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## Family Language Policy and Heritage Language Development of Children in Transnational Immigrant Families: A Case of Two Nepali Families in the US

Laxmi Prasad Ojha  
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*Family Language Policy and Heritage Language Development of Children in Transnational  
Immigrant Families: A Case of Two Nepali Families in the US*

By  
Laxmi Prasad Ojha

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Requirement  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in  
Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages

Minnesota State University  
Mankato, Minnesota  
April 2020

Date: 04/10/2020

***Family Language Policy and Heritage Language Development of Children in Transnational Immigrant Families: A Case of Two Nepali Families in the US***

Laxmi Prasad Ojha

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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Dr. Sarah Henderson Lee, Advisor

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Dr. Paolo Infante, Committee Member

## Abstract

This study explored the family language policy of the transnational Nepali families living in the US regarding how their language ideologies and practices are shaped and in turn shape the heritage language development of their school-age children. Adopting an ethnographic case study research design, the study tried to find the answers to three research questions; 1) What are the beliefs of the two Nepali immigrant families living in the US related to the use of language and what are the sources of these beliefs?; 2) What language practices do they make in different interactional settings and how does that further influence the linguistic behavior of the children?; and 3) What language management efforts are these family members making for the development of language in their children and how do these efforts influence the language and literacy skills of their children?. Data for the study were collected using semi-structured interviews, participant observation, field notes, and analysis of available artifacts related to the study area from two selected families. Analysis of the data done through recursive content analysis showed that despite having a positive attitude towards their heritage language, the families are not able to invest resources and provide adequate support to their children for the development of heritage language and literacy skills. The study also revealed that the children, as members of the linguistically marginalized communities, do not receive any support from the schools and society to help them develop proficiency in their home language.

*Keywords:* family language policy, heritage language, language ideology, Nepali immigrants, transnationalism

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
List of Tables .....	vi
Dedication.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Background of the Study.....	1
Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study.....	5
Research Questions .....	7
Limitations of the Study.....	8
Chapter Conclusion.....	9
Chapter Organization of the Thesis.....	9
Chapter II: Review of Literature.....	11
Introduction.....	11
Transnational Migration.....	12
Transnational Families and Language Issues .....	14
Identity Issues in Transnational Migration.....	16
Family Language Policy .....	20
Role of Parents and Children in FLP.....	24
Language Ideology.....	27

Bilingualism and Heritage Language Acquisition .....	31
FLP and Heritage Language Transfer .....	33
Nepali Immigrants in the US and Minnesota .....	37
Immigrants in Minnesota.....	39
Chapter Conclusion.....	40
Chapter III: Methodology .....	42
Introduction.....	42
Participants.....	42
Research Design.....	48
Methods and Tools for Data Collection .....	49
Interview.....	49
Observation .....	51
Researcher Diary .....	52
Artifacts.....	52
Data Analysis .....	53
Transcription .....	53
Data Coding and Analysis.....	53
Researcher Positionality.....	54
Chapter Conclusion.....	57
Chapter IV: Findings of the Study .....	58
Nature and Sources of Language Beliefs .....	58

Parental beliefs and ideologies about language proficiency.....	59
“Children should know our language”: Parental expectations about heritage language learning.....	62
“The kids don’t need to speak Nepali like us” .....	65
Support from schools for heritage language development .....	69
Language Practices in the Transnational Families .....	73
“They don’t talk to us much these days”: Decreasing family interactions with the children.....	73
“They always start in English”: Language preferences in family conversations .....	80
Language preferences in different interactional contexts.....	85
Grandparents as agency to transfer heritage language .....	89
Literacy development: A neglected area .....	93
Efforts for Language Management .....	95
Parental involvement.....	96
Community engagement.....	100
Chapter Conclusion.....	103
Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusions.....	104
Discussion .....	104
Disjuncture between language beliefs and practices .....	105
Grandparents as agency to transfer heritage language .....	107
Transnationalism, language and identity .....	108
Schools, literacy, and subtractive bilingualism .....	110

Conclusions.....	112
Implications.....	114
Recommendations for Further Research.....	116
References.....	119
Appendix A: Recruitment Script .....	130
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form.....	131
Appendix C: Assent Script for Children/Minors .....	133
Appendix D: Pre-observation Interview Guidelines (Parents).....	135
Appendix E: During-observation Interview Guidelines (Parents).....	137
Appendix F: Post-observation Interview Guidelines (Parents).....	138
Appendix G: Guidelines for Ethnographic Field Work.....	139
Appendix H: Semi-structured Interview Protocol (Grandparents) .....	141
Appendix I: Semi-structured Interview Protocol (Children) .....	142
Appendix J: IRB Approval Letter.....	143



**List of Tables**

Table 1: Biographical Information of the Participants from Family 1.....	46
Table 2: Biographical Information of the Participants from Family 2.....	48

## **Dedication**

To my Dad and Mom

पूजनीय आमा र बुवामा समर्पित

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April 2020

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### Background of the Study

There has been an unprecedented growth in the mobility of people from one part of the world to another. While most people are choosing to move voluntarily for education, employment, and better living conditions, there are many who change their place of residence out of compulsion for such reasons as conflict, political instability, and economic hardship. According to UNHCR (2016), the major reasons for the mobility of the people are forcible displacement, refugee status, statelessness, and economic hardships besides voluntary migration.

The flow of this migration is mostly towards the developed countries. One such country that has seen tremendous growth in the inward mobility of the people is the United States of America. According to the United States Department of Homeland Security (USDHS, 2017), 1,127,167 people received permanent resident status in the United States in the year 2017. Similarly, a total of 53,691 new refugees arrived in the US in the same year, and another 10,523 were granted asylum. Besides these long-term and permanent immigrants, international students also account for a major population in US immigration. The US is the country with the largest body of international student population. For example, a total of 4.6 million international students were enrolled in different countries in 2017 and US was at the top of the table with 1.1 million (24%) enrollments of international students (Sugarman & Geary, 2018) followed by UK (11%) and China (10%). This suggests the flow of international population to the developed country such as the US making transnational mobility a global phenomenon. Many of these students extend their stay in the US in search of a better career and thus become permanent residents in the country adding to the linguistic and cultural diversity to the already diverse

American society. Transnational migration, thus, is an important aspect of the modern world that has invited many issues related to language culture, education, and employment.

The US is also a major country of destination for refugees around the world. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugee, 3.6 million people were displaced from their homes in 2018 alone - 37,000 people each day on average - due to war or persecution. The data shows that nearly half of these refugees are children under the age of 18. Only a fraction of these refugees return home and most of them seek asylum in the neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2018). At different points in history, the US has granted asylum to refugees from many countries and now they have been an integral part of the American society.

No matter what the reason for their movement, people struggle to make a series of adjustments in the host country. One such challenge they face is related to language. Immigrant families are always in a dilemma whether and how to transfer their heritage language to their children as the limited opportunity to use the language in the new place deprives them of enough exposure and motivation to learn and use the home language. On the other hand, immigrants need to learn the language of the host country for social and economic opportunities. Many parents experience challenges due to lack of adequate proficiency in the language(s) used in the host country and realize that it is important for them to provide appropriate environment and resources for their children to develop proficiency in the dominant language. In many cases, this happens at the cost of the development of the heritage language of their children.

Although immigrant families try to transfer their heritage languages to their children, multiple factors influence the actual ability of the families to empower the children with bilingual ability in their heritage language and dominant language in the community. Among such factors, dominant monolingual discourses, lack of educational and economic opportunities,

and lack of opportunity to engage in communication with the people in heritage languages are some major forces. In this connection, recent studies (Canagarajah, 2011; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009, 2016; Kwon, 2017; Nesteruk, 2010; Pérez Báez, 2013) have tried to investigate why some immigrant families are successful in maintaining their heritage language to their children while others are not.

As the immigrants continue to live in the new place, they have tremendous pressure to learn and use the dominant language of the host country due to educational, social, and economic benefits. Usually, one or more official languages are used as the dominant language(s) in the host countries and they are deprived of the opportunities in the new place due to lack of proficiency in the dominant language. Although no official language has been designated for the public administration and education system in the US, English, no doubt, enjoys the privilege of becoming the most dominant language or even the only language in many contexts. This both motivates and forces the new residents to follow the socially constructed linguistic hierarchy that places English above all other languages.

The US is a multilingual country, where hundreds of languages are used, primarily due to the flow of people from around the world at different times in history. However, the space and role of languages other than English and Spanish is very limited specifically in public places and education. This has forced people from other linguistics communities to change their language practices and shift to dominant (English) language. Multiple factors have played a role in causing this shift besides the immediate economic and educational value. Micro factors such as home literacy environment, parents' expectations, parents' education and language experience, and parental knowledge of bilingualism also play a crucial role in determining the language practices of the immigrant families (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009).

Adult immigrants who have received higher education in their countries and are proficient in the language of the host country face relatively fewer challenges to adjust to the new place. But there are many who either didn't receive the higher education or even if they did, they had little or no exposure to the English language and lack the skills to communicate in the US. Previous studies (e.g., Canagarajah, 2019; Fogle & King, 2013; Said & Zhu, 2019; Yang, 2018) have discussed various factors that impact the family language policy (FLP) and language use of the immigrant families. These studies report that immigrant families from minority languages background face challenges to maintain their heritage language and identity in the new place. In most of the cases, the languages dominantly used in the country of origin and the receiving country are different and the immigrants face several problems. Together with their willingness to learn the language of the host country, the families are also worried about the transfer of their heritage language to the new generation of young children in the future.

These dilemmas collectively shape the language ideologies and practices of the immigrants. Therefore, there is a need to investigate how the FLP affects the language acquisition of bilingual children so that parents, schools and teachers can be prepared better to support the children for the development of the dominant language of the host country while making sure that the children also develop working proficiency in their heritage language. Navigating a new place with a new language and culture is difficult particularly for the newcomers and families with people who did not have access to the dominant language of the host country. These issues are of interest to the scholars involved in FLP research. Traditionally the focus of the FLP research has been on the linguistic outcome of the children in the immigrant families and the actual experience that the family members have while practicing their linguistic behavior has not been explored well (King, 2016; Hua & Wei, 2016). However, focusing on the



product approach to the study measuring the bilingual proficiency of the children does not represent the experiences that the members of the immigrant families go through as they socialize with their new home with different languages and cultures. Little efforts have been made to investigate how parents and children mediate the development of heritage language and the dominant language in their new locations. Responding to this situation, this study explores the impact of family language policy of the Nepali immigrants on the acquisition of heritage language by their children living in the US. More specifically, the study analyzes how the family configurations and linguistic realities in different spheres of lives in the US have shaped and reshaped the ideologies and practices of the selected two Nepali immigrant families. Moreover, the study has also explored the efforts made by the family members to manage the linguistic behaviors of the children and the impact of these actions on their linguistic ideologies and development of the bilingual abilities of the children.

### **Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study**

Language is one of the complex issues that has gained the attention in recent times due to the growth of the migration of people around the world. Immigrant families are always at the crossroad to maintain their heritage language and to learn the dominant language of the host country. This problem is even more serious in families that include children of school-going age. As a transnational immigrant family, the parents want their children to learn their heritage language and culture so that they feel connected to their roots. At the same time, parents want to ensure that their children are successful in the English dominant education system in the US so that they have a good career to live a quality life. The immigrants also have pressure to join the social mainstream (Canagarajah, 2008). This dilemma makes it difficult for them to make choices between the use of their heritage language and English.

With the increasing movement of people from around the world for various purposes, the linguistic behaviors of immigrant families have changed significantly in recent years. This has influenced the beliefs and practices of these people regarding their selection of languages for interaction in various family contexts. There have been numerous studies that focus on how children acquire their first language. However, most of the studies on child language acquisition focus on first language acquisition and take monolingualism as a norm in the process of language socialization (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008) and the impact of the family language policy on the language acquisition of the children growing in transnational bilingual contexts has not been documented well. Realizing this need, the present study aims to investigate how these families living in an English dominant society negotiate their linguistic resources both to maintain their heritage language and to support the development of early bilingualism in their children.

The arrival of the immigrant families and children who speak a minority language at home has created both challenges and potentials for the educators as it is important for them to understand the underlying beliefs and ideologies of the parents regarding their use of languages at home as these practices greatly affect the expectations parents have from the schools and also determine the academic success of the children. Therefore, it is important to investigate whether and how the children are offered affordances for the development of both dominant English and heritage language in family contexts. However, most of the research continues to focus on language policy and related language use in public space, and what happens within a family and with individuals in private domains has remained unexplored (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry 2008). Therefore, this study will help interested individuals in developing a better understanding

of the issues facing transnational families to navigate the English dominant linguistic realities of the US.

Despite the growing population in recent years, the beliefs, practices and challenges Nepali immigrant families living in the US have not been studied well. There are some studies (e.g. Dhungel, 1999; Rawal, 2015; Sijapati, 2009) related to the Nepali population in the US, but the issues of transnational identity and heritage language acquisition have not been explored from FLP perspective. Therefore, this study sought to investigate how the transnational Nepali community is navigating through this complex linguistic situation and what kind of linguistic practices they have for the management of the language practices of their children. Although this study focused on the families of Nepali origin, it is still relevant to all the immigrants who land in the US for various reasons in search of a better future for themselves and their families.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ideologies and practices of the transnational families of Nepali origin living in the US regarding their linguistic behavior in everyday family contexts. The study also sought to explore the impact of the family language policy on the language acquisition of the children growing in transnational bilingual contexts. More specifically, this study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs of the two selected Nepali immigrant families living in the US related to the use of language and what are the sources of these beliefs?
2. What language practices do they make in different interactional settings and how does that further influence the linguistic behavior of the children?

3. What language management efforts are these family members making for the development of language in their children, and how do these efforts influence the language and literacy skills of their children?

### **Limitations of the Study**

A single study cannot cover all the aspects related to an issue. The present study was not an exception and had several limitations. First, the study was limited to the data collected from two families of Nepali origin living in the US. Therefore, the findings of the study might not represent all the immigrant families from different parts of the world, or all Nepali families who migrate to a new country for different social, political and economic reasons. Similarly, the data for this study were collected within six months and might not represent any temporal changes that take place in the ideologies and practices of the participants of this study.

The study was limited to the data collected using semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations. The adults in the family were interviewed formally for three times (four times in the first family which included grandparents), one round of conversation with the elder child in each family (altogether two conversations), and a total of five observational visits were made to both the families during various family meetings including lunch/dinner time, children's study hours, community gatherings, and playtime. Due to the limited number and settings of observations, the study might not cover the language practices of the family members in all the contexts. For example, the language used by the family members with each other when they are among the people who speak a different language has not been reported in this study. Finally, the study covered the FLP in a conventional family involving parents from similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and it might not represent the FLP of the families involving relationships between people from different nationalities, cultural and linguistic groups.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

This introductory chapter of the thesis presented the context and background of the study on family language policy. It identified the gap in current research on family language policy from the perspectives of transnational migration and heritage language development. Besides, I have also presented the statement of the problem and mentioned the three key research questions that this study tried to answer. The chapter also contained the discussion on the significance and the limitations of the study and concluded with an overview of the organization of the chapters in this thesis.

## **Chapter Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. After this introductory chapter, Chapter Two reviews the literature related to the areas of the study and discusses the key concepts such as transnational migration, transnational families and language issues, and identity issues in transnational migration. Next, literature related to family language policy, parents and children as agencies for family language policy, language ideology, bilingualism and heritage language acquisition, and role of the family in heritage language maintenance are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the Nepali immigrants in the US and the state of Minnesota.

Chapter Three presents the methodological details used to conduct this study. The chapter contains a detailed description of the participants of the study, methods and tools used for data collection, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with the researcher positionality in the study.

Chapter Four includes the details of the findings of the study. The findings are presented in three key themes responding to the research questions mentioned at the beginning of the

thesis, namely a) Nature and sources of language beliefs; b) Language practices in the transnational families; and c) Efforts for language management. Several sub-themes under these themes have been discussed covering issues such as parental beliefs and ideologies about language proficiency, parental expectations about heritage language learning, support from schools for heritage language development, decreasing family interactions with the children, language preferences in family conversations and different interactional contexts, grandparents as agency to transfer heritage language, literacy development in the heritage language, parental involvement and community engagement.

Finally, Chapter Five begins with a discussion of the findings of the study. Four key themes, namely, the disjuncture between language beliefs and practices; grandparents as agency to transfer heritage language; transnationalism, language and identity; and schools, literacy and subtractive bilingualism are discussed linking them with the existing literature. After this, the chapter includes brief sections on conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter II: Review of Literature

### Introduction

As an emerging field of study within the larger area of language policy and planning, there has been a significant interest in the research and scholarship on family language policy in recent times. Scholars have focused their attention on different aspects that influence the ideologies and practices of the families speaking minority languages in diverse contexts. To understand the issues well, the existing literature on transnational migration and family language policy has been reviewed in this section. The interrelated concepts elaborated under this chapter help explore the existing literature on family language policy and find the gap in the existing literature.

This study addresses the issues to the transnational immigrant families from Nepali origin living in the US regarding their language ideologies and practices regarding the use of their heritage language in the family conversations and the impact of such beliefs and practices on the heritage language development of their children. More specifically, the review of literature is centered around the issues related to the three research questions that this study tries to investigate: (a) What are the beliefs of the two Nepali immigrant families living in the US related to the use of language and what are the sources of these beliefs?; (b) What language practices do they make in different interactional settings and how does that further influence the linguistic behavior of the children?; and (c) What language management efforts are these family members making for the development of language in their children and how do these efforts influence the language and literacy skills of their children?. The chapter is divided into different themes organized as sections and sub-sections.

First, the chapter discusses topics such as transnational migration relating it with the issue of language use and sets the background of the study. After that, the chapter delves into the topics related to family language policy followed by a section on language ideologies and practices of immigrant families. This helps to explore the key concepts related to the areas of this study. The next section deals with bilingualism and heritage language acquisition in the immigrant families with a focus on the impact of family language policy on the development of heritage language in the children from immigrant families. The chapter concludes with a section on the status of Nepali immigrants in the US discussing the history and status of the Nepali diaspora.

### **Transnational Migration**

There has been unprecedented growth in the mobility of people around the world for various reasons in recent decades. People may move within a single country or across the political borders of their countries and settle in a new territory. The migration within a single country is often less challenging for the migrants as they are familiar with the people, culture and in many cases, languages spoken in the new place. However, transnational migration involves complex processes related to legality, duration of stay, linguistic and cultural assimilation, employment and living standards of the immigrants (King, 2013).

The United Nations has defined international migration as the process of changing the country of usual residence by a person or group of people. The latest World Migration Report published by International Organization for Migration (IOM), shows that there were an estimated 244 million international migrants globally in 2015, which is around 3.3% of the world's population (IOM, 2018). The report identifies “increase in migration and displacement occurring due to conflict, persecution, environmental degradation and change, and a profound lack of



human security and opportunity” (p. 1) as the major reasons for recent migrations. Besides, as King (2013) argues, many people are also moving from one place to another due to educational, economic and social opportunities.

Due to this growth in international mobility and its economic, political, social, environmental and economic impacts on many countries and the lives of a large number of people, there has been a significant interest in the issues related to migration, especially the one involving the international mobility. As a result, many scholars have devoted their works on transnational migration and tried to define it in various ways. In one of the earliest discussions on the issue, Basch, Schiller & Blanc (1994) define transnationalism as a “process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 7). Similarly, Tsakiri (2005) states that transnational people as the “migrant populations living in a country other than their country of origin but with ties to the country of origin” (p. 102). For Block (2009), they are the people who “have moved across geographical borders and immersed themselves in new cultural and linguistic environments” (p. 75). Despite different definitions proposed by the scholars the challenges discussed in the literature on transnational migration are related to language, and identity linked with socio-economic mobility.

Transnationalism “emphasizes the social processes by which migrants establish social fields that cross political, demographic, social, and cultural borders, maintaining relationships and connections that span nation-state borders” (King & Lanza, 2017, p. 720). It refers to the process of crossing the cultural, ideological, linguistic and geographical borders and boundaries but especially those of nation-states (Vertovec, 2004, 2009). Scholars have also differentiated *transnationalism* and *immigration* and argue that transnationalism denotes the wish of the people

to stay in a new country temporarily until their economic goals are fulfilled, whereas immigration involves a permanent stay in the host country (Hornberger, 2007). However, the term *transnationalism* dominates the discourse in the migration literature as it embraces different dimensions related to human mobility such as identity, acculturation, and social mobility.

Most of the families move beyond the borders of their countries mainly because of political reasons, economic factors and the pursuit of education which might affect the experiences of transnational families in a different way (Cho, Chen & Shin, 2010). Since the immigrants have strong emotional, linguistic and social connection with their place of origin, they feel comfortable and are willing to continue to use the language from their place of origin. However, the strong need created by the dominant use of a different language in the new country motivates and pressurizes them to learn and adapt to the new linguistic milieu.

The families in which all or some of the members have lived in two or more different countries are considered as transnational families (Cho, Chen & Shin, 2010). These families have crossed international borders at least once to live in a country where they were not born and raised. Each of these migrant families might face different issues due to various factors such as the purpose of movement, the similarity between the culture and language of the place of origin and settlement, familiar expectations and relationships, the financial condition of the family, their migration status and many more (Hirsch & Lee, 2018).

**Transnational Families and Language Issues.** Despite their bodily movement across national borders, most of the immigrants keep their ties and networks maintained at their country and place of origin (Hornberger, 2007). To address this, the discussions on transnationalism in recent times has focused on virtual and psychological connectedness, multigenerational experiences affecting languages, and communities in the transnational spaces (Duff, 2015). It is

believed that when people migrate from one country to another, they carry their language, culture, beliefs, values and ideologies. However, they do not remain the same as these immigrants come in contact with new people with different languages, culture and values. The transnational immigrants have complexities of belonging to two or more places simultaneously (Suarez-Orozco, 2010) as they are born and raised in one place and settle and see their future in another. Their identity is “reshaped, negotiated and reconstructed through interaction in a new setting and through their changing beliefs (Rawal, 2015, p. 7).

On arrival to the new country, the immigrants are in constant negotiation between the dominant language and the home language. This process of learning the new language and maintaining already know language is ongoing for a long time, most probably throughout their lives. Hirsch & Lee (2018) support this view and argue that some of the most important processes and issues of transnational migration are related to “language learning, language acquisition, and language maintenance or loss” (p. 885).

