Canada, however, English was portrayed as a problematic language because (a) it limited or impeded the realization of professional goals in the new country ( $n = 7$ ) and/or (b) it created problems in interactions with others in the English-speaking community ( $n = 8$ ). For example, Nadeje's and Nora's (both in plot 3) discussion of the difficulties in passing the English tests required for professional accreditation in Canada offered a good illustration of English as a language of professional obstacles. And, Miwako's (plot 2) detailed description of her feelings of social isolation and incompetence because of her initial lack of fluency in English exemplified well the notion of English as a language of social difficulties.

Note that only in Joyce's (plot 3) and Lena's (plot 4) cases, the depictions of English in the professional realm seemed to remain relatively the same before and after the move: For Lena, English remained a language associated with culture and knowledge; for Joyce, English continued to be the language of her work persona as she continued to carry out her research projects and teaching after the move in English.

Another interesting finding shown in Table 10.1 relates to how depictions of English after the move in relation to the children had quite different meanings depending on social context. Specifically, in relation to the family realm, English was portrayed as

language that *threatened* the survival of first languages in the sense that the children's growing preference and usage of English were posited to interfere with the acquisition or maintenance of first language skills. However, when the academic realm was at stake, English was described as a language that should be *embraced* as its transmission was intricately connected with the children's academic success and social well-being in the English-speaking environment at school. The latter finding, namely that the transmission of English was associated with academic success *and* the children's social well-being in their English lifeworld, challenged to some extent the hypothesis in the introductory chapter which stated that the transmission of English would be primarily informed by the logic of the market. As readers will recall, I initially posited that the transmission of English would be mainly associated with mothers' desire that their children have rightful access to educational, professional, and/or economic opportunities in the new country. Although this was important goal, the data shows that, in ten narratives, the stakes in the transmission of English went well beyond that as the mastering of English was intricately connected with the children's ability not only participate fully in Canadian society, but also to form meaningful social bonds with others in their English lifeworld.

In the three instances in which mothers did not associate the transmission of English with the social and academic well-being in the school realm, the husbands were Canadian-born and the children were younger than two and shared their fathers' national origins (plot 1). In these narratives, mothers had been assured by their partners that their children would have no difficulties learning English during early childhood. As a result, the topic of English transmission and the children's social and academic well-being at school did not seem to be a pressing issue.

Another noteworthy finding was that more than half of the sample ( $n = 7$ ) reported employing English as a language of mothering in varying extents and in different capacities. In Miwako's (plot 2) and Bia's (plot 4) narratives, for example,

English was depicted as a language of discipline. There were two fine variations in this regard. First, while Bia employed English as a language of discipline at home and Miwako used it in the public. Second, whereas Bia reporting using English to garner her children's attention, Miwako specified that she chastised her children in English because she feared that English speakers would think that she was "abusing" her children if she employed Japanese instead. By comparison, in Miwako's, Kasumi's (both in plot 2), Nadeje's, Nora's Joyce's, and Lya's (all in plot 3) accounts, English was employed as a language of mothering in the context of instruction. Specifically, these participants reported engaging in English conversations with their children on limited occasions to help them improve their English skills. Finally, in plot 4, the participants' depictions of English as a language of mothering differed in the following manners: While Bia conversed in English voluntarily whenever she wanted to participate in her children's English lifeworlds (e.g., in the singing of English songs, in the playing of English games), Lena talked in English with her oldest son (e.g., helping with homework, telling stories) not because she chose to, but because the child had lost much of his Russian fluency.

Taken together, these portrayals of English as a language of mothering seem to defy the common sense view that one's first language is the only genuine mother tongue. Bia's account was particularly illustrative of this argument as her narrative showed in rich detail how one's second language, in this case English, may evolve from being a language that was threatening to the survival of a first language in the home environment into an embraced language of meaningful mother-child interactions. The examples above also illustrate well Cook's (2002) argument that second-language users, or in our case, mothers, may also be viewed as "legitimate speakers (of the second language) in their own right"—as opposed to always being treated as "failed native-speakers" (p. 295).

I would also like to highlight some of the less common depictions of English as they too offer rich information regarding how English was conceptualized. In three accounts—Miwako’s, Katya’s (both in plot 2) and Nora’s (plot 3)—English was described as a language of marital disagreement in the sense that the couples had divergent opinions about whether or not the language should be allowed in the family realm. In one narrative, Nara’s (plot 2), English was portrayed as (1) a language that interfered with the mother’s—but not the child’s—ability to interact with English-speakers (the participant felt very poorly about her English) and (2) as a language of embarrassment in regards to her first language network (Nara indicated that her co-nationals spoke English much better than she did and that she felt ashamed that she could not speak the language as well). Anee in plot 3 described English as her family’s language of communication during social outings because the couple worried that Hindi made English speakers uncomfortable. And, Kasumi in plot 2 depicted English as a language whose transmission was supported by Japanese-speaking mothers in her first language network who had school-aged children (this depiction was discussed in detail in the past section).

And did participants establish a link between their experiences with English and their language transmission practices with their children? In Anee’s instance (plot 3), the participants’ discomfort with the English language (she felt she lacked appropriate vocabulary) in the social realm, did not seem to stop her from using English as a language of family communication in the public realm, as I specified above. In the six cases in which mothers depicted English as the preferred/most valued language of the children in first language networks, participants indicated that they had strengthened (or planned to strengthen) their first language transmission practices with their children. Finally, In Miwako’s and Kasumi’s (plot 2) narratives, participants explained that their own English-related social difficulties had strengthened their desire to ensure that their

Canadian-born children developed adequate English skills in the early years of their lives.

In the seven accounts in which English was portrayed as a language of professional obstacles, the link between English experiences and language transmission practices seemed to be prominent. My hypothesis is that the successful transmission of English was particularly important for these mothers because they all envisioned a professional future full of possibilities for their children in Canada or abroad—an outcome that would be unlikely without the mastering of English.

Portrayals of First Languages. Table 10.2 (p. 333) offers a summary of the metaphors, values, and images of how first languages were depicted across time and social context. To begin with, note that depictions of first languages *before* migration were even more limited than the portrayals of English in the same timeframe. Specifically, only four mothers talked about their views of first languages before the move and, in these cases, descriptions were succinct, vague, and restricted to the work realm: When examined from the perspective of migration experiences, first languages seemed to be languages associated with the professional and/or educated selves. My interpretation about the lack of discussion in this respect is that the question surrounding the meanings of first languages acquired greater significance after the move to Canada, when the existence and transmission of these languages were no longer taken for granted by mothers.

In the context of migration, the four most common portrayals of first languages included the following: (a) preferred languages of parenting ( $\underline{n} = 13$ ), (b) languages of intergenerational family bonds ( $\underline{n} = 8$ ), (c) languages of cultural heritage, values, and/or national roots ( $\underline{n} = 7$ ), and (d) languages of resistance in relation to the children ( $\underline{n} = 12$ ). As the first three depictions illustrate, the stakes in the transmission of first languages were portrayed as high. Specifically, as preferred languages of parenting, first

languages were described by mothers as the languages in which they could best express themselves, their maternal love and care for their children. (In plot 4, Bia's indication that she had an array of expressions to comfort her child in Spanish, but not in English, as well as her assertion that she did not "feel English" was very illustrative in this respect.) In addition, as languages of intergenerational family bonds, first languages were viewed by participants as languages that were intricately connected with the children's ability to (re-)establish family ties that had been challenged by the advent of migration with non-Canadian born grandparents and/or relatives ( $n = 8$ ). Finally, as languages that were associated with the passing of cultural heritage, values, and/or national roots ( $n = 7$ ), the transmission of first languages was posited to be critical to the children's ability to form and/or sustain a relationship with their non-Canadian lifeworlds. Thus, in the latter two instances, the logic of the gift—that is, notably the logic of passing to next generation what was given to you before—appeared to be at work in the language transmission process. Specifically, first languages appeared to be a gift not only in the sense that they were linguistic system given to the children, but also in that they were depicted as communication tools that were essential to social bonding with loved ones and/or cultural transmission of non-Canadian roots and culture.<sup>177</sup>

If we juxtapose the fourth and last portrayal of first languages—that of languages of actual or anticipated resistance in regards to the children ( $n = 12$ )<sup>178</sup>—to the first three depictions of the same languages discussed above, we have a telling picture of the family challenge that was a central part of many language transmission narratives. Specifically, on the one hand, we have mothers determined to ensure the transmission

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<sup>177</sup> Note that the social exchanges in the theory of the gift go beyond the transmission of language. According of Godbout (1988) the types of goods that are circulated in the realm of the gift may include presents, invitations, charity, hospitality, donation of organs, blood, inheritance, etc. However, in this study I chose to prioritize the dimension of language.