Mobility can lead to the acquisition of new language(s) and lack of opportunities to use the heritage language leading to shift to new languages. This might develop multifaceted and multilingual identities (Duff, 2015). For these immigrants, the boundaries between the nation-states and languages become a blur as they continue living in the new place for a long time. These hard bounders have also been broken due to the advancement in communication technology mainly internet and mobile phones.

Highlighting the complexities of transnational family in relation to language use, Hirsch and Lee (2018) argue that educationally motivated transnational family moves, and economically motivated transnational family moves have the most dominant research concentration in the existing literature on family language policy. They further discuss the complexities related to

language use faced by transnational families and report how the decisions of the families about language use are affected by various socio-economic factors. Their review of ongoing debate in the field shows that “FLP ideologies underlying the management of languages are complex and often operate on an emotional level” (Hirsch & Lee, 2018, p. 888). With the increase in global mobility, not only the speakers, but also many languages themselves have also become transnational. These languages are not limited within a traditional geographical or political territory but are used across different countries (Duff, 2015).

Another study conducted by Hua and Wei (2016) shows how immigrant families deal with the issues of children’s language socialization with a focus on their struggles and aspiration of maintaining contacts with the former and new home country. The study highlights the importance of diverse experiences of the individuals and the strategies they use to deal with the challenges of multilingualism. Transnational and multilingual families are very common in a globalized world today (Hua & Wei, 2016), and this even poses a challenge to the educators as they must meet the demands of the children from various linguistic, social and economic backgrounds to support them for their academic development.

The present study attempts to investigate how the Nepali immigrants living in the US negotiate their multiple identities. Furthermore, it explores whether and how they try to transfer the Nepali language to their children who are born and raised in the US where the public space including education is dominated by the use of the English language.

**Identity Issues in Transnational Migration.** Since people have diverse connections in areas such as language, religion, culture, nationality, and educational background, everyone has layers of identities or multiple identities. These identities change over time and space (Gee, 2015; Norton, 2000). This is more so with the immigrant families as they have an experience of,

living in multiple societies with various social practices. Immigrant people have multiple layers of identities and consider themselves as members of multiple geographical, linguistic and political spaces. They may think themselves as global citizens with, what Vertovec (2009) calls “an awareness of multi-locality” (p. 6).

Some families move to the new place with all the members together and some others leave part of their family back home. The mobility of the families to the new places brings along several problems such as economic stability, cultural preservation, and language maintenance. If the family moves to a place where the primary language of communication in society is the same as the language used by the family members, the family faces relatively fewer problems. However, in most of the cases, the families involved in transnational migration speak the language(s) different than the ones used in the new place. In that case, these families face a lot of challenges related to adaptation in the new place because of issues related to language. One such challenge is the transfer of their heritage language to their children. The challenges are aggravated as the children start going to school as they are exposed to a language or languages that are dominant in the new place in education, market, television and elsewhere. The children are exposed to the new language in most of the communicative situations and gradually feel more comfortable using this language instead of the home language.

In those families where the family members are well versed in the dominant language of the new place, the children usually prefer communicating in the dominant language. However, in families with members having limited proficiency in the language of the new place might continue using the language with the members. The case becomes more interesting if the parents come from families/communities that speak different languages. In these families, if the couple both know each other’s languages, there might be a lot of episodes of translanguaging, a

situation in which speakers draw linguistic resources from multiple named languages to communicate in one speech event (Canagarajah, 2013; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009). However, if both the partners do not know each other's first language, one of them might need to switch to the other language or both of them switch to the new language used in the place they have recently shifted to. In these transnational and translingual families, the use of language crossed all the boundaries drawn between the language form a traditional approach of defining languages. The parents and children might code switch or code mix on many occasions. The family members might also develop multilingual abilities to use various languages if the family members try to use these languages in family conversations.

The transnational families need to make a lot of adjustments to fit in the new place including the ones related to language. Families that have multiple transnational moves might go through more critical issues in the development of language in their children. Even the children or siblings may grow in different linguistic environments resulting in varying degrees of competence of various languages they are exposed (Fogle and King, 2013).

The study of identity in applied linguistics research has focused on people's sense of self which they construct, reconstruct and negotiate during their interaction in the communities and people they come across. Bonny Norton, one of the pioneers in the field of identity issues in language learning has contributed significantly to this field. According to Norton (2013) identity is related to how language learners view themselves among the target language speakers. Their perception towards themselves changes over time and space and affects their world view including that related to various languages they know or are in the process of learning. According to King & Lanza (2017), the identity of the immigrant families about "broader political, cultural, and ideological context shapes family life and family language practices in

particular” (p. 721). Therefore, the study of identity is an integral part of studies that focus on various aspects of FLP.

In many cases, the children lack the required language proficiency in the beginning but as they go to school, they develop the linguistic competence to use the language of the host country and soon become proficient in the language, in most cases earlier and better than their parents. The parents may also develop their command over the new language and the family might even switch to the dominant language due to the ease they have while communicating with each other. These moves in the linguistic practices are often subtle and are made without the family members even realizing the changes they have made within their families. The moves also “add to the complexity of the transnational family language policies” (Hirsch & Lee, 2018, p. 885) as the use of the dominant language of the host country in family conversations might impede the transfer and preservation of heritage language of the immigrant families. On one hand, they might want to preserve their home language, but their subconscious shift to the new language might do more harm than good to the children in terms of their heritage language development. This might even create a dilemma and identity crisis among the immigrants as they need to navigate between two or more languages that they need to learn and use for different purposes, namely identity and socio-economic opportunities.

In this study, I have focused on identity issues concerning the acquisition of their heritage language and the dominant English language among children from immigrant Nepali families living in the US. While doing so I have used Norton’s (2013) view that takes identity as a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon as a framework of my analysis. In doing so, I believe that the parents and children in these transnational families have been practicing hybridity in traditions, values, and languages (Lanza & Wei, 2016) due to their willingness to embrace both

their heritage language and culture on one hand and need to assimilate themselves to the target language and culture in the English dominant American society.

### **Family Language Policy**

The mobility of people to new countries and places from traditional communities where people speak the same language and follow similar culture has resulted in new forms of multilingual societies around the world. While most of these movements are within a single country, there is a growing trend of migration outside of one's country of birth. This transnational mobility has posed a tremendous challenge for the families that migrate to new places with regard to their language practices. In many cases, the migrant families need to communicate with people in a new language that is used dominantly and continue using their heritage language at home within the family. However, due to the changing social and economic contexts, the families might have to make a lot of choices regarding the use of language in their families. Consciously or subconsciously, these families are involved in the formation of language policy and their linguistic practices are guided by these invisible policies.

The study of family language policy is an important topic for sociolinguists around the world. Curdt-Christiansen (2018), defines family language policy as “explicit and overt as well as implicit and covert language planning by family members in relation to language choice and literacy practices within home domains and among family members” (p. 420). Similarly, King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry (2008), also highlight that FLP as “explicit and overt planning in relation to language use within the home among family members” (p. 907). These discussions suggest that family language policy is very subtle and might even take place without the conscious knowledge of the people engaged in its formation and enactment. In this study, I have used the term FLP to refer to any conscious or unconscious efforts made by the members of the



immigrant families to shape the language practices in their families. While doing so, I aim to identify factors that influenced their language ideologies and practices.

Family language policy aims to investigate why and how members of some transnational families maintain their heritage language while members of some other similar families lose theirs; how do the children growing up in transnational families become monolingual or bilingual, what kind of decisions do the parents make to support or discourage the use of particular languages; how are the parent decisions associated with language ideologies and broader educational practices in the host country (Curdt- Christiansen, 2013; Spolsky, 2012).

The formation and implementation of the family language policy is determined by multiple factors both within the family and outside. While the external factors (such as, education, employment, mass media) might play an influential role in pushing the family away from transferring their heritage language to the children, it is the internal factors (such as, attitude and beliefs of the family members, the linguistic competence of the parents, family configurations) that might play an equally important role for maintenance and loss of the heritage language.

According to King (2016), language competence of the immigrant families, unlike in the past, is taken “not just as an outcome, but as a means through which adults and children define themselves, their family roles, and family life” (p. 727-728). She further states that the current FLP research has focused on diverse population and family configurations using more newer research methods. Spolsky (2004) identifies FLP research primarily focuses on three key areas: how family members think about languages (language ideologies); how they use the languages (language practice); and how they influence the use of languages (language management). Discussing the scope of FLP research, Fogle & King (2013) state that these studies address the

ideologies and strategies, which indicates that “parental beliefs are important factors in maintaining a minority language at home” (p. 4). Initially, the study of the face-to-face interaction and social life within the family has been the prime area of study of the FLP research (Gafaranga, 2010). However, due to the advancement in digital tools, it is also possible to investigate how digital tools have affected the nature of family communication and access to the heritage language among immigrants. Besides the face-to-face interaction within the family, FLP research also “takes into consideration external influences, such as public discourses as well as socio-economic and political forces affecting families and contributing to the(dis)continuity of intergenerational transmission” (Curd-Christiansen, 2018, pp. 420-421). Similarly, some studies (Armstrong, 2014; Curdt-Christiansen, & Wang, 2018, King & Fogle, 2006) have also explored the role of parents as agents of language policy who provide affordances and constraints in supporting or limiting their children’s language development in different languages.

Scholars (e.g., King & Fogle, 2006; King, Fogle & Terry, 2008) have also highlighted how the linguistic ideologies of the parents in the immigrant families influence the interactional patterns within the family domain determining the children’s success and failure in acquiring the heritage and dominant language. The decisions made by the family related to language influences the pattern of language use within the family, especially affecting the development of language in the children. These studies indicate that parental beliefs play an important role in maintaining a minority language at home or introduce the dominant language in family conversations (Fogle and King, 2013).

Although monolingual families may also have some kind of language policy such as how to behave or talk to the family members and outsiders, maintaining politeness (Spolsky, 2004), most of the research on FLP has focused on bilingual or multilingual families (Fogle and King,

2013). A study conducted by Hua & Wei (2016) reports different language trajectories of people from similar country and language groups now living in the UK. The study investigates how families deal with the issues of children's language socialization with a focus on their struggles and aspiration of maintaining contacts with the former and new home country. The findings show the importance of diverse experiences of the individuals and the strategies they use to deal with the challenges of multilingualism. Similarly, the beliefs and practices of the families regarding the use of language play important role in determining "children's developmental trajectories, connect in significant ways with children's formal school success, and collectively determine the maintenance and future status of minority languages" (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008, p. 907).

The linguistic behavior of the immigrant parents and children is greatly shaped by various social and economic factors in English dominant contexts such as in the US as they have to negotiate between their desire to maintain their heritage language and the demand to be proficient in English to be both academically and professionally successful. Curdt-Christiansen and Wang (2018) argue that parents can play an even more significant role in transnational and multilingual families as agents of multilingual education for their children. The children develop proficiency in multiple languages if the policy and practices of the family favor the use of different languages for various purposes (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018).

Immigrant families are engaged in the process of language socialization in the new place for a long time. According to Duff (2015), this process might take place "at home, in educational institutions and workplaces, and in other face-to-face and virtual communities" (p.62). In fact, language socialization is a lifelong process and takes place in multiple sites such as homes, educational institutions, workplaces, social gatherings and, recently, in cyberspaces (Duff &

Hornberger, 2008). In this study, the following framework developed by Curdt-Christiansen (2018) was used to analyze how family language policy is affected by various social factors.

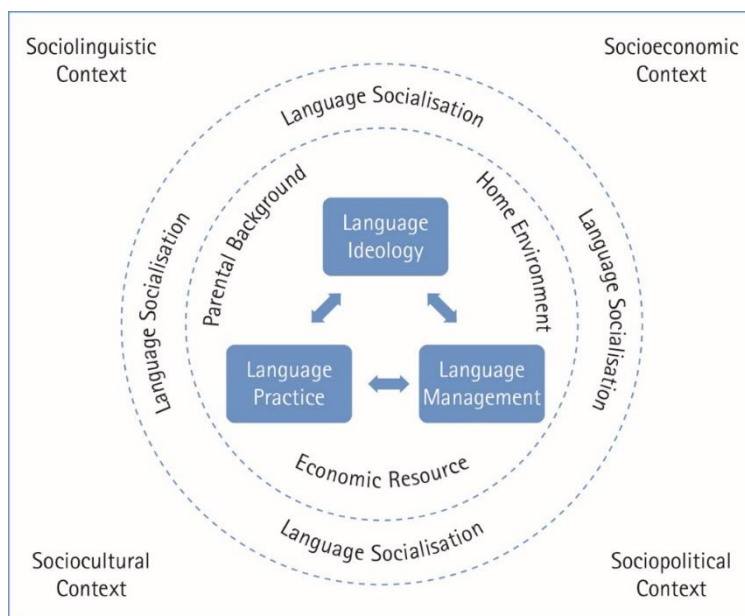


Figure 1: The interdisciplinary framework of family language policy. From Curdt-Christiansen (2018)

The framework borrows Spolsky's (2004) analysis of linguistic and non-linguistic contexts that are related to language choice in the family. The present study also draws on this concept and tries to see how the family language policy of the Nepali immigrants in the US is shaped by different contexts.

**Role of Parents and Children in FLP.** Traditionally FLP studies focused on the influence of the parental ideologies and decisions on the language acquisition of the children. It was believed that parental ideologies and interactional patterns with the children influence the language development of the children. However, recent studies have acknowledged the role of child agency in shaping the language ideologies and behaviors of the parents besides the role of parents.

There is a growing recognition that children can also function as the agency for language socialization and support the communicative needs of their parents (Fogle & King, 2013) through ‘language brokering’ (Orellana, 2009). Children play an important role in shaping their parents’ discourse. They scaffold their parents’ language use, provide necessary vocabulary items when required. This function often referred to as “language brokering” (Orellana, 2009) is a process which positions children as expert language users who mediate the communication between their parents and other people from different linguistic and cultural background. According to He (2016, p. 674), language brokering is “the practice of children of immigrant families who translate and interpret a variety of talk and texts for their parents and grandparents who have limited access to the mainstream language and culture and limited proficiency in contemporary technology”. This process of mediating communication between the parents and other members of the host country who are from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds is significant from the FLP perspective. In a study conducted by Tuominen (1999), it was found that the policies and practices made by the parents were found to be affected by the attitude and practices of the school-age children. In these families, children, rather than the parents, played a crucial role in determining the family language policy and socializing the family members in the community they lived in.

Children also act as agents to socialize their parents in the new place especially of the older generation faces linguistic and cultural gaps to communicate with the dominant linguistic group in the new place (Fogle and King, 2013; Luykx, 2003). This process called “linguistic brokering” (Orellana, 2009) is common especially in the refugee families because they are forced to flee their country without any preparation and intention beforehand. As the children grow, they also bring the language learned in other environments into their homes (Canagarajah, 2008)

which might influence the linguistic behavior of the older generation. Together with the language, they also bring the culture and values of the dominant society outside the family domain (Fogle & King, 2013) and influence parental decision-making and language use.

The FLP research has primarily focused on the influence of interaction pattern between the parent and children in immigrant families. However, it is also important to explore the influence of the pattern of interaction between the siblings on their language development. According to Fogle and King (2013), older siblings have a great role as agents for language socialization in transnational families among the children. Studies have also shown that children's linguistic practices influence how others in their network, such as siblings and peers (e.g., de la Piedra & Romo, 2003; Fogle and King, 2013; Schieffelin, 1990) making them important factors in shaping the FLP among the immigrants (Said and Zhu, 2019).

The family policies to transfer the language and culture are not static and unidirectional (Fogle and King, 2013). Many different factors play role in shaping the collective behavior of the family in the course of time leading to changes in their perception and practices over the times. Family decisions are influenced by the "broader social forces and institutions" (Canagarajah, 2008, p. 171). The family decisions made related to the selection and function of languages to be used within the family determine whether a minority heritage language is transmitted to the children influencing the maintenance or loss of the language (Fishman, 1991). The families may have collective decisions regarding their language use or individuals may have differences in what they do with the languages. In both cases, the language development of the children is affected by parental language choices. In my study, I have explored how both children and adults, including parents and grandparents, work as an agency to influence the decision of the family regarding their language practices.

## **Language Ideology**

Language ideology or linguistic ideology refers to a set of beliefs of the people regarding the status and use of language(s) in various contexts. The study of language ideology occupies an important role in language policy research including that of FLP. There is a growing trend to use the plural form of the term – language ideologies – scholars agree that multiple ideologies exist within a person in relation to language use.

The root of the study of linguistic ideologies is associated with (linguistic) anthropology. Silverstein (1979) was one of the earliest scholars to define language ideologies who considered them as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 193). Multiple scholars have studied and contributed to the field of language ideologies since then. The study of language ideologies is important as it provides insights into how people conceptualize their lived experiences, memories, and identity (Woolard, 1998).

Language ideologies are important constructs related to family language policy. These ideologies are “shared framework(s) of social beliefs that organize and coordinate the social interpretations and practices of groups and their members” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 8). Ideologies are often subconscious and are related to status, role and importance of languages in a particular society. Language ideologies are largely shaped by the society that people live in and are associated with economic values, political power, historical roles, and social utilities (King, 2000; Kroskrity, 2010). For instance, Curdt-Christiansen’s (2016) study reveals that the overt favor to the English language, the pragmatic concerns about the children’s educational achievement in English only medium of instruction and the economic values associated with the language forces the parents to choose English in their everyday linguistic practices.

Spolsky (2004) has discussed four major linguistic and non-linguistic contexts or conditions that shape the language ideologies: sociolinguistic context; socio-cultural context (the symbolic values associated with language/languages); socio-economic context (instrumental, mainly economic, values ascribed to a language); and socio-political context (national educational/ language policy; language choice as a right). These contexts motivate individuals and families to form their language policy as the lives of people are largely affected due to these contexts.

Even within a single family, individual members may have different ideologies related to language. In a study conducted by Curdt-Christiansen (2016), she found that parents, caregivers and grandparents had different attitudes towards their language practices, sometimes even conflicting language ideologies leading to contradictory language practices within the same family. The following framework adapted from Curdt-Christiansen (2009) demonstrates how language ideology is connected to various macro and micro factors.

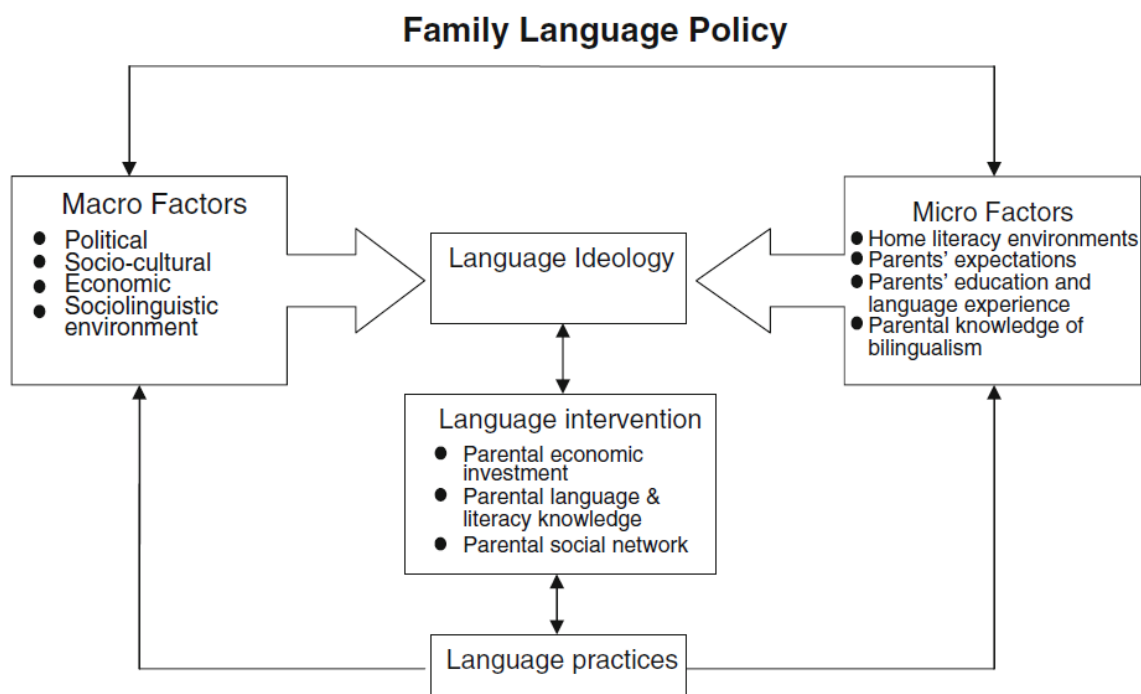




Figure 2: Family language policy. From Source: Curdt-Christiansen (2009)

The scope of language ideology goes beyond the study of linguistics. Highlighting language ideologies as essentially social rather than linguistic constructs, Yang (2018, p. 927) argues that “language ideology is not only linguistically significant, but also socially and politically significant” as these ideologies are shaped by the broader socio-political environment that determine various dimensions of life including the economic and educational opportunities. Therefore, language ideologies are related more to social realities than to linguistic factors (Piller, 2015). For example, language ideology related to the selection of one variety over the other one has nothing to do with the language forms themselves, but the power and status associated with those forms. Woolard (2016) also shares similar views about language ideology referring them to “socially, politically, and morally loaded cultural assumptions about the way that language works in social life and about the role of particular linguistic forms in a given society” (p. 7). Views of these scholars suggest that language ideologies are shaped by broader societal forces and are fluid and moving. Language ideologies held by individuals and groups of people might change with a change in the context they live in. For instance, the selection of a particular language as the medium of instruction might motivate people to have a more positive attitude towards the language than in the past.

Language ideologies can be both *articulated* and *embodied* (Kroskrity, 2004) as the speakers may be aware of and articulate their language ideologies when expressing their views on language or the ideologies. Kroskrity further states that the speakers may not explicitly express their language ideologies and their ideologies may need to be interpreted based on the actual use of the language. What people think about heritage language in relation to the dominant language of the host country affects the linguistic behavior of the family and ultimately

determines whether and to what extent the children develop proficiency in the heritage language. Moreover, the beliefs of the parents regarding language use also shape the beliefs of the children in a subtle way.

How parents assess their children's language ability affects the FLP as the parents "rethink their language practice and implement a clear intervention plan to support the child's bilingual development" (Schwartz & Moin, 2012, p. 36). Parents might put extra effort and provide additional resources and affordances to help their children learn the heritage language (HL) if they perceive their ability to be lower than their expectations. On the other hand, if the parents are happy with the current progress and level of proficiency of the children in using HL, they might just continue the existing practices and might not plan for any changes in their language practices. Although the assessment of the language proficiency of their children by the parents might not be accurate, it certainly provides some insights into the necessity for further support for the language development of their children. The level of the language acquired by the children can function as evidence of whether the current FLP is appropriate or not for the HL acquisition.