<sup>178</sup> Recall that Nara in plot 1 was the only participant in the sample who did not anticipate that her child would resist her first language transmission attempts.

of familial, social, and/or cultural bonds to their children through the passing of first languages. On the other, however, we have the children—the primary recipients of the gifts—resisting in varying degrees these language-related gifts, given their occasional or continuous objections to first language transmission.

The children's reluctance to comply with first language transmission goals (which was discussed in the past section) was not the only source of resistance to first language transmission attempts. As the depictions of first languages as languages of negative social standing in the English speaking community suggest, the transmission of first languages in public was viewed as problematic for some mothers who felt uncomfortable employing these languages with their children during outings ( $n = 4$ ). Furthermore, portrayals of first languages as languages that were seldom employed by the children of co-nationals also indicate that, even in a first language-speaking environment, some participants anticipated encountering resistance to first language transmission ( $n = 3$ ). Finally, Olga's description of her first language as a language of disapproval in respect to her Canadian-born in-laws shows that, in addition to the children, Canadian-born grandparents could also be considered to interfere with language transmission plans.

And, which portrayals of first languages in Table 10.2 (p. 333) could be associated with perceptions of first language transmission support? They include those depicting first languages as languages that were continuously nurtured by the adults in the first language communities ( $n = 11$ ) as well as those of first languages as languages that were valued and admired by (a) the English-speaking community at large ( $n = 6$ ), (b) Canadian-born husbands ( $n = 3$ ), (c) Canadian-born grandparents ( $n = 2$ ), and (d) the English-speaking school system ( $n = 1$ ).

Finally, take note of the very interesting and rather unusual depictions of a first language offered by Lena in plot 4, namely, those of (a) Russian as a language of mal-



adjustment in relation to her oldest child in the school realm and (b) Russian as a language that threatened this child's well-being in her country of origin. When the mother had these two specific points of reference (i.e., the school system in Canada and her country of origin) in mind, the Russian language was not the preferred language of mothering or intimacy (as she described it in relation to the domestic sphere), but rather, it was viewed as a language that hindered her son's ability to fit in with other English-speaking Canadian-born children as well as a language of cruel and mandatory military work for young men in Russia. I found these latter portrayals to be particularly interesting because they challenged to some extent the common-sense view that a person's mother tongue should exclusively convey images of goodness, maternal care and love. In the context of the academic sphere in Canada and of the Russian country, it was English—and not Russian—the language associated with the participant's concern towards the emotional and physical well-being of her child.

To conclude, the varying portrayals of first languages and English described in this section lends support to one of the primary theoretical arguments of this thesis, namely that, the objects of language transmission (i.e., first languages and English) would not be fixed or static, but on the contrary, would be open, shifting, and dependent on the social context.

#### 10.1 The Dynamics of the Language Transmission Plots across Time and Social Contexts

Much like the depictions of first languages and English, mothers' portrayals of their language transmission journeys (i.e., their descriptions of language goals, plans, challenges, and interactions) varied across time and social contexts. In this section, I will (1) provide an overview of the "movement" of the language transmission journeys across time in the four language transmission plots and then (2) examine the sorts of contextual factors that appeared to shape the specific dynamics of each of these plots.

### 10.1.1 Portrayals of Language Transmission Journeys across Time

In this section, I will specify the differences across portrayals of language transmission journeys across time.

In plot 1, the talk was focused on the transmission of first languages in the past, present, and future. In this respect, mothers ( $n = 3$ ) offered two contrasting portrayals of their first language experiences. In regards to past and present language transmission exchanges, mothers talked about language transmission journeys that were successful and relatively obstacle-free, given their Canadian-born children's willingness to embrace first languages and their Canadian-born husbands' firm support for the first language transmission task. With respect to the near and distant futures, participants described their first language transmission interactions as problematic in the sense that they envisioned their children resisting their first language attempts (e.g., upon their entry in the Canadian school system) and/or lacking sufficient exposure to these languages in context of Canadian society in the long run.

In plot 2, the talk was centered on both the transmission of first languages and English. The mothers in this plot ( $n = 3$ ) described multiple, albeit slightly different, changes in their language transmission plans and practices with their Canadian-born children in a relatively non-linear fashion. In the early stages of the language transmission process, Miwako and Kasumi specified that they had planned on emphasizing the transmission of English and Japanese and Katya indicated that she intended to focus on the transmission of Russian. When the timeframe related to the children's entry in the Canadian school system in the near future, however, participants specified that their children's acquisition of English would become their priority and that they planned to nurture this language accordingly. In addition, when the distant future in Canada or the children's social exchanges with non-Canadian grandparents in past, present, or future were the points of reference, mothers indicated that they had, or

intended to, strengthen their first language transmission practices. Katya illustrated well the non-linear and interchangeable movement of the language transmission accounts in this plot when she likened it to “waves”, to something that would come and go:

Sometimes the transmission of English mattered most and at other times it was the transmission of first languages what demanded attention and care.

In plot 3 ( $n = 5$ ), the discussion also pertained to the transmission of first languages and English, like it did in plot 2. However, in this plot, the timeline associated with changes in the language transmission process was more straightforward than in the latter plot. Upon arriving in Canada with their co-national children and husbands, participants in plot 3 indicated that the transmission of English took priority over the maintenance of first language skills. After the children mastered the English language and felt confident in their new English-speaking environment, these mothers specified that the transmission of first languages became, or was expected to become, the primary goal of the language transmission process.

Finally, in plot 4, mothers ( $n = 2$ ) talked about language transmission journeys that started with opposite language transmission goals and that ended with transformative language transmission insights and/or practices. Whereas Bia began the language transmission process determined to employ only Spanish, and not English, with her oldest Canadian-born son, Lena was of the view that her Russian-born son's acquisition of English was more important than the maintenance of his Russian skills in the context of migration. At a later time in their narratives, both participants explained that migration events such as those surrounding their sojourns to their countries of origin and the birth of their second child in Canada led them to reconsider, and change, their initial language transmission stances. Specifically, Bia indicated that she decided to embrace Spanish *and* English as legitimate languages of mothering in relation to both her children. And, Lena reported questioning her long-held view that the transmission of

Russian was less important than the acquisition of English in the context of migration. Even though Lena continued to employ English with her oldest son to a great extent, she specified that she only conversed with her youngest Canadian-born in Russian.

Thus, much like the depictions of first languages and English, portrayals of language transmission plots were not static with variations both across the sample. And what kind of contextual and demographic variables appear to underlie the variations or movement of each language transmission plots?

#### 10.1.2 Examining the Variations in the Language Transmission Plots

Examination of the narratives showed that the variations in both the movement and content of the language transmission process were not random. Rather, they seemed to result from a combination of at least three contextual factors: (a) demographic or background characteristics (e.g., the national origins of the children, national origins and first language backgrounds of husbands, the age of the children at the time of the interviews), (b) the migration context (e.g., did participants move to Canada with their families or alone?), and (c) espoused views of the children's relationships with Canada and/or the countries of origin.

For instance, in plot 1—the plot in which participants' husbands and children were both Canadian-born—the mothers' emphasis on first language transmission throughout their narratives spoke of their desire to give continuity to family and cultural bonds that had been challenged by the advent of migration. As readers will recall, Lucia, Nara, and Olga associated the transmission of their first languages with their children's ability to (a) establish meaningful relationship with maternal grandparents who resided in the countries of origin and/or (b) have access to the traditions, values, or history of their non-Canadian heritage. In other words, all three mothers wanted their children to grow up in Canada, feeling culturally bounded to the countries of origin. The Canadian cultural universe of the children seemed to remain in the periphery of the narratives not only

because Canadian-born husbands had assured participants that the children would have no difficulties navigating within Canadian society, but also because the children, who were younger than 20 months, had not yet expanded their horizons beyond the domain of the home environment at the time of the interviews.

In plot 2—the plot in which mothers and fathers shared the same national origins and first language backgrounds, but the children were Canadian-born—the simultaneous concern towards the transmission of first languages and English throughout the descriptions illustrated participants' struggle to help their children become socially and culturally bounded with *both* Canada and the countries of origin. Specifically, in Miwako's, Kasumi's, and Olga's accounts, while the transmission of first languages was associated with the nurturing of family and/or cultural bonds in the countries of origin, the transmission of English was intricately connected with full integration in Canadian society. Contrary to mothers in plot 1, who were assured by their Canadian-born husbands that the couple's children would have no difficulties integrating themselves to Canadian society, participants in plot 2 worried that their children could feel excluded from this society if they did not have sufficient exposure to the English language and culture in the first years of their lives. In the three narratives, the latter concern seemed to be associated with the fact that participants and their husbands shared the same national origins and first language backgrounds. At the same time, mothers in plot 2 also worried about the possibility of their children not being able to retain their linguistic, cultural, and family bonds with non-Canadian grandparents while growing up in Canada. Thus, the on-going language transmission dilemma underlying the simultaneous transmission of first languages and English in these accounts appeared to be the following one: "Should I emphasize the transmission of English and my children's affiliation with Canadian society or should I focus on the transmission of my first language and help my children establish meaningful bonds with the people and culture

that I have left behind?” Accordingly, mothers switched the focus of their language transmission efforts from English to first languages, and vice-versa, whenever the children’s access to either society was at stake.

In plot 3—the plot in which school-aged children migrated to Canada with their parents—the initial focus on the transmission of English reflected the mothers’ desire to help their children function in, and establish order within, their new world of their existence: the Canadian society. The maintenance of first languages and the children’s cultural bonding with the countries of origin in which they were born were not at stake at least at first, not only because the children in question arrived in Canada with fluency in first languages, but also because they had already established family and cultural roots in their birth countries prior to the move to Canada. However, as Nadeje, Nora, Joyce, Anee, and Lya sensed that their children were adapting more and more to the language and culture of the new country, they began to fear that the family and social bonds with the countries of origin were being jeopardized. As a result, they switched (or planned to switch) the focus of their language transmission efforts from English to first languages so as to help their children maintain their prior affiliation with the countries of origin.

In Bia’s and Lena’s narratives in plot 4, the mothers’ own relationship with their countries of origin and/or Canada as well as the length of their language transmission journeys were additional contextual factors that seemed to shape language transmission accounts. Bia, the participant who had been forced to flee her beloved Chile, reported emphasizing the transmission of Spanish (and banning English from her household) at the outset of her language transmission journey not only to because she wanted to give her son access to the Chilean society and its heritage, but also because she wanted to maintain *her* connection with Chile in the context of a forced migration. And Lena, the participant for whom migration had been a desired life event, indicated to me during our interviews that her “rejection” of Russia, which was intensified after a traumatic visit to

the country, was one of the reasons why she had neglected the maintenance of the Russian language with respect to her oldest child. For this mother, what was at stake at the outset of the language transmission process was, above all, her child's *and* her family's ability to embrace and be embraced by the new country.

Later in their accounts, both Bia and Lena described a profound transformation regarding their initial language transmission viewpoints and practices. While Bia specified that she had allowed English (in addition to Spanish) to become part of the mother-child language repertoire with regards to both of her sons, Lena explained that she only spoke Russian with her infant baby and that she now wished that her oldest son had retained some of his Russian skills. In both narratives, the length of the participants' language transmission journeys appeared to have played a significant role in these unexpected language transmission changes. Specifically, Bia and Lena were the only participants in the sample whose language transmission experiences spanned a period longer than five years. As such, these mothers and their children had been exposed to a greater array of language transmission situations in the context of migration than did their counterparts in the sample. In Bia's case, the change occurred after the participant realized the relevance of English to her oldest son, after the child embraced his Canadian environment. Specifically, she understood that if she did not embrace English as a legitimate part of mother-child interactions, she would be excluded from the child's English social life. Thus, at the time of the birth of her second son in Canada, her language transmission outlook had changed significantly. Similarly, in Lena's instance, the participant's realization that her ability to mother her oldest son in Russian had been severely compromised by the years during which the couple neglected the maintenance of the language challenged her earlier viewpoint that her children would not need Russian while growing up in Canada. After her youngest child

was born in Canada, Lena appeared to be intent on helping her baby acquire Russian skills.

Finally, I would like to end this section by drawing attention to the fact that, with the exception of the two participants from Japan in plot 2 (Miwako and Kasumi), none of the remaining mothers within each plot shared the same national/regional origins or first language background.<sup>179</sup> As readers will recall, plot 1 was comprised of mothers from Argentina, South Korea, and Russian ( $n = 3$ ); plot 3 included mothers from Afghanistan, Iran, India, Argentina, and Ukraine ( $n = 5$ ); and plot 4 consisted of mothers from Chile and Russia ( $n = 2$ ). Thus, the three Spanish-speaking mothers from South American countries, for example, were each in a different plot (Lucia and Joyce from Argentina were in plots 1 and 3, respectively and Bia from Chile was in plot 4) and the four Russian-speaking mothers from neighbouring Russian and Ukraine were spread across plot 1 (Olga), plot 2 (Katya), plot 3 (Lya), and plot 4 (Lena). As this discussion shows, for the most part, the common denominator uniting mothers in each language transmission plot in this study related, not to ethnic origins or first language background, but, rather, to contextual factors such as shared personal and family background characteristics, common migration experiences, and similar language transmission viewpoints. This finding—which contrasts with studies that emphasize the role of linguistic or ethnic membership in the study of language use, maintenance, or transmission (e.g., Jia, Aaronson, & Wu, 2002; Mucherah, 2008; Vedder & Virta, 2005)—opens up new research paths in the sense that it underscores for researchers the importance of treating language transmission as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon.

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<sup>179</sup> The third participant in plot 2 was from Ukraine.



## 11. LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION AS MORAL EXPERIENCE

“One`s own language, the mother tongue, is never as libidinally invested as when one lives in a country where a different language is spoken.”

(Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 90)

In this section, my discussion will be twofold. First, I will elaborate on language transmission as moral experience in terms of the *eventfulness* of the experience. Second, I will reflect on the morality of language transmission taking into account the view of morality that speaks about the *rightfulness or wrongness* of human behaviour. The latter reflection was prompted by a question that I was often asked during the research process, namely, that of “which language<sup>180</sup> should migrant mothers be speaking with their children?”

### 11.1 The Eventfulness of Language Transmission

One of the earliest propositions in this study was that the language transmission experiences examined here would belong to the realm of “*an* experience,” as per Turner’s (1986) definition above, or similarly, that they would be akin to Kleinman’s (1999) definition of “moral experience” as an experience in which “...things are at stake and in which ordinary people are deeply engaged stakeholders who have important things to lose, to gain, and to preserve” (p. 362). From the first phone call to participants to the end of the very last interviews, I was struck by the prominence of language transmission experiences in their lives. From those mothers who were eager to begin discussing their language transmission journeys even before we set our first meeting to

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<sup>180</sup> Note that the question was phrased in the singular: It was not a matter of which languages but, rather, of which language to pass on to the children.

those who wanted to meet for a third or perhaps even fourth interview (two were the planned limit), it was evident to me that the subject matter was dear to all and, more importantly, that it required expression.

The great lengths that mothers went to so as to ensure the proper transmission of first languages were also impressive. From the participant who hired a first-language speaking caregiver to help her son learn Russian (Olga), to the one who helped establish the Spanish school in Saskatoon to ensure the formal transmission of the language not only to her children, but also to other children of Hispanic background in the city (Bia), to another who remained steadfast in her Hindi-transmission efforts, in spite of her child's resistance to the language (Anee), it became clear that language "trans-mission" was indeed a "mission."

Finally, efforts to help the children learn English were also as noteworthy as first language transmission attempts. Recall, for example, Nadeje's description of helping her daughters learn English in a hotel room the day after her family's arrival in Canada from a refugee camp or Miwako's simultaneous translation of Japanese words into English during the first year of her daughter's life because of her concern that her child could feel uncomfortable in the English-speaking world, if she did not understand the language.

#### 11.2 Which Language should Migrant Mothers speak with their Children?

The subtitle above illustrates a common question asked by friends or acquaintances in Saskatoon after they learned about the topic of my research. Specifically, these individuals often wanted to know if migrant mothers should be speaking first languages *or* English with their children and if the simultaneous transmission of both languages could cause linguistic "confusion" for the children. From my perspective, I found these questions interesting because they seemed to be guided by a "binary *either/or* position" rather than by a "*both/and* logic," if I may borrow Kvale's (1992, p. 90) expressions. Specifically, it appeared to me that others often placed the

two languages in opposition to one another (i.e., if taught together, they could “confuse” the children), thus excluding the possibility of bilingualism and/or multilingualism as viable options. More importantly, the question of which language to transmit also seemed to be grounded on a moral supposition, namely, that the transmission of one language might be more appropriate, or better, than the transmission of the other. Pavlenko (2002) attributes this monolingual language bias to the dominant language ideologies in North America which presupposes a clear-cut distinction or separation between in-groups and out-groups and their linguistic backgrounds. This particular worldview, she argues, “[does] not reflect the complexity of the modern global world, where more than half of the inhabitants are not only either bilingual or multilingual but also members of multiple ethnic, social, and cultural communities” (p.279). The reflection on the morally laden topic of language transmission will have the following format: First, I will make important differentiations between the ethical and moral realms of human experience; then I will elaborate on the question of language transmission considering these different perspectives on morality.