Language ideologies are key constructs in the studies focusing on family language policy. Studying the beliefs, practices, and experiences of the immigrant families in relation to their language use can provide important insights for educators as the children of transnational families have unique needs and the English as the Second Language (ESL) programs must address such needs to strengthen the educational experiences of these learners. Bilingual children also need to be supported in the development of the language used in their home countries as many will move between these countries and the US in their lifetime (Hirsch & Lee, 2018). The present study primarily focuses on the language ideologies and practices of immigrant Nepali

families to explore how their ideologies shape and are in turn shaped by the language practices in their newly found home as the immigrants in the US. The concept of language ideology in this study is primarily informed by the works of Curdt-Christiansen (2009), Curdt-Christiansen (2018), King (2000), Lanza (2007), Kroskrity (2010), and Spolsky (2004).

### **Bilingualism and Heritage Language Acquisition**

The term heritage language has a broader definition and multiple interpretations in different contexts. In a broad sense, heritage language is a language used by the people at present or by their ancestors to which they are emotionally connected (Baker, 2011). The language may or may not be used by the members of the family. In some cases, the members may have lost the proficiency in the language and have developed a renewed interest to acquire it. In this situation, the heritage language learning is very much similar to learning a second language except for the fact that the language was used by the ancestors in the past. In a narrow sense, a heritage language is a language acquired by the people in their childhood but due to the growing use of a second language in school, society, workplace, and home they have stopped using the language and ultimately have gradually lost the command over the language. The speakers might still have some level of linguistic competence to understand and use the language but are not competent to use it fluently as the native speakers do. Depending on the degree of current proficiency in the heritage language, the speakers can be considered as bilinguals as they can communicate using two (or more) languages.

The practice of using home language or the dominant language of the host country as the home language has a tremendous impact on the linguistic practices and lives of the immigrants. The selection of the parent's home language as the language of communication in the family supports the development of the heritage language in the children, whereas, selection of the

dominant language of the new country for family conversation might have a negative consequence on the development of the heritage language proficiency of the students. This might, however, help the family in cultural and linguistic assimilation (Hirsch & Lee, 2018) helping them integrate into the new place.

The families might also want their children to learn the language used in their place of origin due to linguistic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). If the immigrants have a long-term plan or the possibility of returning to their home country, they might be more inclined to encourage and support their children to learn their home language as it might be required for them to successfully navigate the social, educational and economic opportunities in the home country later. Therefore, how transnational families think about the need and importance of home language for their children is intertwined with various factors besides the identity and economic benefits.

Family can play an important role in creating a transformative linguistic environment for the development of both heritage and dominant language (Curd-Christiansen & Wang, 2018). Studies (King & Fogle, 2006; Piller, 2002) have shown that many parents in immigrant families have a positive attitude towards raising their children bilingual as they considered bilingualism as investment and asset. Parental aspirations or expectations play the most important role in positive home language development in children. These aspirations are, in fact, guided by parental beliefs and goals for their children's multilingual development and educational outcomes (Curd-Christiansen, 2009). However, it is difficult for the families and individual members to decide which language to prioritize as "language ranking and ideological conflicts can invoke complex systems of power relations that can inhibit intergenerational language transmission" (Curd-Christiansen, 2018, p. 431).

In a study conducted by Seloni and Sarfati (2013) regarding the factors that contribute in the language shift and change, the authors found that the family members were bound to stop the cultural and linguistic practices of the Sephardic Jewish community that settled for more than five hundred years ago due to the on the contextual factors prevalent in Turkey. This shows that immigrant families face challenges regarding the development of the languages of their children. On one hand, they want to transfer their heritage language to their children. But on the other hand, the harsh realities of the domination of different languages outside their home forces them to focus more attention on developing proficiency in the language of the host country.

Based on Warriner's (2007), ideas related to bilingualism and heritage language acquisition by immigrant children, this study aims to investigate what literacy practices do the Nepali immigrants in the US develop while adapting to new contexts and what resources are used in doing so?; how do the Nepali families practice and maintain their heritage language and English language development? If they are transferring literacy skills in their heritage language, what challenges do they encounter and what attempts do they make to overcome them?

**FLP and Heritage Language Transfer.** Family plays an important role in the preservation and transfer of heritage language in immigrant families. In many cases, family members are the only source of input for the children to get exposure to the heritage language in the lives of immigrant children. This makes family and the FLP crucial factors in determining the success of the transfer of heritage language in the children.

According to Palviainen & Bergroth (2018, p. 264), "mother tongue can be very emotionally loaded and closely connected with personal lived experience and identity". Therefore, the adult members in the families might want their children to learn the heritage language to maintain the lineage and identity. However, family language policy alone may not be

sufficient to transfer the heritage language to the children as multiple factors play a significant role in the success of the bilingual development of the children in a situation where the home language and dominant language in the society are different. This is particularly relevant to the immigrant families that migrate to a place where there is a small or no community of people speaking their language. In this case, the language of education, business, mass media and everyday communication in public places is another dominant language and the children do not get any exposure to the language except the limited opportunities within the family. Besides, while growing up, they do not see any use of their home language in education and employment in their life thereby limiting their investment in acquiring the home language.

Henderson Lee (2018) argues that “heritage language learners are often positioned between the perimeters of first and second language acquisition” (p. 3) as those who are learning their heritage language in formal settings share the characteristics of both the first and second language learning. This places them in a unique position compared to a regular second or foreign language learning context. Learning a heritage language in an environment dominated by a second language is challenging for the kids. On one hand, they do not receive much exposure to the language outside the family conversations limiting their domains of language use. On the other hand, they also do not find a reason or motivation to learn a language that can be used within a limited interactional setting. However, knowing one’s own heritage language provides additional benefits to the learners as Lee and Suarez (2009) argue that “there is a strong, positive relationship between heritage language proficiency and maintenance with identity development, higher self-esteem, confidence, self-determination, social interactions with peers, family relationships, second language development and academic achievement” (p. 157). If the children are proficient in their heritage language, they develop a positive self and can feel happy about

their own identity. They also develop a sense of belonging to the community leading to more engaged social and cultural networks. In the families that do not share the heritage languages or have origins to different linguistic communities, it might be even more complicated as the couple might have already decided to use one language over the other one depending on the relative vitality of the languages they speak. This makes the issue of heritage language and identity even more complicated as there can be negotiation or even conflicts between the partners regarding the use of the languages within their family domain. Wei & Hua (2019) argue that “*imagination* (original emphasis) plays a key role in whether and how members of transnational families individually and collectively maintain or relinquish their heritage languages and adopt other languages as part of their dynamic multilingual repertoires” (p. 73). Therefore, the personal connection of the immigrant families with their home country and community affects the transfer of the heritage language to the children. For example, the children in those families that have strong ties with the members of the community in the home country tend to get opportunities to communicate with their family members, relatives and friends back home. But those families that do not have a strong connection and bond with the people from their place of origin might not get opportunities to use their heritage language. This connection is easier now because of the advancement of digital tools such as the internet and mobile technologies.

In his graded intergenerational development scale, Fishman (2004) gives family the central role in preserving heritage language because families can provide the resources and opportunities for the children to learn their heritage language even when the micro-social institutions such as schools, community interactions are not favorable. Kroskrity (2004) argues that having a uniform and consistent language ideologies of a community is not possible. In fact, there is a constant negotiation of the ideologies among the community members. We can relate

this with the immigrant families and further argue that the ideologies held by each member in the family can be different and even the ideologies held by a single member across different time frames can vary. Moreover, a person may also have multiple ideologies and some of them might be conflicting with one another.

In his study of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora families living in the UK, US and Canada, Canagarajah (2019) found that taking part in religious rituals is one way to preserve the heritage language among the immigrant children as they make use of verbal resources while reciting the religious hymns or other forms of religious prayers. Based on this study, Canagarajah argues that cultural activities organized by the community and/or people help the children socialize with other adults and children and support in heritage language learning. However, most of the immigrant children feel comfortable using the dominant language. Another study conducted by Said and Zhu (2019) showed that three factors as reasons for the successful language learning, use and maintenance of heritage language among the immigrants from Arabic language groups living in the UK. These factors included FLP with a positive multilingual attitude; bond and connectedness of the family members; and the children's ability to understand their parents' language preferences.

It might be unrealistic to expect the children to have a mastery of the heritage language like the parents who lived the foundation years in their lives in the community that used their heritage language. In many cases, people judge the children's language abilities without considering their multilingual repertoire. However, it is natural for the children to switch to the dominant language and use translanguaging as a tool to bridge their communication. Supporting this view Canagarajah (2019, p. 13) states that "even without advanced and full proficiency, one might still be able to participate in the spatial repertoires of an ethnic community and perform



typical functions indexed by a heritage language”. Canagarajah further states that “heritage language is hybrid and relative: it might constitute a different set of language resources in the homeland and different diaspora settings, based on the language ideology, historical trajectories, social relations, and indexicality practices of the respective communities” (p. 13).

The communities and schools can help the children from the immigrant communities to acquire their heritage languages, as after-school-program, weekend program or summer holiday programs. However, it is the ideologies and practices of the family members that invariably impact the development of heritage language in the children. If the parents have a strong will to transfer their heritage language and provide appropriate opportunities and support, it might positively support the children. Moreover, parents’ language practices in the family lay the foundation of the communication skills for the children. In this study, I have explored the ideologies and practices of the Nepali immigrants regarding the transfer of heritage language to their children. More specifically, the study looks closely at the discursive construction of language ideologies in the children and the affordances provided by the parents to support their children’s heritage language development.

### **Nepali Immigrants in the US and Minnesota**

Due to the economic, educational and employment opportunities, the US is the center of global mobility in recent decades. People from all over the world, both developed and developing, have migrated to the US for various reasons such as business, higher education, employment, as refugees and asylum seekers, and through diversity visa lottery. The fact that immigration is one of the most important issues in national politics and policy debates in the US demonstrates the crucial role of immigration in American society.

The US census report 2000 shows that a total of 11,715 people born in Nepal live in the US. However, this number is smaller than the actual size of the Nepali diaspora population in the US as informal estimates of the Non-resident Nepali Association (NRN) and other organizations show that there are more than 200,000 people from Nepali origin living in the US at present. There are very few people with Nepali generation in their third generation living in the US as the history of mass movement of Nepali immigrants to the US doesn't date back very far. In fact, most of the Nepali immigrants in the US moved to the US after the new millennium mainly as students to pursue higher education, and as permanent residents through the diversity visa (DV) lottery program.

Although the presence of Nepali immigrants in the US is not very visible demographically, the number of people who have migrated from Nepal to the US for higher education and employment has grown significantly in the last couple of decades. There has also been a significant increase in the Nepali population due to the diversity visa lottery provided by the US government to the people from the least developing countries. Around 3,000 families come to the US through the DV lottery alone. If we take the average family size to be three, that makes 9,000 from DV lottery alone. Similarly, the population of Nepali students studying in the US has grown many folds in recent years. For example, the number of Nepali students ranked 12th in the US with a total of 13,229 enrollments in the academic year 2019-20 (Farrugia, Bhandari, Baer, Robles, & Andrejko, 2017), which is 50% increase from the 2012/13 academic year when the total number of Nepali students in the US was 819,644.

According to the US Census Bureau (2010), 8,209 people in the US identified themselves as Nepalis in 2000. The number reached 57,209 in 2010 with a growth rate of 596.9% in 10 years. The data shows that New York City, Washington DC, Dallas, Boston and San Francisco

are the top five cities with the Nepali population which indicates that Nepali immigrants are concentrated around big cities and metropolitans. However, Sijapati (2009) states that the informal estimates made by non-resident Nepali associations show the figure to be between 80,000 and 150,000. This suggests that the number of Nepalis in the US is far more than the ones documented in the census report. Moreover, the number of Nepali speakers in the US is higher than these numbers as the Bhutanese refugees resettled in the US over the last 10 years from the refugee camps in Nepal also speak the Nepali language. I have used the term *Nepali immigrants* in this study to refer to the people living in the US who were either born in Nepal or have ancestral roots in Nepal but are not connected to other countries with Nepali speaking population such as India and Bhutan.

**Immigrants in Minnesota.** According to Sugarman & Geary (2018), 8.7% of people living in Minnesota are foreign-born, which is much lower than the US national figure of 13.7%. “which covers people residing in the United States who were not US citizens at birth including naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents”, certain legal nonimmigrants (e.g., persons on student or work visas), those admitted under refugee or asylee status, and persons illegally residing in the United States. The data further shows that nearly half (47.6%) of the total population in Minnesota have ancestral roots to a place outside the US territory.

American Community Survey conducted by the US Census Bureau (2017) has shown that a total of 11.1% out of 5.5 million population in Minnesota (age 5+) spoke a language other than English at home in 2017. Citing Minnesota Department of Education’s data, Sugarman & Geary (2018) state that there were 137,008 students enrolled in schools in Minnesota with a home language other than English in the school year 2017/18. Among these students, the three

languages with the largest population of students were Spanish (35,1%), followed by Somali (19%) and Hmong (14.9%).

Although the Nepali immigrants belong to different linguistic, cultural and ethnic groups, Nepali is used as a dominant lingua franca for communication among these people (Dhungel, 1999). The exact number of Nepalis in Minnesota is not known, but the Association of Nepalis in Minnesota (ANMN) estimates that there are around 3,000 people from Nepali and Bhutanese origin. Most of these people living from Nepali origin living in the US use Nepali as the language of contact within the community (Rawal, 2015).

Like all immigrant communities, transferring their heritage language is one of the greatest challenges the Nepali community has in terms of maintaining their identity. The present research makes a case of how the ideologies and practices of the immigrants from a minority groups influence the language practices of the children that influence the development of their heritage language in an environment that is dominated by the English language.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of the literature related to the various issues connected to this issue. The review of the literature showed the challenges associated with the heritage development in children from transnational families. Moreover, the review also showed a gap in the existing literature regarding the experiences of transnational families speaking the less-known languages in the US.

First, the chapter reviewed the existing literature on transnational migration with two sub-themes, namely, transnational families and language issues, and identity issues in transnational migration. It then reviewed the literature on family language policy and discussed the role of

parents and children in shaping the family language policy in immigrant contexts. After this, the chapter included a discussion of research on language ideology, followed by bilingualism and heritage language acquisition with a focus on family language policy and heritage language transfer. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the Nepali immigrants in the US and Minnesota, and a brief section on the immigrants in Minnesota. The next chapter presents the methodology used to conduct this study detailing the research design, context of the study, participants, data collection methods and tools.

## Chapter III: Methodology

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ideologies and practices of the transnational families of Nepali origin living in the US in regard to their linguistic behavior in everyday family contexts. Moreover, the study also explored the impact of the family language policy on the language acquisition of the children growing in transnational bilingual contexts. More specifically, this study tried to answer three research questions: (a) What are the beliefs of the two Nepali immigrant families living in the US related to the use of language, and what are the sources of these beliefs?; (b) What language practices do they make in different interactional settings, and how does that further influence the language behavior of the children?; and (c) What language management efforts are these family members making for the development of language in their children, and how do these efforts influence the language and literacy skills of their children?

In this chapter, I have described the methodology adopted to answer the above-mentioned research questions. More specifically, the chapter elaborates on the details of the participants of the study, the tools and methods used to collect the data, the procedures used to analyze the data, and researcher positionality on the study.

### Participants

The participants in this research study were two Nepali families living in the state of Minnesota in the US. To select the required participants for this study, I used the purposive non-random sampling procedure (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), which allows the researcher to select the participants based on his convenience to collect the data. As the study aimed to investigate the

FLP in the families of Nepali origin that have school-age children, it would have been difficult to find the participants using random sampling. In addition to that, being a member of the Nepali community living in Minnesota offered me the opportunity to gain the confidence of the participants to collect the data involving their family interactions. I selected these families because both had two school-going children of different age groups. Within the broader scope of this FLP research, I wanted to observe how joining school impacts the language socialization of the children in the English dominant community, and how children's heritage language use and proficiency is affected as they continue to immerse in the English only schools and communities. This is the reason why I selected families that had two children one of which is in high school and the other one joining the school recently.

I have used the terms *Family 1* and *Family 2* to refer to the families, and names of the members and their relationship with each other to refer to them. The numbers allocated to the families have no meaning in the study except to identify them. I used *Family 1* for the family that I recruited first and *Family 2* for the one that I recruited second for the study. The detailed description of the participating families has been discussed below.

**Family 1:** Family 1 consisted of 6 members including both grandparents, father, stepmother of the children and two children. I have used the pseudonym Prem to refer to the first immigrant in the family. Prem came to the US in 2004 in a diversity visa lottery program which allows people from low-income countries to immigrate to the US permanently to fulfil the growing work force in the country. Before coming to the US together with his wife, Prem was doing his bachelor's degree in mathematics in Nepal and working part-time. After he came to the US, he worked for five years and bought a house for his family. As he became financially secure, he joined a community college and completed his associate degree in two years. He, then,

enrolled at a university in Minnesota and earned his bachelor's degree in information technology in three years. With this new degree, he got a job in a bank in 2013 and has been working there ever since.

Prem and his wife gave birth to a son, Pritam, a year after they came to the US. As both of them had to work hard to become financially independent, they decided to send their son to Nepal a year after his birth to stay with Prem's parents. Pritam stayed with his grandparents until he was five years old and came to the US with the grandparents. The grandparents stayed with their family in the US for some time and returned to Nepal. During his stay in Nepal for four years, Pritam developed his foundation in the Nepali language as it was used by all the members of the family, relatives and the community members around. The grandparents visited the US twice before their current visit but returned to Nepal after a few months each time. They last came to the US three years ago and have been staying with his son's family until now. While I was collecting data for this study, they did not have any intention to return to Nepal anymore as they thought that they were old, and it would be convenient for them to get the necessary health services in the US than in Nepal. At the time when I collected the data, the grandfather was 82 years and the grandmother was 76 years old.

Prem and his wife had their daughter five years ago. The couple got divorced three years ago when the younger child was 2 years old. Prem has taken the custody of both the children and they live with him. Prem requested his parents to come and live with him in the US after his divorce as he also needed help to look after his children. Prem's ex-wife lives in the same town with her mother and the children visit her during the weekends and holidays. As shared by Prem and his son, the children use Nepali with their mother, and monolingual grandmother during their visits. After his divorce with his first wife, Prem got married to his current wife, Renu, two years



ago in Nepal. It took them a year to process the immigration process and Renu came to the US a year ago. She works in a company that produces medical equipment. The three-generation extended family has six members now.

Prem and Renu belong to a family and community that uses Nepali as their first language. Nepali is the language used by the largest group of people as their first language in Nepal. Moreover, it is the official language and is used widely in education, mass media, business and government affairs (Phyak & Ojha, 2019). Prem had studied English in his middle and high school classes, and in his college as a subject but had low level of functional proficiency to use it for everyday communication. At the time of the data collection, I found Prem to be fluent in English in his oral communications which he said developed over the years due to his long stay in the English-speaking community. He also attended a community college and university and is now working in an English-only communicative environment in a bank. Renu had completed her degree in sociology in Nepal before coming to the US. She had studied English as a subject in her middle and high school and in the college, and knew little English, but she was not able to have independent communication in English when she came to the US a year ago. Both Prem's father and mother are monolingual Nepali speakers and do not know any English except some words that they have mastered due to their frequent use by their family members. Prem's father is literate in Nepali but his mother can't read and write in any language.

Prem's son, Pritam, is 14 years old and his daughter, Poonam, is 5 years old now. Pritam studies in Grade nine and Poonam just completed her kindergarten and started her First grade. Both of them go to local public schools near their home. The following table summarizes the biographical information of the members of Family 1.

Table 1: Biographical Information of the Participants from Family 1

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Languages known</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Length of stay in the US</b>
Prem (husband)	42	Nepali (fluent), English (fluent)	IT professional in Bank	15 years
Renu (wife)	29	Nepali (fluent), English (functional)	Working in a manufacturing company	1 year
Prem's father	82	Nepali (fluent)	Farming in the past; now retired	3 years continuously now; 4 years altogether
Prem's mother	76	Nepali (fluent)	Farming in the past; now retired	3 years continuously now; 4 years altogether
Pritam (son)	14	Nepali (functional), English (fluent)	Student (Grade 9)	Since birth except 4 years spent in Nepal
Poonam (daughter)	5	Nepali (functional), English (fluent)	Student (Grade 1)	Since birth

**Family 2.** The second family consisted of four members including Dipak (husband), Priya (wife) and their two children. Dipak and Priya also came to the US through the diversity visa (DV) lottery in 2005. Before coming to the US, Dipak used to work as a sub-engineer (overseer) in a hydropower company in Nepal. He had completed a vocational training course from a technical school in Nepal before joining the job.

Family 2 also uses Nepali as their heritage language. Like Prem, Dipak had also studied English in his school and in the vocational institute but had not used English for everyday communication before coming to the US. Due to his long stay and regular communication with the English-speaking community in the US, Dipak is a fluent speaker of English now. Because of his experience in the technical field in Nepal, Dipak continued his work as a technician after he

came to the US. On the other hand, his wife, Priya, had very little experience of learning English in her school in Nepal and shared that she could not communicate in English when she first came to the US. Therefore, she worked as a manual worker that did not require her to communicate with her co-staff and clients. Priya told that the supervisor in her first job was a Nepali immigrant and it was easier for her to communicate if she needed.

Dipak and Priya came to the US with their six-month-old son, Pramod. Only Dipak used to work in the initial phase of their arrival as Priya spent her time at home looking after their son. This made it difficult for them to earn enough to sustain their family expenses. Therefore, they sent their son to Nepal to stay with Dipak's elder brother's family. He stayed in Nepal for four years and came to the US when he was of school-going age. At present, Priya works at a company that manufactures medical equipment. As told by her during the interviews, she can communicate in English now but still does not feel comfortable to talk when she is among all English-speaking people.

According to Priya, Pramod did not speak any word until he was 2 years old. She reflects that it might be because he did not have anyone to talk to in the family as Dipak would be working outside the whole day and Priya was a very quiet person who would talk very little. Priya still has a quiet personality and does not speak much with people. I noticed this during my visits to the family while collecting data, and she also mentioned this during one of the interviews that I had with her. According to Priya, after staying with Dipak's elder brother's family for a few months, Pramod started speaking some words and soon developed the age-appropriate proficiency like normal children. The parents think that the baby did not speak due to a lack of exposure to the language. Pramod is 15 years old now and studies in grade 10. Dipak

and Priya had their second son, Diwas, four and half years ago who now goes to kindergarten. The following table summarizes the biographical information of the members of Family 2.