The dictionary<sup>181</sup> definition of morality describes the term as (a) the standards of conduct accepted as right or proper in society or as (b) virtuous behaviour, that is, behaviour that is consistent with what is deemed to be right or moral. Similarly, the term ethics is commonly employed to denote (a) a set of principles for right conduct, (b) a system of moral values, or (c) the formal study of moral standards and conduct (i.e., moral philosophy). Thus, from this perspective, the meanings attributed to these two terms appear to overlap to some extent and one could assume that they could be easily interchanged with one another.

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<sup>181</sup> The source used was The Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (1995).

Among other authors, Kleinman (1995, 1999) and Shweder (1991), however, have made an argument for a refinement or differentiation between the concepts of ethics and morality.<sup>182</sup> According to these authors, ethics refers to abstract and universal principles which offer guidance for what is deemed to be morally appropriate behaviour across situations and societies. This ethical position, which is also referred to as *axiological ethics* or *ethical universalism*, aims to establish a set of broad and general values that would help individuals identify universal rights and wrongs. Thus, in this stance, the particular context within which a particular action originates has little or no importance in the evaluation of what is deemed to be morally appropriate or inappropriate; rather, the goal is to have a set of de-contextualized, pre-determined moral principles that can be universally and objectively applied in the evaluation of human behaviour. A good example of ethical universalism is the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

Another ethical stance that downplays the specificity of the social context in the evaluation of human behaviour, but that is grounded on a slightly different philosophy than that of ethical universalism, is what is known as *utilitarian ethics*. This school of ethical thought<sup>183</sup> received its impetus with the work of the English philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of Bentham's main propositions was that the value of two alternative actions should be decided, not on the basis of abstract principles, but rather on the principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Thus, the utilitarian view of ethics differs from the axiological, or universal, stance not only in that it is grounded on a hedonistic theory of the value of

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<sup>182</sup> Note that some authors discuss this distinction using different concepts: Métayer (2001 as cited in Plett Martens 2007), for example, speaks of narrow and broad views of morality instead.

<sup>183</sup> According to the online Encyclopedia Britannica, the seeds of ethical utilitarianism can be traced back to the ethics of Aristippus of Cyrene in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and the foundations of ethical universalism to the rival schools of Stoicism and Christianity.

actions (i.e., a theory of pleasure, well-being), but also in that it favours a cost/benefit analysis in the decision of what is deemed to be morally appropriate: The best action is that which will produce the maximum well-being for the maximum number of individuals.

Finally, the *moral stance* differs from both the axiological and utilitarian ethical viewpoints in that it favours the particularities of the context in the assessment of the value of human action. According to Shweder (1991), the moral perspective is guided by a “relational contextualized logic” (p. 123)—that is, a logic that takes into account the specificity of the situation in the appraisal of human behaviour. Within this perspective, the value of actions cannot be extricated from the particular occasions from which they originate and must be determined in accordance to uniqueness of each context. In other words, the moral view of what is deemed to be ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ is context-bound. Thus, in this instance, neither the notion of universal principles (as in axiological ethics) nor the idea of measurement of collective well-being (as in utilitarian ethics) can be the *only* ones used in the assessment of morality.

In broad terms, a good part of the literature concerning the transmission of minority languages in North America (e.g., Chow, 2001; Li, 2001; Mucherah, 2008; Tannenbaum, 2003; Wright, Taylor, & Macarthur, 2000) reviewed in this study appeared to be grounded, at least to some extent, on the utilitarian (and to a lesser extent axiological) tradition of ethics. Specifically, it seems that much research on the field centers its attention on the interrelationship between the well-being of linguistic minorities and the survival rates of minority languages. In other words, utilitarian principles seem to be employed not only in the sense that the literature embraces an experience-distant perspective (i.e., the focus is statistical portraits, not on concrete cases), but also in that the discussion favours the notions of measurement and well-being (i.e., assessment first language transmission rates is directly or indirectly correlated with the idea of linguistic minority well-being).

Tannenbaum (2003), for example, has asserted that the maintenance of first languages is paramount to the overall emotional and cultural well-being of migrant families:

Language maintenance is relevant not only to the survival of minority languages, but also to the psychological reality of immigrants and their families. Language is a crucial aspect of the homeland and the old world, and the mother tongue is often viewed as a positive symbol of cultural pride, as a means of maintaining practical and emotional contact with the homeland and with oneself, and as a tool that strengthens family cohesion. (p. 374)

Likewise, Mucherah (2008) contends that societal support for minority languages not only helps migrants nourish meaningful and vital links with their past but that it also contributes to the overall success and well-being of children of linguistic minorities in the new environment:

One's native language is one of the crucial aspects of staying connected to one's cultural heritage. It is almost the only link between immigrants and their native land...the native language...increases the students' self-esteem, making...academic success more likely. (p. 189)

In the context of indigenous languages, for example, researchers such as Wright, Taylor, and Macarthur (2000) have not only warned us of the negative impact of language loss on viability of indigenous cultures, but also of the alarming rate of subtractive bilingualism in North America:

...(there) are groups for whom replacement of their heritage language with the societally dominant language (English) also spells the end, the death, of the heritage language itself and by extension represents a serious threat to their cultural existence... For many indigenous groups, this issue is already decided. Most of the hundreds of languages spoken in pre-Columbus North America have been lost or now teeter on the brink of extinction..." (p. 64).

Thus, if one took into account the utilitarian perspective on morality, which is an experience-distant point of view, the most likely answer to the question of language transmission would be that migrant mothers should be focusing their efforts on the transmission and maintenance of their first languages, not only because of the high rates of subtractive bilingualism in North America specified in the literature, but also because

of the documented social, emotional, and cultural benefits associated with first language transmission and maintenance.<sup>184</sup>

However, if we were to consider the contextually-embedded moral stance on experience, that is, the experience-near viewpoint, the questions of which language transmission stances and practices are the morally 'appropriate' ones become more complex and plural. Specifically, if we grounded our reply on the varied and multifaceted portrayals of language transmission experiences described in this study, we could not say that the transmission of first languages is always the *only* beneficial, or correct, path in all contexts. For example, given what we now know about Lena's (plot 4) complicated relationship with Russia and her profound maternal concern towards her oldest son's inclusion and socio-psychological well-being in Canada, can we condemn or chastise her for choosing to emphasize the transmission of English over Russian throughout her language transmission journey? And which general theory of minority language transmission praising the benefits of the "one parent/one language" approach could discount Bia' (plot 4) desire to communicate with her children both in English and Spanish so that she could be part of all of her children's lifeworlds? Therefore, given the experience-near view of human action and experience, I would have to say that, in matters of language transmission, "...there are times—not all times yet some times—when permission ought to be granted to diversity and difference," if I may borrow Shweder's quote (p. 29). What this study highlighted was that the mothers' decisions to focus on the transmission of first languages at certain times and on the transmission English at other times are both morally justified, from the perspective of experience-

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<sup>184</sup> Interestingly, Mucherah (2008) has pointed out that in the recent years there have been a growing number of opponents to bilingualism in the U.S. who espouse the view that "...bilingual education harms immigrant children by failing to adequately instruct them in English, which will leave them unprepared for the workplace." (p. 188) This observation shows that there are also some researchers in the field of bilingualism who employ the utilitarian perspective to discourage—rather than encourage—first language transmission.

centered traditions: After all, one of the primary guiding principles underlying the language transmission viewpoints and practices described in this study was a profound maternal concern towards the children's cultural, familial, socio-emotional, and/or academic/social well-being in the context of migration.

To conclude, I would like to note that the purpose of my discussion above is not to reject the experience-distant, or ethical, approach to language transmission but to point out that while the recommendations for first language maintenance seem to be both well-grounded and very appropriate at a collective level, they should not be applied rigidly to *all* concrete cases and situations. Rather, those in charge of social policy and social programs for linguistic minorities should take into account *both* perspectives—ethics and moral experience—when devising recommendations and planning services for these populations.

In concrete terms, what this means is that in addition to relying on research findings concerning the general relationship between first language transmission and migrant well-being, it would also be important that stakeholders assess the particular language transmission viewpoints and worries of the targeted population. The tailoring of generalized programmes (through a needs assessment survey prior to the delivery of the program, for example,) would not only dispel pre-conceived ideas that program facilitators and developers may have with respect to participants (e.g., that all migrant mothers share the same language transmission stances), but it would also ensure that at least part of the relevant language transmission concerns could be properly identified and addressed. As Posavac and Carey (1992), have put it, obtaining the input of stakeholders prior to program development is a worthwhile strategy:

We remind readers that the probability of developing a successful program increases markedly if the important stakeholder groups are involved in the planning...(of) services (p. 116).



In general terms, program planners could employ the ethical stance on language transmission not only to understand issues concerning the ethnolinguistic vitality of minority languages across time and the interrelationship between minority language survival and migrant well-being, but also to inform migrant mothers of the legal and political status of multicultural minorities in Canada. As I specified in an earlier section, only two of the mothers in the sample made mention to Canada's Multiculturalism Act when discussing their language transmission practices in public and none appeared to be aware that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms legally supports the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians. Knowing that one has both the legal right and freedom to maintain their first language (given that one's first language is an integral part of one's multicultural heritage) may ultimately influence the way linguistic minorities view their language transmission enterprise in Canadian society.

## 12. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

“...all texts stand on moving ground...”

(Kohler Riessman, 1993, p. 15)

I would like to begin this section by acknowledging the inevitable transformations that the telling of experiences undergoes during the research process. For this purpose, I will draw attention once again to Bruner’s (1986) important distinction concerning “life as lived” (reality), life as experienced (experience), and “life as told” (expression of experience). As I discussed earlier in the thesis, even though reality, experiences, and expressions are intricately connected with one another, there is an unbridgeable gap among them: Experiences do not perfectly reflect reality and expressions do not flawlessly represent experiences (Crotty, 1998 ; Good, 1994; Mattingly, 2004).

This study centered on the *telling* of language transmission experiences—a telling that was re-ordered and re-shaped on several levels. First, in the process of conveying their experiences to me, mothers in this study appeared to refine—and as a result, constrain to varying extents—their views and understanding of the language transmission process. Lena’s (plot 4) remark of how, prior to the interviews, she had never fully realized how her “rejection of Russian” was connected with her rejection of her country illustrated quite well this argument. Although the format of the interview questions was quite open, my asking about certain aspects of the language transmission process and not others further contributed to shaping of the data presented here.

The process of re-construction or co-construction, however, did not stop at that point. Specifically, participants’ oral discourse was transcribed into a written text, and once more when I engaged in the process of data analysis and interpretation—the stage in which decisions about the “form, ordering, (and) style of presentation” of the data must

be made (Kohler Riessman, 1993, p. 13). Finally, as Rabinow and Sullivan have pointed out (1987, as cited in Kohler Riessman), the re-presentation of a text continues even after a written manuscript reaches its final form for its reading will always be “plurivocal, open to several readings and several constructions” (p. 14). In sum, the idea that I am trying to convey is that one needs to be aware of the “chorus of voices” (Kohler Riessman, p. 16)—including those of the tellers, listeners, transcribers, analysts, and readers of a narrative—that take part in the research meaning-making process.

The fact that the process of re-presenting experience can only offer a biased and limited portrait of experiences, however, does not imply that the exercise of the data analysis and interpretation in qualitative studies like this one is, by default, ruled by rampant subjectivity. As Crotty (1998) has argued, in the constructionist vein of research, “objectivity and subjectivity (are)...indissolubly bound up with each other” (p. 48) because of the investigator’s intent preoccupation with the object of inquiry:

It is...not a question of conjuring up a series of meanings and just imposing them (on the object)...Constructionism takes the object very seriously...Imagination is required, to be sure. There is call for creativity. Yet we are not talking about imagination running wild or untrammelled creativity. There is an ‘exactness’ involved, for we are talking about imagination being exercised and creativity invoked in a precise interplay with *something*. (p. 48)

In this study, a great deal of time (over a year) was spent on the interpretive exercise of meaning-making as well as on the task of establishing how the different narrative plots converged and diverged from one another.

In her book about the crafting of personhood in Japanese society, Doreen Kondo (1990) pointed out that “...conveying the multidimensionality of experience in a linear, discursive medium...” (p. 42) was one of her greatest research challenges. In this project, I was faced with the same difficulty and was unable to escape from the narrative conventions in the Western mode of telling stories. As readers will recall, I structured all of the language transmission plots in a similar way: They have a beginning (past),

middle (present), and end (future). I want to reiterate here that this linear structure was imposed on the data for the sake of clarity and organization only. The actual order that mothers ascribed to their experiences were at times non-linear with the talk about the future preceding the talk about the present or past and so forth. Also, I want to point out to readers that, given the incredible diversity in the sample, it was impossible for me to convey in these pages the full complexity of the mothers' language transmission accounts. There was a "sea of details" that could likely be part of yet another dissertation if I were also to address them. For example, some of the mothers (e.g., Nadeje, Anee, and Lya in plot 3) were not only bilingual, but multilingual. Throughout the interviews I was unable to explore if and how these others languages may have been related to the language transmission process. Thus, because of time constraints, I had to simplify to some extent the complex linguistic profiles in some instances. In this respect, MacPherson and Ghoso (2008) have offered useful research advice:

Multilingual and multicultural experiences are layered and intertwined, generating complex and unpredictable combinations. Immigrants, especially those in the refugee class, arrive in modern host countries like Canada with complex linguistic and cultural profiles, which tend to be reified and reduced under the assumption of a singular ethno-linguistic identity. Their complex cross-cultural and multilingual histories tend to be obscured within the prevailing monolingual, at best, bilingual logic of mainstream society and institutions. (p.189)

It is my hope, however, that I have done at least some justice to the intricacies of the narratives that were offered to me.

My role as a mother-migrant researcher should also be discussed. On the positive side, being "one of them" seemed to give me instant access into my participants' worlds. There was very little difficulty in establishing rapport and the mood of the interviews was very enjoyable. I felt that I had the trust of my participants. However, because I was a fellow migrant-mother, it is possible that there might have been additional and important angles of language transmission experiences that were never discussed. For example, the topic of language transmission interactions between mother

and child in the family realm (my primary interest because of my language transmission experiences with my Canadian-born son) was given a lot of attention by participants and generated much talk. By contrast, the topic of language transmission experiences in relation to English-speaking others outside the domestic sphere was not emphasized. Perhaps if the researcher had been an English-speaking outsider such a theme, or different aspects of the phenomenon, might have received more attention. Thus, there could be important aspects of the language transmission in migration that were not fully explored in this study.

Finally, I would like to address the specificity of the group of mothers who participated in this study. Specifically, because the sample was small ( $n = 13$ ), self-selected, not representative of any particular nationality, and residentially-located in Saskatoon, one needs to be aware that broad generalizations of findings to the much broader group of migrant mothers in Canada are not warranted. (And this was not the goal of this study, anyway.) Furthermore, take note that the 13 narratives that were examined here belonged to mothers whose migration situations were relatively stable. That is, in spite of their unique migration challenges, all participants in this study could focus on language transmission matters. For two mothers whom I had a chance to meet, but whose experiences were not addressed in the research, the issue of language transmission was secondary to much more pressing life matters.<sup>185</sup> For a mother who came to Canada as a refugee from Sudan, for example, the recent trauma of the refugee camp experience and the despair over the impossibility of reuniting with extended family members who were left behind were the issues that demanded immediate expression. For another mother from Colombia who had been in Canada for just over a year, it was

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<sup>185</sup> Note that these mothers initially expressed interest in discussing their language transmission experiences. However, when we actually met, it became clear that language transmission was not their primary migration concern.

the linguistic and social marginalization from Canadian society what affected her the most. Canadians never understood her English, she said, and the agonizing loneliness of her new life made her feel depressed. Thus, the relevance of the topic of language transmission experiences for migrant mothers cannot be taken as a given; rather, its importance may be bound to the contextual particularities of different migration journeys.

In spite of its limitations, this research has generated new themes that could be studied more extensively in the future. For example, additional studies could explore in greater detail the types of profound transformations in language transmission worldviews and practices that take place in those journeys that span a longer period of time. In this study, the only narratives that fell into this category were those of Bia and Lena in plot 4. Specifically, in their instances, the language transmission experiences had been longer than five years and a decade, respectively, and the depicted changes with regards to deeply-rooted language transmission philosophies and practices were fascinating to listen to.