Table 2: Biographical Information of the Participants from Family 2

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Languages known</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Length of stay in the US</b>
Dipak (husband)	45	Nepali (fluent), English (fluent)	Technical field	14 years
Priya (wife)	40	Nepali (fluent), English (functional)	Working in manufacturing company	14 years
Pramod (elder son)	15	English (fluent), Nepali (functional)	Student (Grade 10)	Most of his life except 4 years spent in Nepal
Diwas (younger Son)	4.5	English (fluent), Nepali (working)	Student (Kindergarten)	Since birth

## Research Design

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs and practices of two families of Nepali origin living in the US regarding the transfer of heritage language to their children. To address the three research questions of this study, an ethnographic case study design was used for the data collection and analysis. An ethnographic research design was chosen to gain understanding of the culture of the two selected transnational families taking them as a group having similar culture. A case study approach was blended with the ethnographic research design to set boundaries on the population under study.

The study is ethnographic because it looks at language ideologies and practices focusing on cultural patterns of the selected group in a holistic manner (Nunan, & Bailey, 2009). While doing so, I mostly adopted an emic perspective (Maxwell, 2013). As a member of the Nepali

community living in the US, I share the insider's perspective on the issues related to language and culture as explored in this study. The study tried to explore the underlying beliefs, values, culture that guided the behavior of the participants. The study is a case study as it investigated using a holistic and intensive analysis of a single unit (Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016), that is, two Nepali families living in the US. The data for the study were obtained using semi-structured interviews, observations, field notes and analysis of artifacts related to the study. The following sections describes the method and tools for data collection in detail.

### **Methods and Tools for Data Collection**

Data for this study were collected from several sources and tools. The four major tools were semi-structured interviews, participant observations, artifacts that show the language practice of the family, and researcher diary. Data from interactions that took place during the observations was also used as a source of data. The following section contains details of the tools used to collect the data.

**Interview.** Multiple rounds of interviews were conducted with different participants from the selected families over the period of three months during the data collection procedure for this study. A semi-structured interview guide (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) was used to elicit the information from the participants to explore their feelings, thoughts and intentions (Patton, 2015). However, the subsequent interview questions (Appendix E and Appendix F) were based on the responses provided by the participants. These follow up interviews provided me with an opportunity to get detailed understanding of the ideas that are brought up by the interviewee during the previous rounds of interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interviews were conducted in Nepali or a mix of both Nepali and English, and were audio recorded and translated by the researcher.

The parents from both the families were interviewed three times each for about an hour each. The first set of interviews were conducted at the beginning of the data collection phase. During this interview, I focused on finding out the background information of the family that might have influenced their language practices. The second sets of interviews with the parents were conducted between the second and third rounds of observation of the family in different contexts. During these interviews, I asked questions to the participants based on the observed language behavior of the families. The third set of interviews were conducted towards the end of the data collection phase after the completion of the fifth observation of the language practices of the family in different contexts. During this interview, the participants were asked to elaborate on any theme that emerged during the observations and past interviews.

Since Family 1 was an extended family and included grandparents, I also interviewed the grandparents for half an hour. The joint interview with the grandparents was conducted to investigate their beliefs and practices related to language use in their family in the US. Since they were monolingual Nepali speakers, I also asked them questions related to the issues they have while communicating with their grandchildren as they grew in English dominant society. Moreover, I also tried to understand how their presence impacted the language practices in the family, especially that of the grandchildren.

I also had a brief interview with the elder kids in both the families. The interviews lasted for about half an hour and focused primarily on the beliefs and practices of the children involving their heritage language and dominant English language. They were asked to reflect on their language learning journey so far, their future goals in terms of maintenance and use of heritage language. I also asked them to share information and materials related to the development of their language skills.

Overall, these interviews were used to collect information on the background of the family, the attitude of the family towards the Nepali and English language, the language environment and practices of their children, and the family language practices in different contexts. The interview topics and questions that I used for the data collection have been included in appendix D to Appendix I at the end of this thesis.

**Observation.** To explore the language practices of the selected families, I observed both the families five times in different interactional contexts such as mealtime, family gathering, children's play time, TV time and children's homework hours. I joined them in their daily household activities and family gatherings and observed their linguistic behaviors when they communicated with each other. I audio recorded these conversations as far as possible, and also took field notes in the researcher's diary if any interesting incident took place during the observation. During these observations, my focus was identifying the language they use, any switch in language in different contexts, translingual communications, reflection of any language ideology in the linguistic behavior, and any effort made by the parents to manage or influence the use of language by their children. While making my observation notes, I did not follow any pre-determined format or template and tried to note down whatever I thought would be interesting and relevant for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After each observation, I made a brief reflective note to link the data with the ongoing analysis.

The participant observation of the family in different interactional contexts provided me with data to see whether and how the linguistic practices of the family are affected in different contexts and purposes. Moreover, it also helped me to document the efforts made by the parents for the management of the languages in the family. Interactions made during the observation helped me explore the issue further and also provided clues for the elicitation of their ideas while

usual conversations took place. I also had informal interactions with the children to document their responses and to identify their beliefs and practices related to the use of languages. All interactions were conducted in the presence of their parents to provide a safe environment for the children. This was done with pre-approval from the IRB Board at Minnesota State University, Mankato. A copy of the assent script used for the study has been attached at the end of this thesis (Appendix C). The participant observations allowed me to see if the language ideologies held by the participants were found in practices in their real-life conversational exchanges within the family.

**Researcher Diary.** I documented any important incident that took place during the whole process of data collection in a researcher diary. I also took detailed notes of any important and useful information from my observation in this diary. I decided on the areas to make note based on the relation the incident had with the research questions and the existing literature I had reviewed prior to data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The diary was written on an ongoing basis and provided further details on the issue under investigation. I also recorded my reflection and ongoing interpretation of the important data I came across. My reflective notes were mostly unstructured as I did not use any pre-determined prompts.

**Artifacts.** In ethnographic research, documents and artifacts which are part of the research setting also serve as sources of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I made note of artifacts noticed during the family visits that indicated the language ideologies and practices of three participants. I found these heirlooms during my visits to the families as we sat in different places during our interviews and different events. I also requested the participants to show me if they had kept anything related to Nepal and their culture to which the participants happily agreed to. These artifacts included heirlooms, family collections, written and digital communication among



the family members, relatives, and friends, reading materials, textbook and other materials used by the children. These artifacts helped me understand the underlying beliefs of the family members regarding their heritage and language.

## **Data Analysis**

**Transcription.** I translated and transcribed the audio-recorded interviews manually myself. I consider myself qualified to translate the interview as I am an advanced user of both the languages and have also got some experience of translating texts between Nepali and English. To make sure that of the translation and transcription of the data, I did a member check to get consent from the participants regarding the accuracy of the data. Although the participants did not go through all the transcripts, they went through some initial pages and agreed with my translation.

**Data Coding and Analysis.** The data collected from the multiple sources was analyzed qualitatively. As “qualitative data analysis is concurrent with data collection and management” (Saldaña, 2011, p. 95), the data analysis process for this study began right at the beginning of the data collection procedure. The data analysis was done by reading the transcripts, field notes and anecdotes multiple times. The first reading was done without any particular focus. During the second reading, the data were coded and sorted to find out the emergent themes, a process identified as *analytical coding* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The coding is done based on interpretation and reflection on meaning (Richards, 2015) as the researcher interprets the data relating them with his understanding of the participants’ context. Data collection and analysis go together, and themes are drawn on a recursive basis making multiple rounds of revisions before making a final decision. I drew themes based on the first round of interviews and looked for patterns and categories that matched them. In case of the emergence of more frequent patterns in

the data collected later, the themes were restructured. I followed an iterative, spiraling, and cyclic process of data analysis as suggested by Creswell (2018) and kept on referencing the new data on an ongoing basis. The data collected from interviews, observation, researcher diary, and artifacts will be linked with each other before drawing conclusions.

While analyzing the data, I used pseudonyms to refer to the participants to maintain confidentiality. Member checking was conducted to allow the participants to read and comment on the translation of the data and my initial interpretations of the findings (Friedman, 2012). Any comments from the participants were incorporated into the final analysis to ensure the validity of the data analysis process. While making meaning out of the data, I used an interpretative analysis (Dörnyei, 2007) and linked the social, cultural and other factors that might have contributed to the ideologies and practices of the participants. I started my analysis using a literal approach and discussed the surface meaning of the data, but as I continued the data analysis process, I also explored the deeper meaning and interpreted the meaning linking the data with the broader social and cultural contexts the participants live in. While doing so, I used Curdt-Christiansen's (2018) framework focusing on three key areas, namely, language ideology, language practice, and language management to analyze the data.

### **Researcher Positionality**

In the present study, I find myself as an insider of the community under investigation. As a fellow Nepali, I am familiar with the language, culture and values that the Nepali families have in common. Recently I was appointed a Committee Member of Association of Nepalis in Minnesota (ANMN) and have been serving the community for a year now. I have been assigned the responsibility to work in the membership and Public Relations Committee. This responsibility requires me to contribute in planning different programs such as cultural events

and festivals. As a Committee Member, I get the opportunity to work closely with the Nepali community in Minnesota and understand their common concerns and challenges.

It is important to acknowledge that as a Nepali who lived most of his life in Nepal and moved to the US for graduate studies, I share a similar immigration profile with the participants of this study. However, unlike my participants who have lived in the US for a longer time and have settled here as residents permanently, I have been in the US for a couple of years. Moreover, I just have a baby born towards the end of this study and do not have any issues related to the transfer and maintenance of my heritage language to the next generation. However, as an international student, I have realized that maintaining my own language is a huge challenge here as I am immersed in the English speaking community all the time, including when I am studying, and I have realized that there are some changes in my language now than a year ago.

Through observation of Nepali families in my close network, I have realized that the Nepali immigrants living in the US face a tremendous challenge to transfer their heritage language to their children. As an individual who has great admiration for multilingualism, diversity and preservation of heritage language, I place a high value on heritage language transfer and maintenance in children of immigrants. Despite all the personal associations with Nepali language and community, my preference for maintenance of heritage language, literacy and culture, I have tried to be open to understanding the ideologies and practices of my participants and have reported the ideas and experiences shared by the participants.

I have both etic and emic perspectives while analyzing and interpreting the data. I share some features with the participants due to my linguistic and cultural background similar to the participants. Therefore, I call my perspective as emic. However, since have not lived in the US for a long time and am not an immigrant, I might not have the same world view about language

and culture as my participants. Therefore, I might also have an etic perspective while analyzing the data.

I admit that my theoretical orientation to language learning and use in relation to immigrant identity might reflect my own experience as a sojourn academic and international student in the US. Moreover, my own mobility from a monolingual Doteli speaking village in the remote part of Far-western region of Nepal to the English dominant town and then to Kathmandu, Nepali-dominant multilingual capital of Nepal has also contributed in shaping my understanding of the issue of migration, mobility in relation to language and identity. Even though Nepali was used as a medium of instruction for education in my elementary grades, I rarely used it outside the classroom and had no other exposure to the Nepali language except the textbooks prescribed to us. Even the classroom interactions would take place in Doteli language, thereby limiting out exposure to other languages outside out native tongue. Upon my move to the new place, I experienced some sort of language and culture shock as I was not proficient in the Nepali language and was new to the city culture. This has helped me to relate the experience of the immigrants in new places. Moreover, as an international student who has traversed many linguistic and cultural boundaries, both within my home country Nepal and in the US, in personal and professional life, I have first-hand experience of navigating the language, culture and professional lives in a different context. This has helped me have a broader understanding of the issues related to international mobility.

In sum, it was easy for me to access the participants because of my affiliation with the Nepali community. I not only researched the family language policy and practices of the Nepali families, but also had extended conversations on the importance of transferring the heritage language to the children. While doing so, I made sure that I was not suggesting the families to

adopt certain ideologies and practices related to language use in their families. Rather, I tried to raise issues related to language use in the immigrant families and their practices with regards to the development of bilingual abilities of the children. I position myself as a member of the researched community and a staunch supporter and advocate of maintenance and transfer of heritage language to the children by the immigrant families.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the methodological details used to conduct this study. As described above, the study followed an ethnographic case study model approach for the investigation of the family language policy of the Nepali immigrants living in the US. I started the chapter with a short introduction followed by the detailed description of the participants of the study. After this, I discussed the research design, methods and tools used for data collection, and data analysis. At the end of the chapter, I detailed the researcher positionality. The following chapter presents the findings of the study and discusses them in line with the literature reviewed earlier in the thesis.

## **Chapter IV: Findings of the Study**

This chapter presents the findings drawn from the analysis of the data collected from various sources for this study. The results are further discussed relating them with three research questions: (1) What are the beliefs of the two Nepali immigrant families living in the US related to the use of language and what are the sources of these beliefs?; (2) What language practices do they make in different interactional settings and how does that further influence the linguistic behavior of the children?; and (3) What language management efforts are these family members making for the development of language in their children and how do these efforts influence the language and literacy skills of their children? The findings of the study are presented in different subsections grouped according to the research questions, thereby, dividing this chapter into three main sections: (a) nature and sources of language beliefs, (b) language practices in the transnational families, and (c) efforts for language management. A number of sub-themes have been drawn from the data and discussed under each of these themes.

### **Nature and Sources of Language Beliefs**

The first research question I wanted to explore through this study was “what are the beliefs of the two Nepali immigrant families living in the US related to the use of language and what are the sources of these beliefs?”. Based on the analysis of the data collected from various sources, I have identified some common sub-themes related to the beliefs of the participants and the sources of such beliefs. Language beliefs have been analyzed from multiple perspectives in various contexts. This study looks at the concept of language belief at family and individual levels: beliefs of the parents and children about the importance of heritage language; parents’ expectations about their children’s language development, their perceived challenges for the

preservation of heritage language. The data for the research question was obtained primarily through interviews but it was also linked with the observation and field notes.

**Parental beliefs and ideologies about language proficiency.** Analysis of the data showed parents from both the families had similar views about the English language proficiency of their children. However, they had differences in opinion on their children's heritage language proficiency. The data suggests that parents were happy about the development of the English language proficiency of their kids. They were found to be confident about their children's English language proficiency. Talking about his children's' English language proficiency, Dipak (Husband) said that they "can speak English well" (Interview, 10.13.2019). However, recollecting his kids' initial days in the school, he said:

Since my children grew up using Nepali at home, they had to attend ESL classes. But I don't think the younger one will need to take ESL classes. I think he will pick English easily as he will spend more time in school with teachers and friends (Interview, 10.13.2019).

Dipak has mixed feelings about his children's language development. On the one hand, he was happy that his children were able to communicate well in English and doing good academically, but on the other hand, their Nepali language proficiency is not as good. Prem, had similar views about his children as he shared that his kids "can speak both Nepali and English well" (Interview, 7.15.2019). However, he also shared that his kids were not as competent in Nepali as they were in English. Although differences were noticed in the way parents perceived the kids' Nepali language proficiency, members of both the families agreed that their children were competent in using English in all domains.

Adult members of both families shared that they can use English for communication. However, they believe that their level of proficiency is different. While the husbands in both the

families mentioned that they could communicate well in English in all domains, the wives shared that they face difficulties in communicating in English sometimes. My field notes showed that Renu showed this kind of anxiety when I was about to start the first interview with her and Prem together as she thought that I was going to ask questions in English. She might have thought so as she knew about my English major at the university. When I told her that she was free to answer in any language she wanted to, she had felt comfortable. Prem also thought that Renu did not have good English to communicate well. During the same interview, when we were talking about language used in the family interactions, I asked Prem if she could communicate in English with the kids. Prem mentioned that she had difficulty speaking English and said, “not necessarily...she is not comfortable in the English language. She is practicing with kids. That’s how she is improving” (Interview, 7.15.2019). Renu also confirmed this as she mentioned that she talked to the kids in English so that she could “improve” her English. While Prem thought Renu was learning English from the kids, he stated that he was proficient in English, and thus, could communicate with the kids well if they wanted him to use English. He said, “I can speak English. I can communicate well with the kids like whatever they want” (Interview, 7.15.2019). Prem’s English language proficiency was also evident in his conversations with the kids, as noted in my field notes.

The couple in Family 2 reported similar experiences with the English language. While Dipak (husband) said he could communicate well in English with anyone, Priya (wife) shared that she faced difficulty to understand the “accent” of the people in her workplace. Dipak also mentioned the difficulty in communicating in English due to differences in “accent” in the initial days. Recalling his experience about the English language in the past, he stated:



Sometimes, I did not understand what others said to me. I also felt difficult to communicate what I wanted to. We used to use British accent (in Nepal) and the people here use the American accent which made it difficult for us to understand them. The American people used to tell me that I spoke with an Indian accent (Interview, 10.13.2019).

The excerpt above shows that both Dipak and Priya had difficulty in communicating with people when they first came to the US. Although Priya said she felt much more comfortable during my data collection compared with her initial years in the US. She reflected that she still faced problems with the people who spoke “fast”. Remembering her struggle with the English language in her initial days in the US, Priya said:

When I came to the US, I did not know any English at all. When I started working, I could not communicate with anyone. I wouldn't even understand other people as they were people from different backgrounds, and they had different accents. I would just work with gestures. I faced a lot of difficulties as I did not know the English language (Interview, 7.31.2019).

According to Priya, after her initial struggle with the English language, she joined ESL class at a community learning center and was able to improve her English. The extended years of contact with people speaking English, mainly in her workplace, helped her learn English and she was able to gain confidence in communicating in English. This is reflected in her statement as she said, “Now I feel a little more comfortable to communicate in English” (Interview, 7.31.2019). My observation of the family conversation showed that while Dipak talked to his children, especially the younger one, in English occasionally, Priya always used Nepali, mixing only a few words from English. Their linguistic proficiency might have affected their language choices during the family interactions.

**“Children should know our language”: Parental expectations about heritage**

**language learning.** Analysis of the data collected from various sources for this study shows that all the members in both the families wanted their children to learn their heritage language.

Although there were differences in their opinion on the rationale, members in both the families held high expectations that the children would be able to use the Nepali language throughout their lives. Discussing the importance of the heritage language, Prem shared that his children should learn the Nepali language as it is their heritage language, and they needed to communicate with the family and relatives. Prem seemed to be concerned about both emotional and practical reasons regarding the usefulness of the heritage language by his children.

Discussing his views on heritage language learning, Prem said, “Because they know Nepali, they can communicate with their grandparents. That is an advantage of teaching Nepali to the kids” (Interview, 8.12.2019). Prem’s statement indicates that he wanted the children to learn and use Nepali because of practical reasons related to everyday communication more than emotional attachment.

Family 2, on the other hand, expressed their desire to transfer their heritage language for an emotional reason. For example, when I asked what language he wanted his children to speak during family conversations, Dipak said, “we expect our children to speak ‘our’ language” (Interview, 10.13.2019). I have highlighted the word ‘our’ because Dipak emphasized this word and connected to this feeling multiple times during the conversation. His statements indicated that he took Nepali as the language associated with his identity and had an emotional connection with it. This is also evident in a conversation between Dipak and his young son during our second round of interviews a few weeks later. The following vignette from my observation notes shows how Dipak associates Nepali with his identity.

***Dialogue #1: Referring to Nepali as ‘our’ language***

Diwas: Daddy, daddy, can I go out?

Dipak: *Kina jane yesto jado ma?* [Why do you want to go out in this cold weather?]

Diwas: I want to play with X [a kid from the neighborhood]. There’s a lot of snow outside.

Dipak: *Hunchha tara snow lai Nepali ma ke bhanchha bhana ta.* [Okay but tell us what snow is called in Nepali.]

Diwas: I don’t know.

Dipak: *Aaphno bhasama ke bhanchha jannu parchha ni ta.* [You should know how to say that in our language]. *Hiu bhanchha hai* [It is called *hiu*.]

Diwas: *Hiu?* [laughs] Okay, I am going out to play with *hiu*.

Dipak: *Ramrari khela hai.* [Be careful while playing.]

(Observation, 7.15.2019)

As Diwas did not know the Nepali equivalent for ‘snow’, Dipak taught him the word and told him that he should also know “our” language. Similarly, when I asked Priya, Dipak’s wife, about the importance of the Nepali language for the children, she said, “I think it is very important because they should know the language used in our country” (Interview, 10.13.2019). The repetitive use of the term “our language” during the interview and family conversations with the children suggests Dipak and Priya’s strong emotional connection with the heritage language. Parents of the children from both the families wanted their children to learn Nepali language and expressed that the children would continue speaking Nepali throughout their lives. When I asked why he wanted his children to learn and speak Nepali, Dipak said:

We came here from Nepal and speak Nepali. We hope that our language that we have been speaking since we were born will not be extinct here. We want this language to continue to develop and hope that our future generation will also follow our language and culture. We want to preserve our language and culture and teach them to our children. Although we are living abroad, our origin is Nepal (Interview, 12.25.2019).

This excerpt clearly shows that Dipak takes language as a part of the culture and it is important to teach the heritage language to transfer the culture to his children. He expects the children to follow the culture in their lives. Prem, on the other hand, expressed that he wanted his children to learn Nepali as bilingualism is a great asset in the US as he said, “It is a great benefit to be bilingual in the US. Therefore, I thought of teaching them Nepali thinking that they should learn the language that their family used at home (Interview, 8.12.2019).” He also reiterated the need to communicate with the family members in Nepali and stated that “because of their knowledge in the Nepali language they can communicate with the Nepali community, relatives and grandparents now” (Interview, 8.12.2019).

During our conversation about why he wanted his children to learn Nepali language, Prem also brought an incident about one of his Nepali friends living in the US who had to send his monolingual Nepali speaking parents back to Nepal as they felt “bored” after staying for a few months. His friend and wife would go to work all day long and the kids would go to school in the daytime. When the children came back, they could not communicate with the grandparents as they did not know any Nepali. Recalling the incident, Prem said, “They did not feel good about staying in the US with their family because they had no one to talk to most of the time (Interview, 8.12.2019).” This episode is important as Prem’s parents were also living with him and both Prem and Renu were concerned about the children’s communication with their grandparents. This incident seems to have influenced Prem’s belief about the need to teach Nepali language to his children. He also shared that he wanted the kids to be able to communicate well both in the US and in Nepal and said, “We just want them to be able to communicate well: both here and in Nepal. We expect that our kids will be able to communicate in the Nepali language when they meet Nepali speaking people” (Interview, 8.12.2019). Prem

also shared that he is trying to connect the kids with members of the Nepali community while he goes out to play soccer with them.