Another research area that requires further attention relates to the dynamics of language transmission practices *outside* of the home environment. In this study, language transmission interactions in the domestic realm were emphasized and talk about how mother-child language transmission interactions changed across different social settings (e.g., at school, at the doctor's office, in functions with English-speaking people) generated some, but not a great deal of discussion. This was likely because (a) many of the children were preschoolers and (b) some of the school-aged children in the sample had not lived in Canada for long. Additionally, I would be curious to read about the language transmission challenges of migrant mothers who live in urban centers in Canada that have greater multicultural and multilingual diversity than Saskatoon. For example, a recent trip to Richmond, B.C., left me convinced that Chinese-speaking mothers in that area would have much less difficulty than the mothers in Saskatoon

transmitting their first languages, given the high levels of ethnolinguistic vitality of their first languages in the region.

The field of language transmission could also benefit from additional studies focusing on the role of the fathers<sup>186</sup> in the language transmission process. Although the topic was addressed here, portrayals of the paternal influence were offered by the mothers—and not by the fathers themselves. As the findings of the study suggest, fathers played a prominent role in the language transmission process and their language transmission viewpoints and experiences should also be examined from their perspective. In fact, while reviewing the literature, I was unable to find a single study focused on this topic. Note also that the majority of mothers interviewed in this research depicted their husbands as supportive of their language transmission efforts and goals. The question of marital discord with regards to language transmission goals and its consequences for the language transmission process is another unexplored and fertile research area. For example, after finalizing the process of data collection in this study, I met a migrant mother (she was not a participant) who was married to a monolingual English-speaking man who had a great dislike for her first language. Whenever this woman spoke her first language with the couple's young children or whenever the children employed that language, the father felt quite angry and lashed out at the family. Thus, the woman confided in me that she spoke her first language with her children in secrecy (as she felt that her "mothering" English was limited) and used English whenever her partner was around. One of the serious consequences of this couple's language transmission discord was that their oldest child, who was about 4, stopped conversing in both English and his mother's first language. Rather, he *invented* a language of his own—a language which no one could understand, but himself—to talk

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<sup>186</sup> Here I refer to both migrant men and men whose partners are migrant women.

with others. While this may be an unusual situation, it does underscore the many complexities of the phenomenon of language transmission in migration that need yet to be examined.

To conclude, additional qualitative studies concentrating on the recipients of the language transmission process—the children—provide exciting research possibilities, especially if we take into account the social positioning of children in gift relationships in the modern age. As Godbout (1998) has argued, the modern child is one to whom all must be given:

Never, perhaps, has there existed at the center of society an asymmetrical relationship so constant, intense, and long-standing. Today a child can remain on the receiving end of a one-way gift-giving relationship for over twenty years. The gift to the child may be the quintessential form taken by the modern gift, and the debt incurred the most difficult to assume. (pp. 40, 41)

In this research, the giving of languages was situated in a migration context in which many sacrifices had been made for the children. In many accounts, mothers felt that the professional, familial, and cultural losses that they had experienced in migration would be compensated by a bright and promising future for their children in the new country. The transmission of first languages, the transmission of English, and the desire for multilingualism all appeared to be related to that. The matter of how children experience these language gifts from their migrant parents, their responses to such gifts (e.g., do they embrace, reject, and/or reciprocate the languages that are being transmitted), and their strategies for addressing the symbolic debt incurred in the language transmission process would all make fascinating research topics.



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Table 10.1

Depictions of English across Time and Social Contexts

Depictions of English <i>before</i> the Move						
<b>Educational Sphere</b>	<b>Professional Sphere</b>	<b>Family Sphere</b>				
Language of fair or considerable academic skill (n = 8)	Language of the professional self (n = 4)	Language of the family (n = 3)				
Language of academic deficiency (n = 3)	Language of the cultured/educated self (n = 1)					
Depictions of English <i>after</i> the Move						
<b>Family Sphere</b>	<b>Work Sphere</b>	<b>School Sphere</b>	<b>First language Community</b>	<b>English-speaking community</b>		
Language of guaranteed transmission in the long run (n = 12)	Language of professional limitations or difficulties (n = 7)	Language of academic success and social well-being in relation to children (n = 10)	Language preferred and/or valued by children of co-nationals (n = 6)	Language of social discomfort and difficulties (n = 8)		
Language preferred and/or valued by children (n = 11)	Language of professional self (n = 1)	Language of guaranteed transmission in relation to children (n = 3)	Language of embarrassment (n = 1)	Language of family communication (n = 1)		
Language of parenting (n = 8)			Language supported by co-nationals (n = 1)	Language of discipline in relation to child (n = 1)		
Language of certain transmission in early childhood (n = 3)	Language of the cultured/educated self (n = 1)	Language of social difficulties re <i>mother</i> and English-speaking others (n = 1)				
Language of marital disagreement (n = 3)						



Table 10.2

Depictions of First Languages across Time and Social Contexts

Depictions of First Languages <i>before</i> the Move						
Work Sphere						
Languages of the professional, educated self  (n = 5)						
Depictions of First Languages <i>after</i> the Move						
Family Sphere	School Sphere	First Language Communities	Countries of Origin	English-speaking community		
Preferred languages of parenting, of expression of maternal love  (n = 13)	Language of mal-adjustment re child  (n = 1)	Languages that require nurturing  (n = 11)	Languages of cultural heritage, values, and/or national roots  (n = 7)	Languages of positive social standing  (n = 6)		
Language of actual or anticipated resistance in relation to the children  (n = 12)	Language of value/admiration  (n = 1)	Language seldom employed by children of co-nationals  (n = 3)	Language of threat re child's well-being  (n = 1)	Languages negative social standing  (n = 4)		
Languages of intergenerational family bonds  (n = 8)						
Languages admired by Canadian-born husbands  (n = 3)						
Languages of value/admiration re Canadian-born grandparents  (n = 2)						
Language of disapproval re to Canadian-born grandparents  (n = 1)						

Appendix A:  
Michael Crotty's (1998) Foundations of Social Research Framework

<i>Epistemology</i>	<i>Theoretical Perspective</i>	<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Methods</i>
Objectivism Constructionism Subjectivism ( <i>and their variants</i> )	Positivism (and post-positivism) Interpretivism -Symbolic interactionism -Phenomenology -Hermeneutics Critical inquiry Feminism Postmodernism <i>etc.</i>	Experimental research Survey research Ethnography Phenomenological research Grounded theory Heuristic inquiry Action research Discourse analysis Feminist standpoint research <i>etc.</i>	Sampling Measurement and scaling Questionnaire Observation -participant -non-participant Interview Focus group Case study Life history Narrative Visual ethnographic methods Statistical analysis Data reduction Theme identification Comparative analysis Cognitive mapping Interpretative methods Document analysis Content analysis Conversation analysis <i>etc.</i>

Appendix B:  
Participant Information Sheet

Attention: MOTHERS WHO IMMIGRATED

How do you speak with your children?

- Do you primarily speak your **first language** (your mother-tongue) with your children?
- Do you primarily speak your **second language** (i.e., English) with your children?
- Do you speak both your **first language** AND your **second language** (i.e., your mother-tongue and English) with your children?

If you answered YES to any of the questions, you may consider participating in the following study:

**Purpose of the Study:**

- To explore the language experiences between mothers and their children.

**Who may participate?** Women who immigrated to Canada, who are mothers, and who meet these criteria:

- Have landed or immigrant status, or Canadian citizenship
- Live in Saskatchewan
- Have English as a second language
- Feel comfortable discussing their language experiences in English

**How?**

- 2 interviews of approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Participation is voluntary and responses will be kept confidential.

**Why?**

- Raquel Faria Chapdelaine, the researcher for the study, is also a mother who immigrated to Saskatoon. Because not many studies have examined language experiences focusing on the mothers' perspectives, Raquel would like to explore this important topic as part of her Ph.D. studies in Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan.

**Contact Information:** Contact Raquel at ----- or e-mail her at -----.

Appendix C:  
E-mail Advertisement

August 27, 2004

Dear Sir/Madam:

My name is Raquel Faria Chapdelaine and I am a doctoral candidate in the Dept. of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. I am writing to let you know about a research project that I am hoping to undertake, and to ask for your help in identifying individuals who may be interested in being part of this project. The goal of the research project is to explore the language transmission experiences of mothers who have migrated to Canada, and who are now living in Saskatoon. In particular, I am interested in examining the following types of language transmission experiences:

1. Experiences of mothers who are primarily teaching their children their first languages (i.e., their mother-tongues)
2. Experiences of mothers who are primarily teaching their children their second language (in this study, the second language is English)
3. Experiences of mothers who are teaching their children both their first and second languages (i.e., both their mother-tongues and English).

My interest in this research topic originated from my personal experiences of immigrating to Canada and becoming a mother while living in Saskatoon. After giving birth to my son, I became very interested in issues related to child bilingualism in a migrant context and tried to find as much information as I could on the topic. After reviewing the literature, I was surprised to find only few studies examining the meanings of different language transmission choices and practices between migrant mothers and their children. Thus, I decided to research this topic as part of my dissertation project.

In the next couple of weeks, I will be calling your office to find out if you think that any of the migrant mothers belonging to your organization may be possibly interested in sitting down for a couple of interviews with me to offer their perspectives on this topic. These interviews will be kept confidential and are open-ended in design. They should take approximately 60 to 90 minutes each. All participants will be informed of their rights to consent and withdraw. If you think that there may be interested individuals in your organization, I would like to meet with you to discuss the eligibility criteria for the study, and talk about the possibility of sending a letter to potential participants to inform them of the study. In this letter, we would provide participants with details about the study as well as with my contact information, so that they could call me if they were interested in participating.

Finally, I would like to let you know that this research project has been approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan on August 12, 2004. I thank you beforehand for your attention to this matter and look forward to discussing this project with you sometime soon. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,  
Raquel Faria Chapdelaine  
Ph.D. Candidate

Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan  
phone: ---- - e-mail: ----

## Appendix D: Interview Schedule

### 1. Interview Schedule

The interview questions specified below were asked in either one or two interview meetings with participants. The follow-up probes specified after each question were asked when participants needed help elaborating their answers. Please note that the questions were not necessarily asked in the order specified below. Part I of the interview refers to topics related to the context of language transmission. Part II explores topics that are directly associated with the experiences of language and of language transmission. Part III examines additional topics related to language transmission experiences such as culture, religion, discourses on minority languages, and future plans.

#### **Introduction:**

- Greetings / Description of the research
- Procedures / Consent and confidentiality / Recording permission

***Directions:*** *I would like to understand your language experiences taking into consideration many other aspects of your life such as your experience of immigration, your relationships with your family, your life in Saskatoon, etc.. So, I'll be asking you many questions that can be directly or indirectly related to your language experiences. Also, feel free to add anything that you feel is important for me to understand your language experiences.*

#### ***PART I: The Context of Language Transmission Experiences***

##### Topic 1: Immigration Process

1. Tell me about your life before you moved to Canada.
  - 1.1 What did you do? (Work? Study? Stayed home?)
  - 1.2 How was your life before you moved to Canada?
2. How did you come to Canada?
  - 2.1 What were the reasons for moving to Canada?
  - 2.2 What were your feelings about immigrating?
  - 2.3 What did family and friends think about the news that you were immigrating?
3. Tell me about your arrival in Canada.
  - 3.1 Where did you live at first?
  - 3.2 When did you come to Saskatoon?
  - 3.3 How was the adjustment process?

##### Topic 2: Family of Origin, In-laws, and Husbands/Partners

4. Tell me about the family you were born in (e.g., parents, siblings, extended family)

4.1 Who are they?

4.2 What do/did they do for a living?

4.3 Where do/did they live?

5. How was your relationship with them before immigration?

6. How is your relationship with them now?

6.1 How often do you see/talk to them?

6.2 How do you keep in touch with them?

7. Tell me about your husband/partner's family.

7.1 Who are they?

7.2 What do/did they do for a living?

7.3 Where do/did they live?

8. How is your relationship with your husband/partner's family?

9. Tell me about your husband/partner.

9.1 How did you meet?

9.2 How was the process of getting married?

9.3 How long have you been together?

### Topic 3: Self with Regards to Immigration and Work

10. Tell me about yourself.

11. How would you describe yourself before and after coming to Canada?

12. How would you describe yourself after coming to Canada?

12.1. Have you changed as a result of the experience of immigration? If yes, how?

13. Did you work in your country of origin? If yes, what do/did you do for a living?

13.1 What made you choose this line of work?

13.2 How do you like your work?

13.3 Would you like to be doing a different type of work? If yes, what?

### Topic 4: Life in Saskatoon and Relationship with Country of Origin

14. How would you describe your life in Saskatoon now?

14.1 Tell me about where you live, about your neighbors and friends.

15. Do you have family living in Saskatoon and/or Canada? If yes, who are they? Where do they live? How often do you interact with them?

16. (If applicable) Tell me about your work here in Saskatoon.
17. What do you like and what do you dislike about life in Saskatoon?
18. What is your relationship with your country of origin now that you have immigrated?
- 18.1 Are you able to go back and visit?  
- If yes, how often do you visit? How would you describe these visits?  
- If no, do you wish you could visit? And, how do you deal with the impossibility of a visit?
- 18.2 What do you miss about your country of origin?
- 18.3 How do you keep in touch?
19. What do you like and what do you dislike about your country of origin?

***PART II: Experiences of Language and Language Transmission***

Topic 5: First Language(s) of Mothers, Fathers, and of Family of Origin

20. What is your first language?
21. What language(s) did you speak growing up?
22. What language(s) did you speak with your family of origin (e.g., parents, siblings) as you were growing up? What language(s) did your family speak with you?
23. What language(s) did your husband/partner speak with his family of origin (e.g., parents, siblings) as he was growing up? What language(s) did his family speak with him?
24. What language(s) does both your and your husband/partner's family of origins speak?
25. What language do you speak with your husband/partner's family of origin?

Topic 6: First Language Use and Experiences in Saskatoon

26. Tell me about your experiences with (participant's first language) here in Saskatoon.
27. Are you able to employ your first language here? If yes, with whom?
28. How often and in what situations can you speak your first language?
29. How comfortable are you when you employ this language at home and in public?
30. How would you define (name of first language) now that you have immigrated? (e.g., Is it still a first language or a mother tongue? Has it become a second language?)



### Topic 7: English Use and Experiences

31. Tell me about your experiences with the English language.
32. When and where did you first learn English?
33. How would you describe the process of learning English?
34. How do you feel about your abilities to speak English now?
35. How often and in what situations do you speak English?
36. In general, how do you feel about English?
37. How would you define the English language? (e.g., Is it a second language? Has it become a first language?)
38. How does your family of origin feel about English?
39. (If applicable) How does your husband/partner's family of origin feel about English?

### Topic 8: Motherhood, Pregnancy, and Child/Children

40. Tell me about the experience of becoming a mother.
  - 40.1 How did you feel about it?
  - 40.2 How was the process of becoming a mother?
  - 40.3 Are there plans for more children?
41. Tell me about your child/children.
  - 41.1 How would you describe them?
  - 41.2 What are they like?
  - 41.2 Do they go to school/daycare?
42. How was the birth of your children?
  - 42.1 How was/were your child/children welcomed by both yours and your husband/partner's families?
  - 42.2 What were the expectations for this/these child/children?
43. How was/were the name(s) of the child/children chosen?
44. How are your child/children social interactions with:
  - Your family of origin
  - Your husband/partner's family of origin
45. How often does/do your child/children interact with both yours and your husband/partner's family? How do you feel about these interactions?

Topic 9: Language Transmission Practices and Experiences with Child/Children

46. What language(s) do you primarily speak with your child/children?
47. How was the decision to speak this/these language(s) made?
48. Who played important roles in this language decision/choice?
49. How does/did you husband/partner feel about the language decision/choice?
50. How do the grandparents feel about the language decision/choice?
51. How do you feel about this language decision/choice?
52. In what situations do you speak (participant's first language) and English with your child/children?
53. How do you feel about speaking this (these) language(s) with your child/children?
54. How comfortable do you feel about speaking (first language) and English with your child/children in public? (e.g., at the park, at school)
55. In linguistic terms, how would you describe you child/children?
  - 55.1 Are they monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual?
  - 55.2 How do you perceive their language competence regarding (participant's first language) and English?
56. What are your child/children language(s) preference(s)? How do you feel about these preferences?
57. How are your child/children language practices with the following individuals:
  - you
  - your husband/partner
  - siblings
  - grandparents
  - extended family
  - child/children's friends, schoolmates, playmates
58. How do you feel about these language practices?
59. What are yours and your husband/partner's language expectations for your child?
60. How do the following individuals respond when you speak (participant's first language) with your child:
  - your husband/partner
  - your family of origin
  - your husband/partner's family of origin
  - your child's daycare provider, school teachers, doctors, nurses

61. (Question was asked if mothers had more than one child) How would you describe your language experiences with each of your children?