Talking about his efforts to socialize his children with his network among the Nepali community, Prem shared, “When I go to play soccer with the members of the Nepali community, I take both the kids with me” (Interview, 8.12.2019). This statement shows that he expects his children to use Nepali in the future as well when they grow up as adults. Prem’s son, Pritam, also hoped that he will continue using Nepali. When I asked if he would use his heritage language in the future or not, he said, “I think I will continue speaking Nepali in the future as well” (Interview, 7.31.2019). Dipak also shared similar views about the future and said, “I definitely want my children to use Nepali when they grow up” (Interview, 10.13.2019). Dipak’s son, Pramod, who was 15 years old, also thought that it is important for him to learn and use Nepali to communicate with his parents. Although both his parents speak English, he felt that it is more convenient to use Nepali both with his parents and the Nepali community. When I asked him to share his opinion on the importance of knowing Nepali, he said, “Nepali language us very important for me to communicate with mom and dad. It is also important to communicate with Nepali people during the events. It’s easier to communicate if I know Nepali” (Interview, 7.31.2019). He seems to have a strong sense of affiliation with the Nepali community as he mentioned his participation in community events. These narratives show that although members of both families acknowledge the need to know Nepali, they have different opinions on why they need to know their heritage language.

**“The kids don’t need to speak Nepali like us”.** The data collected from both interviews and observation show that the parents do not expect the children to speak their heritage language like themselves. Citing the difference in the contexts in which the children are living, the parents

stated that as long as the children are able to understand other people and convey the “intended message” they are happy. When I asked Prem about how he feels about his children’s Nepali language proficiency, he said:

We know that they can’t speak Nepali like us. We were born and raised in the community where everyone Nepali. As there are only a few people to speak Nepali with them here, I am happy with their progress. They can communicate in Nepali well even if they live in Nepal. They don’t need to speak Nepali like us. They can understand and speak well. That’s fine (Interview, 8.12.2019).

The excerpt indicates that Prem is happy about his children’s Nepali language proficiency and thinks that the current level of Nepali use that his children have is enough for communication. He also takes the process of mixing words from two languages in their conversation and does not seem to believe that the kids should use Nepali worldly only. Discussing the use of English words while the children speak in Nepali, Prem said, “they will obviously mix some English as everything around them used that language. We all understand what they are saying in Nepali. That’s not a problem as we all mix English words in our conversation” (Interview, 8.12.2019). His use of the word ‘obviously’ indicates that he takes it as a natural phenomenon as everyone does that. The use of English words was found to be a part of the children’s everyday communication when they were using Nepali. The following vignette shows a representative scenario when the children mix English in their Nepali conversation.

***Vignette #1: We can understand her well***

Prem was preparing some snacks in the kitchen. I was sitting in the living room and talking to his parents. Prem’s father initiated the conversation about my arrival in the US. I was explaining when and how I came to the US for my studies, when Poonam, Prem’s daughter came around and sat next to her grandparents. Her grandmother asked her what she was playing, and she said, “*ma game kheldai chhu* [I am playing a game.]”. The

grandmother asked about the game. Poonam replied, “dog *haru ko game ho* [It’s a game about dogs]”. When the grandmother asked, “Ma *pani herau?* [Can I watch it?]”, Poonam replies, “*Hajur play garna jannu hunchha?* [Do you know how to play this?]. When the grandma replied to her that Poonam should teach her how to play first, Poonam laughs and goes into the kitchen. After their conversation, I asked the grandmother if she understood her granddaughter. She told me that she said, “*Kina na saknu? Dherai jaso bujhinchha. Hamle usle boleko ramrari bujhchhaun* [Yes, we can do most. We can understand her well]”. When I asked her how she feels about Poonam’s pronunciation of the words, she said that “*Unle kehi shabda arkai garera bolchhin, tara uniharule yeta yestai garne ta hun* [She pronounces some word differently, but that’s what they will do here]”. (Observation, 7.31.2019)

As indicated by the vignette, the grandmother thinks that she can understand her granddaughter when she mixes some English words although she is a monolingual speaker of Nepali and cannot communicate in English. She also seems to have embraced the fact that children born and raised in the US in the English dominant environment are influenced by the English language and might pronounce Nepali words “differently”. She also believes that as long as she understands her granddaughter, she is happy about “different” pronunciation and mixing of English words.

In Family 2, Priya is also aware that the way Pramod, her elder son, speaks Nepali is “different” from her own language. However, she is happy that her son speaks in Nepali at home. She highlighted that understanding the message is the key to communication; therefore, she was happy with her son’s language proficiency. Talking about her elder son’s Nepali language, she said:

He can speak with us well, but he pronounces some of the words in a different way. We can understand what he is trying to say. So, we don't mind. I think it is good to speak that way instead of using English at home (Interview, 10.13.2019).

Members of both families think that anyone who is living in an English-speaking country is influenced by the environment and speaks their heritage language “differently”. Contrary to their beliefs that the children’s language is influenced by the social and linguistic realities around, the adult members in both the families are worried that the children are losing the command of their heritage language gradually as they grow.

When I inquired what level of Nepali language parents expected from their children., both Dipak and Prem replied that they wanted their children to be fluent enough to communicate with anyone speaking Nepali. Discussing the level of the Nepali language proficiency he expected from his children, Dipak said:

We expect that they speak Nepali fluently. But we will be happy if they can develop proficiency to communicate with people. They do not need to obtain advanced language proficiency but should be comfortable to talk casually using simple language that is acceptable (Interview, 7.15.2019).

Although Dipak wants his children to be fluent, he does not expect them to have advanced proficiency. For him being fluent is not necessarily having advanced proficiency. Dipak also expects that his children become literate in Nepali as he said, “We want my children to learn not just to listen and speak Nepali but also to read and write Nepali a little” (Interview, 10.13.2019). Prem, on the other hand, does not expect his children to learn to read and write as he said, “We never expected the kids to learn to read and write Nepali. We just expect that they can communicate orally” (Interview, 7.15.2019). However, Prem’s son, Pritam hopes that he will be able to learn to read and write as he said:



I think I should also learn to write Nepali because when I went to Nepali a few years ago, I could not read anything written on the boards there. If I learn reading and writing Nepali, it will be useful to me when I travel to Nepal (Interview, 7.31.2019).

Pritam's desire to learn to read and write is related to his visit to Nepal where he was not able to read anything during his last visit. Dipak's son, Pramod, also shared that he might join the Nepali language classes to improve his Nepali if he gets such opportunity. When I asked about support from his family to learn the Nepali language, Pramod told me that his parents encourage him "a lot" to learn Nepali and he feels "good" about that.

One of the major reasons for the parents to expect their children to know the Nepali language was their need to communicate with monolingual family members such as grandparents and relatives in Nepal. This was more evident in Family 1 as Prem's parents were living with them and they didn't know any language other than Nepali. Prem also reported that the need to communicate with the grandparents has contributed significantly to the development of the Nepali language in his children. I will come back to this later while I discuss the influence of family composition on family language policy and children's heritage language development.

**Support from schools for heritage language development.** One of the recurring themes related to the beliefs of the Nepali immigrant families in this study is related to the parents' beliefs about and expectations from their children's schools. Analysis of the data collected through interviews shows that the parents have negative experience with the schools regarding the development of their children's heritage language. Parents from both the families mentioned that their children started losing the Nepali language proficiency as soon as they went to their schools. Recalling how his son gradually lost command over the Nepali language after he started going to school, Dipak said, "My younger son forgot our language as soon as he started going to school. He can understand Nepali but doesn't like to speak it with us" (Interview, 12.25.2019).

Priya also shared similar views about their elder son as she said, “when he started going to school, he began to lose his Nepali, maybe within three to four months” (Interview, 10.13.2019). Priya was particularly concerned about Diwas, her younger son’s Nepali language as she told me that he was forgetting the Nepali words very fast. She said:

Our younger son is in Kindergarten this year. He will go to full time school from the next session. He started going to part-time school and spent two hours there every day. Before going to school, he used to speak Nepali all the time but after he went to school, he started using English in school with his friends and teachers and used using English at home as well. Now he uses half English and half Nepali at home. His Nepali language is weaker now than it used to be before he went to school (Interview, 10.13.2019).

In the excerpt above, Priya clearly indicates that going to school has a negative impact on the Nepali language proficiency of her son. However, she is happy that the son could at least understand Nepali and could respond a little as she said, “he still speaks Nepali with clear accent. He doesn’t use many Nepali words but speaks them clearly” (Interview, 10.13.2019). Her statement indicates that the child has forgotten many words, but he still pronounces the words that he knows clearly. When I asked about his views on why the children forgot the home language after they started going to school, Dipak opined that it is because of the increasing exposure in the English language. He said, “the kids spend most of their important time in their schools. When they are comfortable and make friends in school, they forget home language” (Interview, 12.25.2019). He highlighted *important time* referring to a major chunk of time that the kids spend in an English-speaking environment every day. In addition to this, Dipak also shared that the children forget their home language also because of lack of interactional opportunities at home due to the busy schedule that the parents have. He mentioned that they are

“busy” most of the time at work or doing the household chores and cannot interact with their children.

Parents from the other family also held similar views about the impact of the school on the children’s language behavior. The interview data also shows that schools do not support the development of the heritage language of the children belonging to the minority language families. Interestingly, the parents do not seem to have any expectations from the schools. They do not think that the schools will provide Nepali lessons to their children as there are only a few children from Nepali families in the schools. Prem agreed that the schools did not provide any support for the Nepali language, he was not bothered much as he thought that speaking Nepali at home and engaging the kids with the Nepali community can help them learn Nepali well. Talking about how he is helping his kids to learn Nepali when there is no mechanism to do so through formal schooling, he said, “We are involving our kids with other Nepali kids. They regularly meet the kids from the Nepali family from our neighborhood and outside kids every week...they are practicing whatever they know” (Interview, 9.17.2019). He is confident that the lack of formal education has not impact on his children’s Nepali development. He does not think that schooling practices have much influence on the use of the Nepali language by his children.

Although the parents mentioned lack of Nepali lessons in their children’s schools, I was curious to know if the parents had made any request to the schools to support their kids in learning the Nepali language. When I asked about this, both the families mentioned that they had not inquired about the possibility of having Nepali classes in the schools. Dipak said:

We haven’t done requested the schools to conduct Nepali classes. They teach Spanish in the school, but I don’t think they will teach Nepali even if we ask them. Although there are a lot of Nepali people here, they are scattered in various nearby towns. The Nepali

children attend different schools. Also, the children are in different grades which makes it difficult to arrange such classes (Interview, 12.25.2019).

Dipak does not think the schools will be able to manage the classes due to a small number of Nepali children in each school. Priya thought that “there is no support to teach Nepali to the children” (Interview, 10.13.2019) in the schools. However, the couple believed that the schools should play a positive role in developing children’s heritage language. Dipak said:

I think the schools should support for the development of heritage language, but as far as I know only selected languages such as Spanish and French are given priority after the English language. We get interpretation service in our language, but I have only seen Spanish included in the school curriculum (Interview, 12.25.2019).

Dipak’s statement in the above excerpt indicates that the schools give priority to only selected languages. He also believes that if they could provide interpretation service in the Nepali language in the government offices, they should be able to provide lessons to teach Nepali in the public schools. However, Dipak also understood that the schools are not able to provide Nepali classes due to lack of students as she shared:

They could have run Nepali classes if there were many students from Nepali community in a single class or school... For example, there are just two kids in the school - my son is in Kindergarten and there is another child in Grade one. I don’t think it is possible to teach Nepali as they will require two teachers (Interview, 12.25.2019).

We can easily infer from the excerpts above that the schools are not providing any support for the development of the heritage language of the children from the minority language families. Although the schools provided lessons in languages such as Spanish, French, German, Chinese, the parents in the present study do not expect any support from the schools as they are confident that children minority language like Nepali do not receive any attention from the schools. The

parents are aware that the schools offer lessons only in a few languages other than English that has a significant population in the area.

Although the children did not get any instruction in their home language, they were positive about learning additional languages besides English. The elder children in both the families reported that they were taking Spanish classes in their high school. This indicates that they are interested in learning an additional language and might enroll in Nepali language classes if offered in the school or community.

### **Language Practices in the Transnational Families**

The second question I wanted to investigate through this study was ‘What language practices do the families make in different interactional settings and how does that further influence the linguistic behavior of the children? The data for this issue was collected primarily through observation and field notes. However, the information collected from interviews is also significant to link the themes. Based on the careful analysis of the collected data, findings related to five sub-themes were identified as described in the pages below: (a) “They don’t talk to us much these days”: Decreasing family interactions with the children; (b) “They always start in English”: Language preferences in family conversations; (c) Language preferences in different interactional contexts; and (d) Grandparents as agency to transfer heritage language; and (e) Literacy development: A neglected area.

**“They don’t talk to us much these days”:** Decreasing family interactions with the **children.** A careful analysis of the data collected from interview and observation, demonstrate that the families have gone through a lot of changes in terms of their language practices. Parents

from both the families mentioned that children do not interact with them as much as they used to do in the past. Describing the communication gap between himself and his son, Prem said:

I have realized communication gap between myself and children these days. There is a high chance that they do not understand us while we use Nepali. We use a lot of cultural words that they do not understand. They don't understand everything in Nepali, and we have to tell that in English (Interview, 9.17.2019).

Prem's statement shows that the children do not feel comfortable using Nepali with their parents due to their lack of understanding of the words with the cultural connection. Renu agreed with her husband that language is a barrier to communication with the kids. She compared the situation in Nepal as she said:

I think there is some kind of gap between the parents and children here due to language. In Nepal both parents and children use the same language, and it is easy to communicate. But here, the kids want to use English and the parents want to use Nepali. This causes a gap between them (Interview, 9.17.2019).

Parents in Family 2 also believed that there are many changes in the way the family interaction takes place as the children grow. Priya, for example, shared how attending school has influenced her younger son, Diwas's language practices as he uses more English and less Nepali now. Priya said:

Before going to school, he used to use Nepali all the time but after he started going to school, he started using English in school with his friends and teachers and started using English at home as well. Now he uses half English and half Nepali at home. His Nepali language is weaker now than it used to be in the past before I went to school (Interview, 10.13.2019).

Priya clearly states that Diwas is losing his Nepali language proficiency as he is engaged in conversation with his teachers and peers. As Diwas speaks more English, Priya thinks that her

interaction with Diwas has decreased significantly. This is reflected in her conversation as she said, “If he spoke Nepali, we would have talked more. He doesn’t understand many things that I tell in Nepali” (Interview, 10.13.2019). During my multiple observations of the family interactions, Diwas was hardly found using Nepali with his elder brother and parents. I never found him starting a conversation in Nepali himself. Even when other members of the family started the talk in Nepali, he would reply in English. Unless his parents insisted that he spoke Nepali, he preferred using English over Nepali. However, he understood what his parents said in Nepali, which indicates that he had not forgotten the Nepali language completely but might not feel comfortable speaking.

I wanted to know how parents perceive the decreasing use of Nepali among their children and asked Priya to explain what she thought. She told me that her children might have stopped speaking Nepali as she does not speak much with them. She described herself as an introvert and expressed some kind of guilt for her personality as she was witnessing a distance between herself and her children as they grew. Relating the lack of family interaction with her personality, she said:

Maybe it is because I don’t interact with them much. I think I should speak more now. My husband tells me to speak more because the children might forget Nepali if we don’t talk to them in Nepali. I am worried he might completely forget our language soon (Interview, 10.13.2019).

In her statement above, Priya is concerned that if they do not speak in Nepali at home, the children might lose the language completely. However, she takes her own introvert nature and her husband’s busy schedule as barriers in creating a conducive environment to support their children in learning Nepali at home. Priya also believes that if Diwas spoke Nepali, she could have more conversations with him. Expressing this wish, she said, “I think that if he spoke

Nepali, we would have talked more. He doesn't understand many things that I tell in Nepali" (Interview, 10.13.2019). Her statement shows a two-way connection between language proficiency and level of interaction between the parents and children. On the one hand, lack of interaction between parents and children had influenced their Nepali language proficiency. On the other hand, children's Nepali language proficiency, in turn, has influenced the level of family interaction.

I also wanted to know how the children see the language practices in their families. When I asked whether he communicates with his parents the same way as he used to do in the past Prem's son, Pritam, said he was not sure about the changes and told me that he did not think anything had changed over the years in his language practice. Interestingly, during my multiple visits to the family, I found that he mostly spent his time in his room and came out to interact with his family members and visitors only occasionally. Even when he came out around the other people, he would spend only a few minutes and go back to his room for hours.

The situation was found to be similar in Family 2 as both the parents reported that their sons did not interact with them as much as they used to do. When I asked Dipak, about the changes in the linguistic practices in his family in recent times, he told that they use "more English" in the family as the children grow. He also mentioned that due to the changed language behavior, they "do not have much conversation" (Interview, 12.25.2019). with the kids as they had in the past. He was particularly concerned about Diwas, their younger son, who they said was losing the Nepali language very fast after he started going to school. Explaining the situation, he said:

There are some changes in the way we speak at home now. Since the kids use English, we use more English in our family conversations than in the past. We [husband and wife]



start the conversation in Nepali but the younger one does not speak much with us. We don't have much conversation with each other. If he has to say something, he uses English (Interview, 12.25.2019).

Describing the changing pattern of communication, Dipak further added:

I have felt that the younger one used to speak with us a lot in the past in Nepali. Gradually he started speaking less and less...I think there is less communication with the elder one as well now compare to the past. As he has grown up now, I feel like he has started distancing himself from us. He spends most of his time at home in his room. The younger one is around us most of the time, but he is gradually forgetting the Nepali language and therefore talks to us less ...Because of this, we have less communication now. He speaks very less and speaks English most of the time (Interview, 12.25.2019).

The excerpts cited above show that Dipak's family is going through significant changes in the language practices as the children are inclined towards more dominant use of English. They tend to bring English home through their interaction with their English-speaking peers in the schools and community. Dipak, however, was not open to sharing this change in the beginning as he denied any changes in the pattern of language use in his family during our initial conversations. For instance, when I asked if he had noticed any change in the language practice in family conversation, Dipak told me that he had not seen "any difference". He mentioned that they "use Nepali as home but have to speak English at the workplace" (Interview, 12.25.2019). Prem also shared similar ideas as he mentioned that their language practice "hasn't changed much" (Interview, 9.17.2019). He also shared that the children's language has been the same over the years. When I asked him to comment on any changes in his children's language after they started going to school, he said:

Their language hasn't changed much. They are using what they used to do in the past. We are involving them with the Nepali kids equally. They regularly meet the kids from

Nepali family from our neighborhood and other kids every week. I don't think there is any influence of the schooling practice on their Nepali language use. They are practicing whatever they know (Interview, 9.17.2019).

Through this study, I also wanted to explore whether and what kind of changes the adult members of the family have gone through in terms of the language practices. Analysis of the data collected through interviews and observations shows that adults have been influenced by the language patterns in the English dominant community around them. This was evident in the statement made by Dipak when I asked him to share his language practices since he moved to the US. He said:

I think my Nepali is the same, but I have improved a lot in my English language proficiency. I was very weak in English. It was difficult to communicate with people in English in the beginning. When we first came here, we attended ESL classes in a community center and that helped a lot to improve our English. It was difficult for me to communicate at my workplace well. Sometimes, I would not understand what others said to me and I also felt difficult to communicate what I wanted to... We improved after we continued speaking with other people (Interview, 12.25.2019).

I found Prem's statements contradictory as he denied any influence of schools on his children's language behavior in this excerpt, but he acknowledged that his children started using English at home after they went to school. Also evident in the data was the influence of the children's language behavior on their parents' language practices. When I asked Dipak about this, he said:

Yes, we are definitely influenced by the way the kids communicate. The younger doesn't speak Nepali, so we have to speak English with him sometimes. We have to talk to him and counsel him. Sometimes we have to instruct him or even scold him in English so that he understands what we say well. We are also using some English at home within family due to our children (Interview, 12.25.2019).

Besides other reasons, it was interesting to see that Dipak used English to “counsel” and “scold” his children. When I asked why he switches to English when he wants to counsel or scold his children, he said that he wanted them to understand him “well”. This discourse also appeared in my conversation with Family 1 as Renu mentioned that her she and her husband use English when they have to “scold the kids” (Interview, 9.17.2019). She thought that the children had to understand what they told them. Priya also mentioned that there was no impact of children's choice on her language as she always uses Nepali with them even if they reply in English.

Similar to Priya’s opinion, Prem also did not accept that the children have influenced his language behavior, my observations show that children have a deep influence on the way they communicate in the family. As seen in my observation notes, Prem’s children always started the conversation with him and Renu in English. The following dialogues shows the language preference of the children during their conversation with the parents.

**Dialogue #2: Days and nights**

*Poonam was watching a video on iPad.*

Poonam: Daddy, do you know why we have days and nights?

Prem: No. Please tell me.

Poonam: Because the earth goes around the Sun.

Prem: How do you know that, *chhori*? [How do you know that, daughter?]

Poonam: I watched in a video.

Prem: Wow, great!

(Observation, 8.12.2019)

In the conversation, both Poonam and Prem speak English except for a Nepali word by Prem. Poonam was found to be using English all the time with Renu as in the following dialogue.

### **Dialogue #3: Favorite color**

*Poonam was sitting next to Renu playing with her doll.*

Poonam: Renu auntie, what is your favorite color?

Renu: Blue.

Poonam: But I like pink.

Renu: I also like pink. Pink *lai Nepali ma ke bhanchha?* [what is pink called in Nepali?]

Poonam: [laughs] I don't know.

Renu: [smiles] *Gulabi bhanchha ni.* [it is called *gulabi* in Nepali.]

(Observation, 7.31.2019)

The representative dialogues above indicate the language preferences and practices of the parents involving their children. As can be seen in the dialogues, the children always initiated the conversations in English and did not use any Nepali unless they were asked to do so by the parents. However, in most of the cases, Prem's children were able to respond well when asked to reply in Nepali.

**“They always start in English”:** Language preferences in family conversations. Data from multiple rounds of interviews and observations for this study showed that the children in both the families used English to initiate conversations with other family members on most of the occasions. Even when the parents initiate the conversation in Nepali, the children usually reply in English. Talking about his children's language preferences, Dipak said:

The elder one initiates conversations both in Nepali and English. But the younger one always starts the conversation in English. He used to speak very good Nepali before going to school. He was very clear and fluent...But after he started going to school, he stopped speaking Nepali. Now, he always uses English when he starts the conversation (Interview, 12.25.2019).

Although Dipak's elder son still seems to start the conversations in Nepali on some occasions, the younger one always uses English no matter whether he is initiating the conversation or replying to his parents. According to Priya, Pramod and Diwas also talk to each other in English all the time limiting the interaction in Nepali to fewer occasions.

The preference of the children in Family 1 is similar to that of Family 2. Talking about his son's language preference at home, Prem said, "The only time he uses Nepali is when he wants to communicate with his grandparents mostly at the dining table. But when he wants to speak to us, he uses English" (Interview, 8.12.2019). Prem shared similar views about Poonam, his daughter, regarding her language choices. He told me that Poonam used to use Nepali all the time until last year, but as she started going to school, she now prefers English to Nepali. However, like her brother, she always speaks with the grandparents in Nepali as she is aware that they cannot understand English. My observation confirmed that parents' opinion is similar to the findings from the several rounds of observations of the family interactions show that children English was the preferred language of communication for the children in both the families.

#### **Dialogue # 4: Bag of gift**

*Poonam brings a bag full of gifts to her dad.*

Poonam: Daddy, look at my gifts!

Prem: Oh, *kati dherai? Kasle diyo?* [Wow, so many! Who gave them to you?]

Poonam: Uncle and aunts.

*After a while when Poonam was eating a candy.*

Prem: Sabai na khau hai. One-time *auta matra*. Two-piece *matrai khau*. [Don't eat all. Eat one at a time. Eat two pieces only.]

Poonam: Can I eat three?

Prem: No, have two only. Tomorrow third *khane*. [You can eat the third one tomorrow.]

(Observation, 12/24.2019)

In this conversation, Poonam started her talk in English and also replied in English even when her father asks him in Nepali. This is also evident in the following conversation from Family 2. Diwas starts this conversation in English and his Dad, Dipak, replies in Nepali. But Diwas replies in English again. This shows that Diwas can understand Nepali but prefers to use English all the time.

***Dialogue #5: Christmas gift***

*Diwas son brings one of his Christmas gifts from last night.*

Diwas: (Trying to hang the gift on his school bag, shows the gift to his dad) Daddy how to hang it?

Dipak: *Yo bag ma hudaina. Uta rakha.* [Don't keep that in this bag. Keep it there.]

*(Dad hangs the gift on the wall)*

Diwas: No, not there. Give it to me.

*(Dipak gives the gift back to Diwas and he starts playing with it by himself.)*

(Observation, 12.25.2019)

Due to the preference of English by their kids, the parents also tend to use English while they interact with their kids. My observation notes show that Prem's language choices are greatly influenced by his daughter's preferences as he chooses between Nepali and English depending on how his daughter's language choices. This can be noticed in the following vignette.

***Vignette # 2: Parent switching to English***

Prem's daughter, Poonam, comes around us several times when we were conducting the first interview. Prem tried to convince her to go upstairs and play or talk to her grandparents, but Poonam kept on coming around and asked several questions. She was

asking all the questions in English. Prem answered the first couple of questions in Nepali but as they continued the conversation, he switched to English. He also mixed some Nepali words in some of the utterances. (Observation, 9.17.2019)

The vignette shows that Prem switched to English although he started the conversation in Nepali. However, Prem did not always use Nepali when he started the conversation. There were several instances when he initiated the conversation with his daughter in English and they used English all the time. Let's look at the example below.

***Dialogue #6 Dad initiates conversation in English***

*Prem goes to the kitchen and makes omelet. He calls Poonam.*

Prem: Poonam, come here.

Poonam: Why daddy?

Prem: I will show you something that you spoiled.

*(Prem explains how she left the fruits out and they got spoiled. He speaks English.)*

Poonam: I didn't know that, sorry.

Prem: That's fine now, but be careful next time, okay?

Poonam: Okay.

(Observation, 8.12.2019)

Although the children preferred to use English with their parents and visitors, they seemed to be aware and conscious of their grandparents' linguistic repertoires and communicated with them in Nepali. This was explicitly visible as Poonam, Prem's daughter, talked to her grandparents. If a conversation involved multiple family members, Poonam was found switching between Nepali and English depending on who she is responding to. The following conversation that I observed during one of my visits gives us a clear sense of her language preferences with

her family members. During one of my observations, I noticed that Poonam is quick to switch between Nepali and English in a single conversation depending on who she is responding to. The following vignette shows her selective language preferences with different members of the family.

### **Vignette #3 English with dad; Nepali with grandma**

The family was talking about Poonam's birthday party last night. Poonam was around and says, "Daddy, I have so many gifts now". Prem asked her (in English) to explain what kinds of gifts she had. Poonam goes into her room and brings some of them and starts talking about them (in English). Prem asked her several questions in English and Renu answered in English. Her grandma was also around and was listening to them talk about the gifts. When she asked, "*Kasle diyeko yeti dherai kura babu?* [Who gave you so many things?]". Poonam replied, "*Sabbai janale.* [Everyone]". Then she continues talking to her dad about the gifts (in English). Her grandma asked her a couple of questions later, which she answered in Nepali. (Observation, 7.15.2019)

The vignette shows that Poonam is careful about the selection of language depending on who she wants to respond to. She initiates the conversation with her dad in English and replies him in English. But when her grandmother asks her about who gave the gifts, she replies in Nepali. Poonam's awareness of her grandmother's monolingual repertoire is reflected in the following conversation as well.

### ***Dialogue #7: You won't understand it***

*Poonam is watching some videos on YouTube on an iPad sitting next to her grandmother.*

Grandmother: *Ke hereko babu?* [what are you watching?]

Poonam: *Geet hereko.* [I am watching songs.]

Grandma: *Malai pani dekhau na.* [please also show that to me.]



Poonam: *Hajur le bujhnu hunna. English ho ke.* [You won't understand it. It's in English.]

*(Poonam continues watching the video. Grandma watches her screen occasionally.)*

(Observation, 7.31.2019)

In this conversation, Poonam shows her awareness of grandmother's monolingual repertoires. First, in both the response to her grandmother, she uses Nepali. My field notes show that she was clear and fluent in her conversation. Except for the word 'English', she doesn't mix any other English words. However, it is common among the Nepali speakers to use the word 'English' rather than the Nepali equivalent *Angreji*. Therefore, I would not even consider that as an example of codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2006). Secondly, when her grandmother asks her to show the video she was watching, she tells her that grandma might not understand it as it was in English. I also found that the children struggled to express some concepts to their grandparents well, but they tried hard to use as much Nepali as possible with the grandparents. It can be inferred from the data that, that children would not use as much Nepali as they do now if they did not have to communicate with their grandparents.

**Language preferences in different interactional contexts.** Analysis of data from interviews and observations showed that the family members had varying preferences depending on the person they are interacting with. Although the parents and children claimed to use Nepali on most occasions, there were some differences in the way they interacted. Discussing the language preferences in family conversations, Prem said:

We usually speak Nepali in our family. But sometimes I don't know which language I'm using. The kids speak Nepali with their grandparents. Sometimes they use Nepali with me as well. I prefer using Nepali with the kids. I always start a conversation in Nepali,

but it also depends on what language they use. I reply in the same language in which the children initiate the conversation (Interview, 8.12.2019).

Renu agreed with Prem and said if the kids “start” the conversation in English, they also reply in English. When I asked about the language used by the children to reply to their parents’ responses in Nepali, Prem said that the children “usually reply in English” (Interview, 8.12.2019) and then he continues in English after that. He also mentioned that sometimes he continues the conversation in Nepali but switches to English later. I wanted to know the language behavior of the children more specifically and asked Prem what language his son Pritam used in family interactions. Prem shared:

It depends on who he wants to talk to. If he's talking about a common topic with everyone together, he uses Nepali. It also depends on who initiates the conversation. If the grandparents start a conversation he replies in Nepali. If we [husband and wife] start a conversation, he replies in English (Interview, 8.12.2019).

Prem’s statement was supported by the data from my observations as I found that Pritam was switching between Nepali and Nepali depending on who he was talking to. Although he used Nepali while talking to his grandparents, with some English words, he was switching between Nepali and English while talking to other members of his family including his dad, stepmother and sister.

Although Prem claimed that they use Nepali in the family interactions, my observations show that the choice of language is different based on the interlocutors and topics they are talking about. For example, the siblings were always found to communicate with each other in English in both families. However, when the children communicated with their parents, the parents replied in Nepali most of the time. Although there were some instances when the parents started the conversation in English with their children, they usually initiated in Nepali. However,

this does not seem to influence children's language preference as they mostly replied in English no matter what language their parents used.

I was also interested to know if the language preference of the family members changes if they are in different contexts. Prem mentioned that they switch between languages depending on where they are. Explaining how the context influences their language preferences, Prem said:

We use English when we are out for shopping, at playground, eating meals, doing homework as the children are involved in these conversations. We use English in every activity that involves children. But we use Nepali in the activities that involve my parents and us (husband and wife). My wife and I never use English for our conversation; we always use Nepali. We use Nepali with my parents as well. When the children are involved in the conversation, we use English but the conversation between the kids and my parents takes place in Nepali. The kids use Nepali whether they can communicate or well or not. That's good. This is how they are learning Nepali (Interview, 8.12.2019).

Prem's statement clearly mentions that the presence of children is an important factor for their language preference as the children always bring in English while they are interacting with their parents. When I asked Pritam, if he speaks Nepali or English at home, he said, "I mostly use Nepali with everyone but when I am talking with friends, I use English" (Interview, 7.31.2019). The data also shows that the language preference of the children is not always guided by command over or lack of the language. This was reflected in Pritam's statement when he said that he prefers to use English but can also use Nepali easily. Talking about his language preference, Pritam said, "I feel comfortable using English. But I don't feel like I wish everyone spoke English. I can also communicate in Nepali" (Interview, 7.31.2019).

I also tried to find out how the children interact with the members of the Nepali community. The parents from both the families reported that their children always use English

with the other kids from the Nepali community but might occasionally use Nepali with the adults. However, the interaction in Nepali is limited to initial greetings and routine conversation like “how are you?”. Discussing his children’s language preference with the Nepali community, Prem said:

When our kids are with other kids from Nepali community, they use English. They also use English with their friends and classmates. But when they meet adults and elderly people from Nepali community, they greet them with Namaste and talk to them in Nepali (Interview, 9.17.2019).

Renu agreed with Prem’s statement about Pritam’s language preference in conversations with other Nepali kids and said, “He goes to the programs and meets Nepali people but talks to people in English. Other kids want to speak in English and he also wants to speak in English. Therefore, they do not have conversations in Nepali” (Interview, 9.17.2019). Her statement indicates that the preferences of the other kids plays an important role in shaping their language choices in the conversations.

Prem’s son, Pritam reported similar preferences as he stated, “I use English with my friends. But I use Nepali with senior members of the community. I initiate the conversation in Nepali with them. I also have some friends from Nepali community” (Interview, 7.31.2019). My observation notes showed that the kids always used English with the other kids from the Nepali community. For example, when I was observing them during one of the gatherings hosted by Prem at his house, I found that Poonam was with two other kids from Nepali families and interacted with them in English all the time for about three hours. Although some adults joined their conversations and used Nepali with them, they always used English. They could understand the statements made by the adults in Nepali but chose to reply in English.

Similar language practices were reported by Family 2 regarding the children's language preference during their interaction with the members of the Nepali community. Sharing his children's language preference, Dipak said, "the kids speak English with other kids from Nepali families" (Interview, 10.13.2019). Priya, however, seemed happy about elder son's use of Nepali for greeting the seniors as she said, "He greets the people in Nepali and says *Namaste*. We have always taught him that culture. Then he talks in English. He only says *ke chha* [How are you?] after that. He feels shy after that" (Interview, 10.13.2019). Dipak agreed with this and said that his elder son's use of Nepali in the community gatherings is limited to "greetings and a few words" (Interview, 10.13.2019). Dipak also shared that his children speak in English with adults as well. This shows that the kids are not benefited by the company of the Nepali community as they always use English with everyone they interact with in the community events.

**Grandparents as agency to transfer heritage language.** Although the two families that I studied were similar in many ways in terms of their language beliefs and practices, I found that they were different in the family structure. Family 1 is a six-member extended family with Prem's parents living together with them. On the other hand, Family 2 is a four-member nuclear family with parents and children. This structure seems to have influenced the language practices these families have resulting in different levels of heritage language development on the part of their children. Analysis of the data collected through interviews and a series of observations shows that the presence of grandparents has a positive influence on learning the Nepali language in Family 1. This is repeatedly mentioned by members of both families. Discussing the influence of his monolingual parents on the language preferences and practice in the family, Prem said:

We used to speak mostly English in the past but since we also have my parents here, we use more Nepali at home. My son has forgotten Nepali in recent years as he doesn't use it

much. The only time he uses Nepali is when he has to communicate with his grandparents, mostly during the dinner...when he has to speak to us [Prem and Renu], he uses English therefore, he is losing his Nepali Language proficiency. But my daughter has improved her Nepali a lot after her grandparents came here. She can communicate in Nepali well now (Interview, 9.17.2019).

Prem's statement indicates that his daughter, Poonam has benefited greatly by the presence of her grandparents. However, his son, Pritam, does not interact with the family members, he has not been able to maintain the level of Nepali he had in the past. However, he is getting some practice to use Nepali due to his grandparents as he speaks with them during the dinner. Discussing Poonam's progress in Nepali language, Prem further said, "She can communicate well in Nepali now because her grandparents are here with us. My parents were not here when my son was growing. Therefore, he could not learn Nepali well like his sister" (Interview, 9.17.2019). In this statement, Prem is comparing how his son could not learn Nepali when he was young as he did not have opportunities to interact much as the grandparents were not living with them in the US. But when Poonam was born, they came to the US and thus, she had been exposed to Nepali well.

My observation also confirms Prem's views as both Pritam and Poonam were found to interact with their grandparents in Nepali whereas, they used English to talk to the rest of the family members. They are aware that their grandparents are monolingual and cannot understand English. As reported by Prem, his children "are able to use Nepali because of their grandparents. The grandparents have helped a lot in preserving their Nepali language" (Interview, 9.17.2019).

My observation shows that during family gatherings, Poonam uses English with his dad and a visitor all the time, but when her grandmother asks her something, she switches to Nepali indicating that she might have been benefitted by the presence of her monolingual grandparents.

I also wanted to know Prem's perspectives on how his children's Nepali would be if their grandparents were not living with them in the US. When I asked him about this, Prem thought for a while and replied in a serious tone that his parents are the only reasons for the children to use Nepali. Explaining the influence of the grandparents on his children's Nepali, he said:

The only reasons the kids have continued to use Nepali language is because of my parents. It is never because of us. If the grandparents were not here, they would have forgotten Nepali language completely...Their Nepali language proficiency would have decreased if the grandparents were not here. They might not have been speaking Nepali like this. They would be using English in school and would do the same at home as well. Their Nepali must have disappeared (Interview, 9.17.2019).

Pritam acknowledges his grandparents' role in learning Nepali during my interaction with him. He stated that he had been using Nepali after his grandparents came here to live with them in the US. Discussing how he learned Nepali, Pritam said:

After my grandparents came to the US to live with us, my Nepali language proficiency has improved a lot. Since they can understand and speak Nepali only, I have to talk to them in Nepali and they also talk to me in Nepali all the time. I feel bad when I cannot respond to them in Nepali all the time, but I try to use as much Nepali as possible (Interview, 7.31.2019).

Pritam's statement shows his willingness to use Nepali with his grandparents. He even feels bad if he cannot speak well with his grandparents in Nepali. The grandmother was also happy that she and her husband could help their grandchildren to learn Nepali. Sharing her happiness, she said, "We feel good that our grandchildren are learning Nepali now after we came to the US" (Interview, 7.31.2019).

Although Family 2 is a nuclear family with parents and their children, they seem to have realized the importance of having an extended family to support their children's heritage

language development. Dipak and Priya bring the topic of the influence of extended family on children's Nepali language development several times. During one such interviews, Dipak brings in the topic of how having extended family influences in children's heritage language acquisition and shared:

If the parents, grandparents and other family members are at home, it supports children to learn Nepali language. I have realized that from my friend's family. Some of them have their parents with them here and his children speak Nepali well because they have to speak Nepali to communicate with their grandparents (Interview, 12.25.2019).

Dipak believes that if he had his parents or Priya's parents to live with them, the children would have learned Nepali better. Priya also shared similar views and shared that she felt bad for not having anyone to support their children when she and her husband have to go out to work. She believed that having grandparents would have been the "most important" support for their family as the children would have been speaking Nepali. The couple's strong belief is rooted in their experience of seeing children from families with extended family members speaking better than their own children.

Besides the support to learn their heritage language, the grandparents in Family 1 were also instrumental in transferring the religion and culture to the children. During my visits to the family, I found that the grandparents brought in the reference of various myths from Hindu religious books several times. Both the grandparents also spent their time watching documentaries based on Hindu mythologies on YouTube. I also noticed that the family had a corner in the basement of their house where they had kept the pictures of different Hindu Gods and Goddesses with other stuffs used for religious ceremonies including a few religious books. The grandmother also shared that her granddaughter, Poonam, follows her while she performs



*pooja* (Hindu religious ceremonies) every day in the morning. She was happy that the young girl loved being around while she was doing the daily religious rituals and helped her when needed.

**Literacy development: A neglected area.** Children's literacy development was one of the important themes that came out across the data sources. I was interested in exploring the opportunities and challenges faced by the two immigrant families in terms of development of written literacy. Analysis of the data shows that children from neither family have received any opportunity to learn reading and writing Nepali. When I asked Prem if his family has kept any reading material in the Nepali language, he told me that he does not read Nepali texts except surfing news online. Describing the availability of reading materials in Nepali, he said:

We never asked them to read and write Nepali. We have some Nepali books. My father reads them, but I don't read them. I usually read the Nepali news online...I usually surf Nepali websites and get updated (Interview, 8.12.2019).

Prem's statement is an indication that he does not feel the need to have any Nepali books for himself and his children. In fact, I never saw any reading material around his house during my observations. Moreover, he does not expect his children to read and write Nepali in the future as well. However, during my conversation with Prem's son, Pritam, I found that he was interested in learning the Nepali language if there is any opportunity in his school or in the community. He also shared about one of his friends from the Nepali community who is fluent in Nepali including in reading and writing. When I asked him about his goal in Nepali class, he said:

I want to attend Nepali language classes to learn to read and write. I don't know how to read and write Nepali but some of my friends know that. I have a friend who is born and raised here (in the US) but he can write Nepali...I think I should also learn to write Nepali because when I went to Nepal a few years ago, I could not read anything written

on the boards there. If I learn to read and write Nepali, it will be useful to me when I travel to Nepal (Interview, 7.31.2019).

Interestingly, Pritam's main motivation to learn to read and write Nepali is connected with his travel to Nepal as he mentioned that his last visit to Nepal triggered his interest to learn to read and write Nepali. His statement indicates his desire to travel to Nepal in the future when he will be able to utilize his skill to read and write Nepali. Like her brother, Poonam also related reading/writing with her Nepal visit. When Prem and I were talking about Nepal, Poonam was around. When I asked her if she wanted to go to Nepal, she replied that she would not want to because she did not know how to read and write Nepali. Although Poonam was very young, she is aware that the written scripts of the Nepali language is different from English and she would require to learn to read and write to be able to travel to Nepal.

Prem's grandfather also mentioned that he would like to see his grandchildren be able to read Nepali. He thought that if the kids spend time with him when he is reading Nepali books, they will learn to read. He shared, "I am reading the *Ramayana* now. I wish the kids listened to me when I am reading the books in Nepali. They could have been literate in Nepali" (Interview, 7.31.2019). His statement indicates that the kids do not accompany him when he is reading Nepali books.

The data shows that Family 2 is very much similar to Family 1 in terms of the literacy practices in the heritage language. Dipak shared his wish to teach his elder son to read and write Nepali as he said, "I want to teach the elder one reading and writing in Nepali. At least he should recognize the Nepali words" (Interview, 12.25.2019). However, when I asked if he is supporting him to learn to read and write Nepali, Dipak said that they had not been able to do anything. Priya also shared similar wishes about her elder son as she said, "Sometimes I show him Nepali

through online sources. He [Pramod] asks about it...I think we should introduce them with Nepali texts now” (Interview, 10.13.2020). She mentioned about her efforts to teach Nepali script to her son through online resources.

I was curious to know if the family had any Nepali books with them in their house. When I asked Dipak about it, he shared that they did not have any books. He also reflected on the support they have provided to his son to learn Nepali and shared that due to lack of time, they have not been able to provide any support. He said:

We don't have any Nepali books with us...I think we should also initiate something from home. We haven't done anything to support our son to learn to read and write...I am thinking that we should teach the elder one how to read and write Nepali. I had thought about this long ago but have not been able to manage time (Interview, 12.25.2019).

The analysis of the data shows that the families have not made any efforts to teach their children to read and write. Moreover, they do not have any resources such as books and magazines to motivate and support the kids to read and write Nepali. In fact, both the families did not have any books and magazines in any language in their living room. The only books available in Family 1 were a couple of religious books that the grandfather read.

### **Efforts for Language Management**

In this section I present the findings related to the third research question, which explores the language management efforts made by the members of the selected family for the development of their heritage language in their children. Besides, I also tried to find out how the family language policy and strategies used by the members influenced the language and literacy skills of the children in those families. A careful analysis of the data collected from various sources, interviews, observations and diary records helped me come up with two sub-themes

related to language management in the selected families namely, (a) Parental involvement, and (b) Community engagement, which have been described in detail below.

**Parental involvement.** The data shows that parents are key actors in formulating the family policy and implementing different strategies for the development of their children's language(s). Parents from both the families mentioned that they try to encourage their children to speak Nepali at home so that they can continue to develop their Nepali language proficiency. When I asked Dipak about his strategies to support his children's Nepali language, he said, "I tell my kids to speak Nepali at home" (Interview, 12.25.2019). He also mentioned that the elder one follows that but the younger one does not speak Nepali. Dipak is also aware that speaking Nepali with the kids is the best way to help them learn the language. His acknowledgement about the need to create such environment is reflected in his statement when he said, "[w]e always use Nepali because we want our children to learn Nepali. We want to create an environment to learn Nepali for them" (Interview, 12.25.2019). Priya also used a similar strategy to support her children's language development by "speaking Nepali with them all the time" (Interview, 10.13.2019). Priya thought that if parents used English with the children, the children would never speak Nepali as she shared: "I think that if the parents start speaking to the children in English, they always use English" (Interview, 10.13.2020).