61.1 Are these language experiences different? If yes, how are they different?

61.2 Did/do you do anything differently with your second/third/child? Explain.

61.3 What did you learn from language experiences with your first child?

### ***PART III: Additional Topics***

#### Topic 10: Culture

62. Tell me about the main cultural/life differences you encountered here in Canada

63. What aspects of Canadian culture/life have you embraced?

64. What parts of (country of origin) culture/life do you maintain in your house?

64.1 How important is it to maintain these parts of culture/life alive?

65. How do you define your cultural identity and/or your nationality now that you have immigrated to Canada?

66. How do you define your child/children's cultural identity and/or your nationality now?

#### Topic 11: Religion

67. Tell me about your religious beliefs

67.1 Are you able to practice your religion here?

67.2 How important is your first language with regards to your religion?

68. Are you teaching your child/children your religion?

#### Topic 12: Discourses on Minority Languages

69. How supportive do you think Canadian/Saskatoonian society is of minority languages?

#### Topic 13: Future

70. What are your plans for the future?

70.1 Where do you think you'll be living in the future? What about your family?

70.2 What language will you be speaking mainly with your family?

70.3 What will you be doing?

71. How do you see the future of your child/children?

71.1 Where will the child/children be living?

71.2 Will the child/children marry? Who? A Canadian or a (mother's first nationality)?

72. What language(s) will your child/children be able to speak?
73. What language(s) would your child/children speak with their own children?
74. How would you feel about this (these) language(s) choice?
75. Is there anything else you would like to add to the interview today?

Appendix E:  
Demographic and Background Survey

In this survey, participants answered general demographic questions about themselves, their husbands/partners, their children, and extended families. This information was later employed in the description of the sample

**Directions:** *I would like you to fill out this survey. It has general questions about yourself and your family and your migration experiences. This information will help me describe the group of mothers that I am interviewing.*

**Section I: General Questions about Mothers**

1. Where were you born?

2. Did you grow up in your country of origin?

Yes.....1

No.....2

- If not, in which country did you grow up?

3. What language(s) did your parents (or primary caregivers) speak to you when you were growing up?

- Did you also speak this/these language(s) throughout your childhood and throughout adolescence?

- Childhood:

- Yes.....1

- No.....2

- If not, what other language(s) did you speak at this time?

- Adolescence:

- Yes.....1

- No.....2

- If not, what other language(s) did you speak at this time?

4. How long did you live in your country of origin?

5. Before coming to Canada, have you lived in anywhere else besides your country of origin?

No.....1

Yes.....2

- If yes, where did you live?
- How long did you live in this (these) country (countries)?

6. When did you move to Canada?

- How long have you lived in Saskatoon?

7. What is your immigration status?

- Permanent resident.....1
- Canadian citizen.....2
- Other.....3
  - If other, please specify

8. What is your current work status?

- Full-time worker.....1
- Part-time worker.....2
- Stay-at-home mom.....3
- Student.....4
- Other.....5
  - If other, specify

9. What is your current marital status?

- Married.....1
- Common-law.....2
- Other.....3

10. How long have you been married/ how long have you lived with your partner?

11. What is your age category?

- 24 years or less.....1
- 35 - 44 years .....3
- 25 -34 years.....2
- 45 years or more.....4

**Section 2: General Questions about Husbands/Partners**

12. Where was your husband/partner born?

- Canada.....1
  - Where in Canada was he born?
- Other.....2
  - Specify husbands' country of origin
  - Specify husbands' immigration status
    - Permanent resident.....1
    - Canadian citizen.....2
    - Other.....3
      - If other, please specify

13. Did he grow up in (his country of origin)?

Yes.....1

No.....2

- *If not, in which country did he grow up?*

14. Where did you meet your husband/partner?

In my country of origin.....1

In his country of origin.....2

In Canada.....3

Other.....4

- If other, please specify

15. When did you get married or when did you begin living together with your partner?

Before immigration.....1

After immigration.....2

16. What is your husband's/partner's first language(s)?

- Did he also speak this/these language(s) throughout your childhood and throughout adolescence?

- Childhood:

- Yes.....1

- No.....2

- If not, what other language(s) did he speak at this time?

- Adolescence:

- Yes.....1

- No.....2

- If not, what other language(s) did he speak at this time?

17. What is your husband's/partner's current work status?

Full-time worker.....1

Part-time worker.....2

Stay-at-home mom.....3

Student.....4

Other.....5

- If other, specify

18. What is your husband's/partner's age category?

24 years or less.....1

25 -34 years.....2

35 - 44 years .....3

45 years or more.....4

### **Section 3: Questions about Children**

19. How many children do you have?

20. What are their ages?

21. What are their first names?

22. When was your first child born?

23. Where was your first child born?

In Canada.....1

In Mother's country of origin..... 2

Other.....3

- If other, specify

24. At this time, is your first child attending one of the following:

part-time day care.....1

full-time day care.....2

pre-school.....3

other.....4

- If other, specify

**Section 4: Questions about Extended Family**

23. Do you have any relatives (e.g., parents, siblings) living in Saskatoon or in Canada?

- If yes, who is living in Saskatoon? And, who is living in Canada?
- If no, where do your relatives live?

24. Where do your husband's relatives (e.g., parents, sibling) live?

In Canada.....1

- Where in Canada?

Other.....2



Appendix F:  
Consent Form

**Study:** The Language Experiences of Mothers Who Have Immigrated to Saskatoon.

**Researchers:**

- Raquel Faria Chapdelaine, Ph.D. student (researcher)
- Michel Desjardins, Ph.D. (supervisor)

**Background of the Study:**

- This study is part of Raquel Faria Chapdelaine's thesis. Raquel is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan.

**Purpose:**

- The purpose of this study is to explore the language experiences between you and your children, considering your family life, your social life, and your experiences of immigrating to Canada.

**Procedures:**

- 2 interviews within a 2 week-period. In the first interview, I will ask you general questions. In the second interview, I will ask you more specific questions about your language experiences.
- Duration of interviews: 60 to 90 minutes.
- The interviews will be tape-recorded. If you would like, you may read your interview transcript and add, change, or delete anything you said before I include your information in my thesis.
- Once the study is completed, you will receive a summary of results, and will be able to access a copy of the thesis at the Main Library, at the University of Saskatchewan.

**Potential Risks:**

- There are no substantial risks associated with this study. You do not need to talk about anything that you do not want to. You can also stop the interview at any time.
- If you work or uses the services provided by the Saskatoon Intercultural Association, the Saskatoon Open Door Society, and/or SIAST, please know that your activities or your access to services will not be affected by your decision to participate or not.

**Potential Benefits:**

- There are very few studies that explore language experiences between mothers and their children considering the perspectives of mothers' who have immigrated. This study will explore why different language choices and practices are important for these mothers.

**Storage of Data:**

- The University of Saskatchewan requires that all tapes from interviews as well as all transcripts of interviews be kept securely for five years.
- The interviews will be stored in Dr. Michel Desjardins' office at the University of Saskatchewan. This office is private and tapes and transcripts will be locked in a filing cabinet for extra protection.

**Confidentiality:**

- Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. That is, when I present the results of the study in the thesis, and possibly in an article or a book, other people will not know the names of mothers who participated in the study. I will discuss the experiences of mothers in general terms.
- Whenever I write about the experiences of a specific mother, I will not give any identifying information. That is:
  - I will not use your real name;
  - I will not give the name of country you came from;
  - I will not give the name of your family members, friends, or people you know;
  - I will not give the name of the organizations that you work in or belong to.
- The only individuals who will have access to your interviews tapes are Raquel Faria Chapdelaine (the researcher), Dr. Michel Desjardins (project supervisor), and a professional transcriber who will help us with the project—but who will not know your identity.

**Right to Stop Participating in the Interview:**

- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.
- You can stop the interview at any time, without any consequences.
- If you decide not to participate in the interview at any time, your information will be destroyed.
- You can turn off the tape-recorder during the interviews, if there is part of your interview that you do not want tape-recorded.

**Questions:**

- If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point.
- You can contact Raquel at ---- or at ---- if you have questions at a later time.
- This study has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board on August 12, 2004. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to this Board through the Office of Research Services (966-2084).

**Statement of Consent to Participate:**

- *I have read and understood the description provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may stop my consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Appendix G:  
Transcript Release Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in the study entitled, "The Language Experiences of Mothers Who Have Immigrated to Saskatoon." I have been provided with the opportunity to add, change, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript reflects what I said in my personal interviews with Raquel Faria Chapdelaine. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Raquel Faria Chapdelaine to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date