Dipak and Priya's statements were mostly corroborated by the data from my observations, which showed that he tried to speak Nepali with his sons most of the times, and also told them how they would say certain things in Nepali even when they replied in English. To know how the language practices are guided in the family, I wanted to know if the families had formed any rule for language use in the family. Although both the families denied having

any explicit rule for use of certain language, they mentioned that they encourage the children to use Nepali. Dipak said:

We haven't formed any rules about the use of language in our family, but Nepali language is our priority during family conversations. If we (husband and wife) speak Nepali, the kids also listen to that and learn some Nepali...The basic idea is that there should be no use of English at home. I have also told my children to use only Nepali at home. But this hasn't worked...They feel like we are imposing Nepali on them (Interview, 12.25.2019).

Despite not having any explicit rule for language use in the family, the parents in Family 2 realize the important role they should play in the family to teach Nepali to their children. Dipak's statement also indicates that his children do not like their preferences as they feel that the parents are "imposing" their own language choices. Moreover, the implicit rule of promoting the use of Nepali in family conversations does not seem to have worked in either of the families. My field notes from the observation show that parents themselves were engaged in conversation with their kids in English on several occasions. Although they used English when kids started the conversations in English, there were numerous instances when the parents themselves initiated the conversations in English with the kids themselves. This pattern was more dominant in Family 1 compared to Family 2 when Prem was talking to his daughter, Poonam. The following conversation between Prem and Poonam can be taken as a representative interaction when both of them talk only in English with a few words in Nepali at the end by Prem.

***Dialogue #8: English only conversation***

*Prem had just come home from his neighborhood and Poonam came near him and sat on the chair next to him.*

Prem: Poonam, did you have your lunch?

Poonam: Yes!

Prem: What did you eat?

Poonam: I had rice, and curry...and chicken.

Prem: You didn't have salad?

Poonam: No. I don't like the green leaves...and...and I don't like the carrot.

Prem: They are good for your health. *Khanu parchha ni*. [You should eat them.]

(Observation, 9.17.2019)

As seen in the conversation, Prem and Poonam use English all the time except the last sentence where Prem used Nepali. There were several instances when Prem replied in English after his children started the conversation in English. However, in some of the interactions, Prem also replied in Nepali for some time and then switched to English. From these instances, we can infer that Prem's language choices are not consistent in his conversations with the kids and are, therefore, not in line with his inexplicit policy to use Nepali in family interactions.

Although the parents in Family 1 did not initiate conversations in English with their children, they were found replying in English several times when the kids talked to them in English. One such instance can be observed in the following conversation between Dipak and Diwas, his younger son.

***Dialogue #9: Parents reply in English***

Diwas: Daddy, daddy, Can I go downstairs?

Dipak: *Kina? [Why?]*

Diwas: I want to play there.

Dipak: No, don't go there.

Diwas: Please daddy. I will come back soon.

Dipak: No, no. *Sabai samanharu bhuiin ma phaleko chhan*. [All the stuffs are scattered on the floor]. Don't go there.

(Observation, 12.25.2019)

Although Dipak claimed that he encouraged his children to use Nepali “as much as possible” (Interview, 12.25.2019), and he “always used Nepali with the kids” (Interview, 12.25.2019), he was found switching between Nepali and English several times. This indicates that his implicit policy of promoting the use of Nepali in family conversation is not working well as he is not able to adhere to that policy himself. Dipak and Priya also mentioned that they were worried about their elder son Pramod’s language development when he did not speak until the age of four. However, their concern was not just related to Nepali language as Pramod had difficulty speaking any language. However, staying in Nepal for two years with his uncle and aunt helped Pramod develop fluent Nepali when he came back to the US after two years. Dipak and Priya’s decision to send Pramod to Nepal seems to have developed a good foundation for him to learn Nepali. The parents seem to be worried about Diwas, their younger son’s Nepali language than the elder one as he uses English all the time with his family and friends in his Kindergarten. Dipak was concerned about Diwas’s Nepali language development and shared the plan that they “should speak Nepali with him as much as possible to help him learn Nepali” (Interview, 12.25.2019).

One of the important strategies parents were using or planning to use to support their children’s Nepali language development was to visit Nepal and stay there for a few months on a regular basis. Although the families were not able to go back to their “home country” every year, the parents from both the families expressed their wish to do so whenever possible. The parents indicated that visiting Nepal is a good way to improve their children’s Nepali language

proficiency. Although they are not able to take their children for a visit very often, they said that they plan to stay in Nepal for the summer after a couple of years so that the children are immersed in the Nepali environment there. Talking about the plan to visit Nepal the following summer, Dipak said, “[w]e are planning to visit Nepal for a month the next summer and I am sure the kids will improve their Nepali a lot during that time...The visit will definitely improve their Nepali proficiency” (Interview, 12.25.2019). Dipak’s statement indicates how visiting Nepal is taken as an opportunity by the family to support their children’s heritage language development.

The children agreed that their parents encourage them to use Nepali at home. However, when I asked the elder children from both the families about how their parents provided support for their heritage language development, they did not have any specific answer. They also reported that they make some efforts to learn Nepali. When I asked if he had been doing anything to improve his Nepali, Pramod shared:

If I don’t know any word, I use Google’s translation service. I play the audio and use the word myself...I have also watched Nepali music videos on YouTube. I also remember the lyrics of a few songs. *Pani paryo asina jharyo...* [he sings a Nepali song]. I have also watched some Nepali movies on YouTube with my family...I also watch videos on Nepal (Interview, 7.31.2019).

The above statement shows that Pramod is making use of digital tools to learn Nepali and about Nepal. When I asked similar question to Pritam, he also had similar response. He said that he had watches some Nepali movies. However, he thought the best way to improve his Nepali was to speak in Nepali with his family and visit Nepal.

**Community engagement.** Both the families that participated in my study were found to have a very extensive network with people from the Nepali community in Minnesota. During my



visits to the families, I saw that both the families organized parties and celebrated functions together with other Nepali families. Although these events were not organized with an aim to interact with the Nepali community and support children's heritage language development, the parents believed that these gatherings provide the children with an opportunity to engage with the community members and get exposure to the Nepali language. Discussing his elder son, Pritam's engagement with the Nepali community, Prem said, "My son takes part in the community events and festivals as far as possible...he participates and enjoys the programs. He feels positive affinity towards these events...he also goes out to watch Nepali movies with us" (Interview, 8.12.2019). Prem's statement indicates his son's active participation in community events. However, Prem is not very positive about the benefits his son has for his Nepali language development as Pritam "doesn't use Nepali and mostly uses English" (Interview, 8.12.2019). Pritam also shared that he goes to the programs organized by the Nepali community and has some friends of his age. Like Prem, Renu believed that the kids are not able to benefit from the gatherings as "other kids want to speak in English" (Interview, 8.12.2019) and Pritam and Poonam also "want to speak in English" (Interview, 8.12.2019). Despite this, Prem is happy that his children engage in such events. Sharing his happiness, he shared, "The children like to go to the places where they know the people. They get excited about going to functions organized by the Nepali families" (Interview, 8.12.2019).

On the other hand, Dipak shared that his family is not able to participate in community events much but is in touch with many Nepali families through a personal connection. He shared, "We have not been able to get involved in programs organized by the Nepali community much. But we take part in smaller events such as *Teej*. We have not been able to go to bigger gatherings" (Interview, 1.3.2019). However, Priya thought that that has not barred her children

from getting exposed to the Nepali community as she told me that there are many Nepalis in her area, and her son “meets the kids in parties such as birthday celebration regularly” (Interview, 10.13.2019).

When I asked the parents about what they expect from the Nepali community to do for the preservation of heritage language, they shared that they should organize some language and culture classes. Dipak thought that having regular programs supports the children’s language development even if they do not have any formal lessons. Highlighting the importance of having a program for the Nepali children, Dipak shared:

I think bringing the children from Nepali background together to provide them exposure and opportunity to use Nepali language would be nice. It doesn’t need to be a Nepali language class. They might play some games but have to use Nepali with each other just like they do with the kindergarten kids (Interview, 10.13.2019).

I also asked the participants to share if the community has made any efforts to support the development of the heritage language. Dipak told me that he was not happy about the community’s role to support children’s heritage language development. He said:

The community members do not talk about language issues here. We have never discussed about teaching our language to the kids. But I think that would be good... It would be nice if the kids from Nepali community are brought together to conduct Nepali language classes (Interview, 10.13.2019).

When I asked if he will be interested in sending his kids to the Nepali language classes if the community organizes them, Dipak said, “Yes, I will send them as far as possible. I think other members of Nepali community will also send their kids” (Interview, 10.13.2019). Talking about a failed attempt to conduct language classes by the community in the past, he said, “Once

the Nepali community here discussed about teaching the Nepali language to the children, but it never materialized” (Interview, 10.13.2019).

## **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have presented the findings of the study dividing them into three key themes: 1) Nature and sources of language beliefs; 2) Language practices in transnational families; and 3) Efforts for language management. The results show that there are several factors such as education and economic opportunities, associated with the beliefs and practices of immigrant families regarding the use of their heritage language. The study further shows that despite their willingness to transfer the home language to their children, the parents are not able to provide the necessary support to the children resulting in a gradual shift towards the dominant English language in the family interactions. The study also showed that the children from the minority language background have not received any support from the schools they attend, thereby limiting their chances of developing biliteracy. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study and draw conclusions linking the study with previous literature. I will also present the implications of the study and recommendations for further research at the end.

## **Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusions**

In the final chapter of this thesis, I have discussed the findings of the study in light of the existing literature and presented my conclusions of the study. The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs and practices of two families of Nepali origin living in the US regarding the transfer of heritage language to their children. Further, the study tried to investigate the strategies adopted by the selected families in developing bilingual competence in their children. The data for the study was collected using a series of interviews with the parents in the two selected families, interaction with the children and grandparents, observation of family interaction in different contexts, researcher diary, and collection of available artifacts. The findings of the study show that despite a positive attitude towards their heritage language, the families are not able to invest adequate resources and support to their children for the development of language and literacy skills. The study further revealed that children belonging to the linguistically marginalized communities do not receive any support from the schools and society to help them develop proficiency in their home language. Besides the discussion of key themes and conclusions of the study, I also present various implications related to pedagogical implementation, policy improvement, and further research related to heritage language education in the US in this chapter.

### **Discussion**

In this study, I have presented the beliefs and practices of two families of Nepali origin living in the US regarding the heritage language development of their children. Based on the findings of the study, I have discussed three main issues that need to be addressed in the field: 1) Disjuncture between language beliefs and practices; 2) Grandparents as agency to transfer heritage language; and 3) Transnationalism, language and identity.

**Disjuncture between language beliefs and practices.** One major issue that emerged from the study is the ambivalent beliefs and practices of the participant families regarding the importance and use of heritage language. Recently, a number of scholars (e.g., Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Irvine, Gal & Kroskrity, 2009) have indicated that language beliefs of the immigrant families are shaped by broader socio-economic factors such as education, employment opportunities and demographic composition. This study points out that despite having one set of language beliefs, the transnational immigrants from minority language families find it difficult to implement their beliefs into their practice. In this regard, broader socio-economic factors seem to affect the language beliefs and practices of the immigrant families as they need to find ways to navigate the social and economic opportunities available to them in their new home, mostly by adjusting themselves with the local linguistic milieu. Thus, individuals from the socially and linguistically disadvantaged community, like the Nepali speaking population in the US, are caught up in a dilemma to maintain their heritage language or access to socio-economic opportunities by investing their time and resources in learning the dominant language.

Additionally, the major reasons for the families to have the motivation to teach Nepali are their emotional connection to the language, and the need for the conversation with their extended family and relatives living in Nepal. The immigrant families, especially children, do not see any immediate value of investing in learning their heritage language (Kwon, 2017). This is enforcing both adults and children to divest in learning Nepali and spend all their time, resources, and efforts in being proficient in the dominant English language. This implies that an understanding of the factors involved in the language shift among the immigrant and minority population provides important insights into the study of heritage language learning.

The ethnographic approach I adopted to study family language policy provided rich data related to the beliefs and practices of the family members. The study showed that the parents have a high attitude towards their linguistic and cultural identity and, thus, associate themselves closely with their heritage language and culture. Their close affinity towards the Nepali language was reflected in their comments about the importance of heritage language as they referred Nepali as “our” language. The children, however, do not necessarily follow this ideology, and do not relate themselves with the Nepali language as strongly as their parents do. The study clearly reflects the parents’ belief that learning Nepali is important for their children to maintain their identity. These findings related to identity are similar to Kwon’s (2017) study which showed that parents see their children’s heritage language maintenance as a “bridge that connects intergenerational families across countries” (p. 495). Despite the desire to see their children use the Nepali language, the parents do not expect the new generation to speak Nepali like themselves. The parents understand that the children are growing in a new context with limited exposure to the language, and with an immense pressure to do well in English in the schools and community spaces.

Although parents expressed their desire that they wanted to see their children use their heritage language now as well in the future, they were not found to have provided adequate support in that direction. They seemed to have been caught between their family obligations and professional duties, and left with little or no time to support their children’s language development. Due to the need to work for long hours and in multiple jobs, they were not able to spend much time with their kids, which resulted in a lack of exposure and support to learn heritage language to their children. Moreover, with no one from their family living around them, the opportunities for the interaction in the Nepali language were found to be limited to some

social functions organized by the Nepali families in their acquaintance. This has led the children to feel more comfortable in using the dominant English language, gradually using it as the language of communication in family interactions.

The role of members of the homogenous community is considered important to design and implement programs to support the development of the heritage language of the children in transnational families (Canagarajah, 2008). However, based on the analysis of the views of the participants, it can be inferred that the community is not conscious of the loss of the heritage language among the children. The lack of conversations among the members from the Nepali community about possible measures to support their kids for their Nepali language development can be taken as an indication of their apathy or lack of awareness for the transfer of the heritage language to the new generation. However, as discussed above, due to the socio-economic status of the immigrant families, it might be difficult for them to focus on things other than the ones related to earning a decent living for their families. In this connection, studies (e.g., Liu, Musica, Koscak, Vinogradova, & López, 2011; Zhou, & Li, 2003) have shown that the communities that conduct programs to support their children's heritage language development, such as after school classes, weekend language classes, cultural workshops, are more successful in preserving their language and culture in their newfound homes for a longer period of time. Communities organizing these kinds of programs have stronger solidarity for their community and can maintain the heritage language despite the adverse circumstances (Maloof, Rubin, & Miller, 2006).

**Grandparents as agency to transfer heritage language.** Another important issue that needs to be discussed in this study is the role of family composition in the heritage language development of the children. The present study found that children also benefit from their

grandparents linguistically and culturally, especially if the grandparents are monolingual speakers of the heritage language. Due to the need to communicate with their monolingual grandparents, children from Family 1 in this study were found to be receiving input and scaffolding to develop their proficiency in the home language resulting in better proficiency and confidence to use the language. On the other hand, the lack of extended members in the family seems to have affected language practices in Family 2 adversely to develop heritage language in the children. The data showed that as the parents have to be busy in their work or in managing their household chores, the children got limited opportunities to interact in Nepali especially after they started going to schools.

The study suggests that there is a direct link between the presence of monolingual grandparents with the language practices in the family especially those involving the children. Children from the family with grandparents were found to have received a more conducive environment to use their heritage language as it was the only way to communicate with their grandparents. As discussed by Tan Jun Hao & Ng (2010) and Nyland, Zeng, Nyland, & Tran (2009), this study showed that children in the family with grandparents benefitted greatly by the presence of additional members. Moreover, the children who had nearly stopped using Nepali and had forgotten most of the words were found regaining their Nepali language proficiency after they started living with their monolingual grandparents.

**Transnationalism, language and identity.** One of the major issues that emerged from this study is related to language and identity in transnational families. Several scholars (e.g., Darvin & Norton, 2015; Duff, 2015; Song, 2012; Warriner, 2007) have discussed the issues related to the role of language in the identity formation of translational immigrants. The present study pointed out that the participants have a positive attitude towards their home language, but it



also showed that they are struggling to transfer it to their children due to their family circumstances mostly related the need to work outside to manage their finances. Although the participants do not oppose the learning of the dominant English language, they believe that the introduction of English in the school has negatively contributed to their children's heritage language development and identity. They seem to have strong imprints of their place of origin and feel closely connected to people whom they knew through the network of the Nepali community. This virtual and *imagined community* (Anderson, 1991) is the close contact of the families I studied and has helped in maintaining their identity based on their ethnic, linguistic and national affiliation.

Based on the study, I can say that transnational immigrants are at the crossroad in terms of their socio-cultural identity and face difficulty in identifying themselves. On one hand, the adult participants of the study were born and/or raised in Nepal and have their home country culture deep in their values and lifestyles. On the other hand, after living in the US, they have adopted the culture and values of American society. This experience has transformed their understanding of the self and how they see the world including their heritage language and culture.

The constant contact with the people from the Nepali community, both at the personal and collective level, and discussion on the topics related to the past, present and future of Nepal and Nepali society can be taken as the key feature of the Nepali diasporic population in the US. The present study suggests that first-generation transnational immigrants have an identity crisis as they relate themselves with the culture of their place of origin, and the place where they currently live (Chaichian, 1997). This dilemma might sometimes lead to an identity crisis, especially with immigrants of a very small population like the Nepali immigrants in the US.

Although the Nepali population in the US is not significant demographically, there are several Nepali families in the study area making it easier for the Nepali diasporic population to develop contacts with several people sharing their language and culture. Being in a small number might have helped the Nepali community to develop group cohesion and have a close relationship with each other.

The study also suggests that second-generation immigrants born to Nepali families are interested in learning Nepali language and culture, but they do not necessarily position themselves as ‘Nepali’ in all forms. Many children born to immigrant parents from minority groups do not feel the need to learn the language and understand the culture of the community of their origin unless they grow and go through some sort of identity crisis among their peers and members of the broader society (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). The present study shows that during their engagements with the people from the Nepali community, the children feel close affinity and bond with each other as they find the people practicing similar cultures. This awareness might develop as they see the people speaking similar language as members of their families do, the food they eat, the kind of dress they wear, the festivals they celebrate and the values they hold.

**Schools, literacy, and subtractive bilingualism.** Schools are considered important actors for the development of language and literacy of the children as the language policy adopted by schools can greatly influence the language ideologies, practices and proficiency of the children. However, schools are criticized for promoting dominant language and culture and erasing the language and literacy practices of the children coming from minority groups (Freire, 1970). The findings of this study show that the language and literacy practices of the children from the Nepali families are not provided any space in the language and literacy instruction in

the schools in the study area. In fact, the parents from both the participating families reported that their children, who were proficient in their home language, gradually stopped using the heritage language with them in the family conversations after they started going to school. This change can be related to both attitudinal and behavioral as the children in their teenage were found to have a good level of command over the Nepali language to take part in a basic communication that takes in the family interactions. However, they choose not to use their home language most of the time as seen during my multiple rounds of observations.

Although most of the schools in the US claim that they support the development of bilingual proficiency of the children coming from non-English speaking families, they tend to offer support to a select group of languages such as Spanish, Chinese, French, German, etc. based on the demographic composition in the respective school district. The parents of the study reported that they do not even expect that the schools will support their children for the development of their heritage language in any way. This might have resulted from the way the schools in general work in their area as they tend to provide lessons in languages with a larger population or the ones which are of interest to many children.

The study shows that schools are promoting subtractive bilingualism (Baker & Wright, 2017; May, 2017) by teaching the dominant English language at the cost of their home language. Parents from both the families in this study reported that their children forgot or stopped using their home language after they started going to school. This indicates that the schools are promoting language and literacy of the dominant groups, thereby erasing the Nepali as a heritage language in the study area.

Parents also play an important role in developing the literacy of their children as they can provide instruction and resources to develop literacy skills at home. However, the children from

both the participating families lacked that support as the parents neither provided any resources to teach reading and writing, nor did they provide any instruction themselves. In this sense, it can be concluded that the children are not able to develop biliteracy due to the lack of support from both home and school.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the analysis and findings of the data, it can be concluded that despite their wish to transfer the heritage language to their children, the parents in the selected families are not able to engage the children in opportunities to learn the Nepali language. Therefore, the children lack a positive attitude and ability to communicate well in the language. Although both the parents and children expressed their willingness to continue using their heritage language, their language preferences in the family interaction did not match their stated beliefs. This might be because of the influence of the broader socio-economic forces that shape the language ideologies and practices in multilingual societies (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009). The language practices of the participating families were largely shaped by the children as they started going to school. Exposure to English in the school and other places in the society contributed to shaping language preferences where the dominant English language was their preferred choice in family and gatherings involving homogenous Nepali immigrant communities. The study shows a clear disjuncture between language beliefs and practices of transnational families. Likewise, the lack of resources and support to develop the heritage language by the family members seems to have influenced the children's beliefs and practices negatively, promoting the use of dominant language in family conversations. However, it is difficult to have a definite answer regarding the underlying factors contributing to the situation and needs further exploration.

The participants' view and observation of family language practices showed that the presence of grandparents played a significant role in the use of heritage language in family conversations, especially those involving children. As Nepali is the only way to communicate with the monolingual grandparents, children were engaged in communication in the home language more frequently when they had to talk to their grandparents. The study affirms the key role of family members in the transfer of heritage language.

The participants of the study indicated that their heritage language is an important indicator of their identity. Although they are happy about being able to learn and use English, they feel more connected with the Nepali language as it is their "own" language. The study shows that despite their assimilation in American society and culture, they have close connections with the values, culture and language spoken in their country of origin. This has an impact on their identity as transnational immigrants. Observation of the participants' interactions and analysis of their engagement with the American society and culture indicates important insights regarding how the participants have developed transnational identity and celebrate their origin and current place of residence.

With the growing linguistic diversity in the US, education institutions have a responsibility to support the students in the development of bilingualism and biliteracy. However, the participants reported that schools do not provide any support for the development of heritage language literacy to their children. In fact, with the enrollment in the schools, the children from minority language families switched to English even in family conversations. To respond to this challenge, it is important for greater awareness of the issues related to heritage language and culture on the part of the parents, community and the schools. For this, the community of Nepali immigrants needs to develop collective action plans seeking support from

the local schools and community to provide heritage language lessons to their children. It is important for them to develop reading and writing skills in the Nepali language so that the children can access the literature on their own when they want to.

To conclude, this study provides a picture of the status of family language policy in transnational families of Nepali origin living in the US regarding their beliefs and practices of the heritage language in family conversations, and the impact on the bilingual development of their children.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study indicate that family plays an important role in the development of the heritage language of the children born to immigrant parents. As the study focused on Nepali families living in the US, these findings might be more relatable to the Nepali diasporic community. However, the findings can provide important insights to understand the family language policy of other groups of immigrant populations with similar socio-economic status and demographic composition.

Although broader socio-economic factors are very important to support the children in developing their foundation, it is the family that can instill a positive attitude towards their heritage language. One way to do so is to use the language in everyday communication by the parents. If the children see that their parents are using the home language with them, and encourage them to speak their language, children develop respect and a positive attitude towards the heritage language. Besides, it also helps to develop affinity and emotional connection to the heritage language which is the most important factor to motivate the children to learn the heritage language in transnational contexts. The children in the selected families in this study can

use Nepali due to the continuous encouragement and use of the language by their parents. However, since the parents do not provide much support to the children in terms of resources, investment of time and effort, the children are not able to maintain the learning curve as they grow and interact with people speaking languages other than Nepali. Despite these challenges, one of the families is able to provide more opportunities for the children to learn than the other one due to the family composition they have. The presence of grandparents seems to have played a vital role in the family to transfer the heritage language and culture as the only way for the children to communicate with their grandparents is to use the Nepali language.

Besides the individual families, the role of the community is also significant to support the development of the heritage language of the children from minority language groups. Although the Nepali community in the study areas is organized both formally through the Association of Nepalis in Minnesota, and informally through personal connections, they do not seem to have made any collective efforts to help the kids from their community to learn the Nepali language. Their role is limited to organizing some social and cultural events and celebrate festivals where people just go and enjoy the company of the fellow members of the Nepali community for a brief time. It might not be possible for the individual families to provide formal lessons to the children on a regular basis on their own, therefore, the Nepali community should initiate some weekend or summer classes to support the children to learn the heritage language. As the children are not able to read and write Nepali and are limited to oral literacy, organizing such classes might support them in the skills that the children are not able to develop through family efforts. Since the children in the study also expressed their interest to learn to read Nepali, it can be inferred that the children are motivated to join these classes.

Schools play an important role in supporting children's language and literacy development. However, the role of the schools that the children from the families in the study attend does not seem to have supported them. During my conversation with the children, they mentioned that their teachers would not care even if they knew that they speak a different language at home. This indicates the apathy of the educational institutions towards the issues facing the children from minority communities. It is important that the schools acknowledge the linguistic resources that children from minority language families bring in their classes. If it is not possible for the individual schools to run the language classes in all the languages that children in the school speak at home, the school districts can run weekend classes for children from several schools together. This can fill the opportunity that these children are missing from their schools and can support their development of biliteracy.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Although this study tried to investigate the beliefs and practices of transnational families living in the US regarding the development of heritage language and bilingual proficiency of their children, it has many limitations. Designed under the framework of ethnographic case study, the present study is limited to the data collected from two families living in the state of Minnesota and thus, does not seek to generalize the findings to a larger group of immigrant population around the world. However, the findings of the study might be transferred to the population from similar contexts. Since the study was a naturalistic study, no intervention was made on the participants. In fact, following the spirit of ethnographic study, I tried to participate in the daily activities of the selected families as much as possible. Therefore, this study might not be repeated, and if done, might not give the same results. However, there are ways to enhance



the transferability and trustworthiness of the present study which I accept are the limitations of this research. Therefore, I believe that there are areas that can be incorporated in further studies.

This study is based on the data collected from two immigrant families from Nepali origin living in the US. One way to differentiate this research can be to alter the population of the study, both in terms of number and background. The study can be made more comprehensive by including more families. Moreover, Nepali families with different language backgrounds can be incorporated in the study to explore the family language policy of the smaller linguistic groups within the broader Nepali diaspora population. Moreover, investigating the family language policy of the Nepali families living in different parts of the world might provide multiple insights into the factors influencing the beliefs and practices in different contexts. Likewise, language issues related to transnational families from different countries can also be investigated to diversify the scope of this research.

Additionally, the data collection tools, procedure and time for the study can be modified in further studies. For this study, I collected data using multiple rounds of interviews, observation of family interactions in different contexts, researcher diary, and analysis of the available artifacts. However, future researchers can invest more time and do a more in-depth study to conduct a true ethnographic study by spending a longer time investigating different changes in the nature of beliefs and practice of the family members. If possible, exploring the language practices of the families before and after their children join their schools might provide important insights into the nature of changes the families go through as their children start learning the dominant language of the host country. It is recommended that the researchers collecting data over a longer period of time request the participants to self-record their interactions during their family gatherings that are not accessible to the researcher due to various

reasons. This will provide a richer set of data that would otherwise be not accessible for the study.

Those interested in the study of the family language policy of the transnational families can also conduct mixed-method research collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This will allow future researchers to collect data from a large population thereby increasing the change of generalization of the findings to a larger population. Finally, investigation of the community-based heritage language teaching programs run by different immigrant communities might provide interesting insights into the pedagogy of the heritage language teaching in transnational contexts. Analysis of the materials and pedagogical resources together with observation and interviews with the parents, teacher, and students might be useful to understand the community-based heritage language programs.

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## Appendix A: Recruitment Script

Hello,

My name is Laxmi. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study (IRBNet ID: 1438519) titled *Family Language Policy and Heritage Language Development of Children in Transnational Immigrant Families: A Case of Two Nepali Families in the US*. Through this study, I want to investigate the beliefs and practices of immigrant families of Nepali origin living in the US regarding their family language policy and practices.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will interview you three times and observe you and your and your family five times in different situations such as dinner and grocery shopping.

If you agree to participate in this research, we will jointly review the consent form and I will answer any questions you may have before the beginning of the data collection.

## Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Laxmi Prasad Ojha. I am a graduate student in the English Department at Minnesota State University, Mankato and am pursuing an MA in Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). I am conducting a research entitled *Family Language Policy and Heritage Language Development of Children in Transnational Immigrant Families: A Case of Two Nepali Families in the US* for my thesis project under the supervision of Dr. Sarah Henderson Lee. The purpose of my study is to investigate the ideologies and practices of the families of Nepali origin living in the US in regard to their language practices in everyday contexts.

You are being asked to take part in this study because you are an immigrant from Nepali origin living in the US and have school age children. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1) participate in three rounds of semi-structured interviews with the student PI. The first interview will happen before the first observation; the second interview will happen between the second and third observations; and the third interview will happen after the fifth observation. Each interview will happen for no more than an hour and will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.
- 2) allow the student PI to visit your family five times to observe different activities including dinner time, homework sessions, shopping/grocery, TV time and community visits, and make recordings of your conversations using an audio recording device. The student PI will also interact with the family members during these visits and will note down any important phenomena related to the topic of family language policy in his dairy.
- 3) allow the student PI to collect the reading materials, writing samples, curriculum and textbooks of your children (voluntary basis) to investigate their language and literacy practices to better understand their language and literacy practices. The student PI will also ask the children questions about how and why they use languages. All conversations with the children will happen in your presence.
- 4) Collect the artifacts such as heirlooms, written and digital communication with the family members and friends, and any other artifacts related to language use (voluntary basis)

The total time commitment for this study will be approximately three hours for interviews plus the time I spend with you and your children during my five visits.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You can withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the Faculty PI, Dr. Sarah Henderson Lee, at sarah.henderson-lee@mnsu.edu or 507-389-1359.

There will be no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, you might get some insights on the issue related to development of heritage language and English language proficiency in your children which will help you to develop a heightened awareness of family language policy. The information that you provide will also provide insights for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to the bilingual children in the US and will also be relevant to the educators in Nepal in terms of supporting multilingual children and their families.

The potential risks you will encounter in this research are minimum and do not exceed those experienced in everyday life. You may experience some level of anxiety, discomfort and stress due to the presence of the researcher and an audio recorder in your family time and space during the data collection process.

After I collect the consent forms from you, they will be kept in a locked file box in Dr. Sarah Henderson Lee's office (AH 229 C). All the information collected from you including audio recordings, transcriptions and any collected artifacts will be kept on a password-protected flash drive. All consent forms and data will be retained for three years before being destroyed (shredding of consent forms and data deleting of electronically stored data, including audio recordings, transcriptions and any collected artifacts), as per federal regulations. I will transcribe the audio recordings of the interview myself therefore no one else will have access to the data provided to you except me. In dissemination of this research, pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality of participants. Additionally, you will be given an opportunity to review all data that pertains directly to you.

If you have any questions about this research, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Sarah Henderson Lee (the faculty PI) at Minnesota State University, Mankato or reach her at 507-389-1359 and/or sarah.henderson-lee@mnsu.edu. If you have any questions about participants' rights and research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board at 507-389-1242.

A copy of this letter will be provided for you to keep. If you are willing to participate in this study, please initial the first page and sign and date the second page before returning it to me. Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years old and that you have read and understood the information above and willingly agree to participate. Thank you for your consideration.

Your name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MSU IRBNet LOG #: 1438519**

**Date of MSU IRB approval: 05/29/2019**



## Appendix C: Assent Script for Children/Minors

### Assent for Younger Children

Hello,

My name is Laxmi Prasad Ojha and I am a student at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

I would like to ask you some questions about how and why you use your languages. We will talk for about 20 minutes and I will record your answers on an audio recorder. Do you know what this is? [Shows child audio recorder.] It's an audio recorder. This is a machine that keeps your voice so you can listen to something you said later. [Researcher demonstrates by recording his voice and playing it back.] If you do not want to answer a question or want to stop talking, just tell me or your parents who will be with us during the conversation.

I also would like to watch your family talking together at different times and look at some of your books and writings.

Does that sound okay?

Name of the child: \_\_\_\_\_

### Nepali Translation of the Assent for Younger Children

नमस्ते,

मेरो नाम लक्ष्मी प्रसाद ओझा हो। म मिनेसोटा स्टेट युनिभर्सिटी मेनकेटोमा पढ्छु ।

म तपाईंले जानेका विभिन्न भाषाहरु किन र कसरि प्रयोग गर्नुहुन्छ भनेर सोध्न चाहन्छु । हामी २० मिनेट जति कुरा गर्नेछौं र म तपाईंले दिनु भएका उत्तरहरु रेकर्ड गर्नेछु। तपाईंलाई यो के हो थाहा छ ? [बालक लाई रेकर्डर देखाउँदै] यो आवाज रेकर्डर हो। यस मशिनले तपाईंले बोलेको आवाजलाई जोगाएर राख्छ जसबाट तपाईंले भनेका कुरालाई पछि पनि सुन्न सकिन्छ। [अनुसन्धानकर्ताले आफ्नो आवाज रेकर्ड गर्छ र त्यसपछि त्यो आवाज बजाएर बालकलाई सुनाउँछ] यदि तपाईं कुनै प्रश्नको उत्तर दिन चाहनु हुन्न वा कुराकानीलाई बिचैमा अन्त्य गर्न चाहनुहुन्छ भने मलाई वा तपाईंका आमा-बुवालालाई भन्नुहोला । हामीले कुराकानी गर्दा तपाईंका आमा-बुवा हामी सँगै हुनुहुनेछ ।

म तपाईंको परिवारले एक-अर्कासँग विभिन्न समयमा कुराकानी गरेको सुन्नेछु र तपाईंका केहि पुस्तकहरु र लेखाईलाई पनि हेर्नेछु ।

ठिक छ ?

सहभागी बालक/ बालिकाको नाम: \_\_\_\_\_

### Assent for Older Children

Hi. My name is Laxmi Prasad Ojha. I am a student at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I'm working on a research project about how Nepali families use languages. I'd like to ask you if you would be willing to participate in my project.

If you agree to participate, I will interview you for about 20 minutes and will use an audio recorder so I can write out our conversation later. If you do not want to answer a question or want to stop talking, just tell me or your parents who will be with us during the conversation. I will also observe your family using languages in different situations five times, including dinner time and shopping, and will take notes on what I see. Lastly, I will ask you to share some of your reading materials and writing samples if you'd like.

Do you have any questions? Would you be willing to participate in my research project?

Name of the child: \_\_\_\_\_

### Nepali Translation of the Assent for Older Children

नमस्ते,

मेरो नाम लक्ष्मी प्रसाद ओझा हो। म मिनेसोटा स्टेट युनिभर्सिटी मेनकेटोमा पढ्छु। म नेपाली परिवारहरूले विभिन्न भाषाहरूको प्रयोग कसरी गर्दछन् भन्ने बारेमा अनुसन्धान गर्दैछु। तपाईं यो अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुन इच्छुक हुनुहुन्छ ?

यदि तपाईं सहभागी हुन तयार हुनुहुन्छ भने म तपाईंसँग २० मिनेट जति अन्तर्वार्ता गर्न चाहन्छु। यो अन्तर्बार्ता म रेकर्ड गर्नेछु ताकि पछि म हाम्रो कुराकानी लेखाईमा उतार्न सकूँ। यदि तपाईं कुनै प्रश्नको उत्तर दिन चाहनुहुन्न वा कुराकानी बिचैमा अन्त्य गर्न चाहनुहुन्छ भने मलाई वा तपाईंका आमा-बुवालाई भन्नुहोला। हामीले कुराकानी गर्दा तपाईंका आमा-बुवा हामीसँगै हुनुहुनेछ। मैले तपाईंको परिवारले एक-अर्कासँग पाँच वटा विभिन्न अवस्थामा (जस्तै: खान खाने बेला, किनमेल गर्ने बेला) कुराकानी गरेको अवलोकन गर्नेछु र देखेका कुरा टिपोट गर्नेछु।

अन्त्यमा, तपाईं चाहनु हुन्छ भने, म तपाईंले पढ्ने केही सामग्री र लेखाईका नमुनाहरू मलाई देखाउन अनुरोध गर्नेछु।

तपाईं कुनै प्रश्न सोध्न चाहनु हुन्छ ? तपाईं मेरो अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुन चाहनुहुन्छ ?

सहभागी बालक/ बालिकाको नाम: \_\_\_\_\_

**IRBNet Id Number:** 1438519

**Date of MSU IRB approval:** 05/29/2019

## Appendix D: Pre-observation Interview Guidelines (Parents)

### Family profile

- Family members
- Family history -- Life trajectory -- Arrival to the US – important events
- Language profile of family members – what language? How learned?
- Education and employment

### Language ideologies and practices

- Please share about the languages you used in your family.
  - Have you noticed any changes in the language use at your home over the years?
- What language do you use the majority of time with your family members?
  - Probe: Whether one is used more than another or both /all are used equally?
- What language do you use for different activities? (lunch/dinner time, shopping, play time, homework, etc.)
- Do you use the language(s) for different things or activities?
  - Probe: Are there certain subjects you usually talk about in your home language and certain ones for which you switch to English? (If they aren't sure how to answer give options such as talking daily routine, school stuff, behavioral and cultural issues, etc.)
  - Probe: why?
- What type of access do your children have to the speakers of your home language?
  - Probe: Nepali friends and relatives living in the US; community of Nepali people, parents, grandparents, cultural activities by the Nepali community, festivals and gatherings of the Nepali people
- Has it changed over the time as they grow? – change in access to Nepali language.
- How do you feel about using more than one language at home/outside home?
- What language do you use to communicate with your family members when you are with other people speaking different home language?
- What type of access do/did your children have to your home language now/when they were growing up?
- Do you want to pass your heritage language to your children? Why? Why not?
- Are there any challenges for you to transfer it to them?
- Has the linguistic behavior of your child(ren) changed since s/he (they) started going to school?
  - Ask: Have you noticed any change in your children's Nepali proficiency when s/he (they) started going to school?
    - If yes, probe: How? How did it impact the children's' proficiency in Nepali?
    - If negative impact, probe: If they did anything in reaction?
- Do you think maintaining the native language can influence English proficiency?
- What do you think was the main reason your child kept/dropped Nepali?
- How important do you think learning Nepali is for your children?
- How important do you think learning English is for your children?

- What language(es) would you like your children to use at home when they grow as adults?
- Please share any situation when you have found yourself in difficult situation because your children could not communicate in your heritage language (Nepali)?
- How do you feel about using:
  - two different languages at home, or
  - one language at home and one outside home?
- What books do the parents read and encourage the children to read?

### **Appendix E: During-observation Interview Guidelines (Parents)**

- Concept of home and belonging
- Heritage language and identity
- Challenges to maintain heritage language
- Bilingual parenting experience in the US
- Families' motives and emotions around their heritage languages
- Parents' desired language outcomes for children
- Impact of grandparents on intergenerational language transmission
- The Parents' perception of the outcomes of early bilingual education
  - Changes in parent-child communication
  - Changes in child's language practices and competence
  - Child's language competence
  - The parents' satisfaction with bilingual education
- Has anyone given you any advice on your child's language learning and language development?
- How important do you think it is for your child to be able to communicate effectively in your HL and in English? Why?
- What support is available for the development of the heritage language(s)/ English in your home?

## **Appendix F: Post-observation Interview Guidelines (Parents)**

### *Parents' perception towards the language practices in the schools*

- Do you think the schools are providing adequate support or constraints in supporting minority language learners?
- What is the influence of the schools to facilitate or inhibit first language literacy and language development of your children?
- Are you happy with the pedagogical practices (curriculum, textbooks, teaching activities, homework) made at your children's schools to support the children's bilingual literacy?
- Do you expect the schools to support your children in development of your heritage language? If yes, how can they do that?

### *Children's influence on adults' language socialization*

- Do you think the choice of language in the family is influenced by the wish or behavior of the children?
- Has your linguistic behavior been influenced because of the attitude and practices of your children?
  - Probe: includes when the children are willing to or resistant to speak a particular language (English or heritage language) and the parents had to shift their choices
- Have you made any decisions about the language use in your family motivated by linguistic aspirations for your children?
- Have you adapted your own linguistic behavior in order to promote desired linguistic competencies in your children?
  - Probe: Have they ever decided to use Nepali or English consciously because you wanted the children to be competent in that particular language?
- Children's willingness to socialize with the Nepali community – do they like to go to festivals and community events?

### *Parents' language ideology*

- Necessary to talk to children in Nepali language only in order to maintain their Nepali language
- Mixing Nepali and English at home
- Children's Nepali language development
- Children's English language development
- Impact of English on children's Nepali language development
- Home language literacy (Focus on listening and speaking only or promoting reading and writing in the home language)

## Appendix G: Guidelines for Ethnographic Field Work

### *Parents' language practices*

What language do the parents use while...

- Talking to parents -
- Talking to spouse –
- Talking to children –
- Reading books for pleasure -
- Reading the newspaper -
- Listening to radio -
- Watching TV –
- Listening to music -

### *Children's language attitude*

- Using Nepali only at home
- Using both Nepali and English at home
- Using English only at home
- Interact with people from Nepal in Nepali
- Feel closer/ have affinity with people from Nepali community
- Learning English in school

### *Children's language practices*

- Talking to father –
- Talking to mother -
- Talking to grandparents -
- Talking to siblings –
- Talking to children from Nepali families in school –
- Talking to children from Nepali families in family gatherings
- Watching TV –
- Best known language –
- Favorite language -

### *General observation guideline*

- Interaction pattern of the family members
- Child's everyday practices in the second language (both languages??)
- Digital media and transfer of heritage language to children
- Observation and recording of critical moments of parental aspirations.

*What languages are used among the family members?*

	Speaking (face to face talks, video chats, phone calls)	Writing (text messages, social media messages, emails, cards)
Between grandparents		
Between grandparents and parents		
Between partners (parents of the children)		
Parents to child(ren)		
Child to sibling		
Child to grandparents		
Grandparents to child(ren)		

- Any incident that is significant from family language policy perspective
- Any anecdote that the family members share during the family gatherings and interactions that reflects their linguistic ideologies and practices
- Collection/observation of the reading materials, writing samples, curriculum and textbooks of the children to investigate their language and literacy practices
- The artifacts such as heirlooms, written and digital communication with the family members and friends, and any other artifacts that show the beliefs and practices of the family



**Appendix H: Semi-structured Interview Protocol (Grandparents)**

- Language used for communication – with son/daughter-in-law --- with grandchildren?
- How do you feel about the language practices at home – son/daughter-in-law – grandchildren
- Communication with grandchildren – Nepali – mixed?
- Changes noticed in use of Nepali after your arrival to the US.
- Changes in their language practice (use of English/Nepali) at home after grandparents came to the US?
- Is it necessary to transfer/use Nepali language? Why? Why not?
- Challenges to communicate with the grandchildren.
- Any influence of children's language practice on grandparent's language (e.g. learned some English words...watch English programs on TV together...talk about dress, school, shopping...)

**Appendix I: Semi-structured Interview Protocol (Children)**

- How old are you?
- Which language(s) do you speak with your parents/extended family members/friends?  
How
- did you learn the language(s) you speak?
- Which language(s) do you feel most comfortable to speak? Why?
- How do you feel about speaking English/your HL? Who do you speak the language(s) with?
- Do you think you will use your HL/English in the future? Why?
- Do your teachers know that you have/speak a language other than English?
- Have you had an opportunity to share your HL in the mainstream school with teachers and other students? If yes, when and what did you do?
- Do you think teachers and schools appreciate students' ability to speak other languages than English? Why? Why not?
- Do you go to an HL school? Why/why not? How do you feel about that?
- How important is English/ HL to you?

## Appendix J: IRB Approval Letter



May 29, 2019

Dear Sarah Henderson Lee:

Re: IRB Proposal entitled "[1438519-4] The impact of family language policy on the language acquisition of bilingual children in the United States: A case of two Nepali families"  
 Review Level: Level [I]

Your IRB Proposal has been approved as of May 25, 2019. On behalf of the Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB, we wish you success with your study. Remember that you must seek approval for any changes in your study, its design, funding source, consent process, or any part of the study that may affect participants in the study (see <https://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/revision.html>). Should any of the participants in your study suffer a research-related injury or other harmful outcome, you are required to report them to the Associate Vice-President of Research and Dean of Graduate Studies immediately.

When you complete your data collection or should you discontinue your study, you must submit a Closure request (see <https://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/closure.html>). All documents related to this research must be stored for a minimum of three years following the date on your Closure request. Please include your IRBNet ID number with any correspondence with the IRB.

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for maintaining signed consent forms in a secure location at MSU for 3 years following the submission of a Closure request. If the PI leaves MSU before the end of the 3-year timeline, he/she is responsible for following "Consent Form Maintenance" procedures posted online (see <http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/storingconsentforms.pdf>).

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bonnie Berg".

Bonnie Berg, Ph.D.  
 Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jeffrey Buchanan".

Jeffrey Buchanan, Ph.D.  
 IRB Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary Hadley".

Mary Hadley, Ph.D.  
 IRB Coordinator

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB's records.