

**Imagined Communities, Language Learning and Identity  
in Highly Skilled Transnational Migrants:  
A Case Study of Korean Immigrants in Canada**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

With the global trend of transnational migration, a huge influx of highly skilled immigrants has been influencing Canadian society and economy. However, there is little literature that illuminates highly skilled migrants' workplace experiences and their identities in terms of second language acquisition. This multiple case study explores three highly skilled Korean immigrants' experiences, focusing on the interplay of their language learning, identity, and workplace communities. Grounded in the notion of "imagined communities" (Kano & Norton, 2003) and the theory of "communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), this study analyzes the process of how highly skilled migrants have constructed their imagined workplace communities. By revealing the multiple dynamic negotiations co-constructed by the workplace contexts and the individuals, this study shows the interlocked relationship between second language learning, identity, and the given community. This study also argues the importance of membership and positive social arrangements in a community for language learning.

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*This thesis is dedicated to  
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# Chapter One

## Introduction and Literature Review

The world we live in today is characterized by a new role for the imagination on social life...The image, the imagined, the imagery-these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice...the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work...and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.

(Appadurai, 1997, p.31)

### *The Initiation of Inquiry*

Living in an era of worldwide immigration, cross national mobility and globalization, I am not only a witness who has observed these trends but also an immigrant who has experienced transnational migration from Korea<sup>1</sup> to Canada. As an immigrant in Canada for a decade, I have also had an opportunity to recognize a recent phenomenon, the huge influx of Korean immigrants into Canada, especially highly skilled<sup>2</sup> Korean migrants. This study is fundamentally instigated by my own experience as an immigrant and a careful observer of recent highly skilled Korean immigrants in Canada.

As a contributor<sup>3</sup> to the phenomenon myself, I have interacted with diverse

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<sup>1</sup> Korea refers to the Republic of Korea or South Korea.

<sup>2</sup> The general definition of a “highly skilled worker” is a person with a university degree of wide experience in a certain technical field.

<sup>3</sup> My spouse got a work permit from a Canadian company he had collaborated with at the end of the 1990’s and for this reason, my family moved to Canada. The next year he applied for and attained the status of immigration under the independent class as highly skilled. Not only applicants but also their accompanying family members are all included in the independent class.

Korean immigrants, living in two cities, Calgary and Winnipeg. Although the Korean immigrants belong to the bounded class of independent in general, and the highly skilled in particular, and share a similar time period of migration (since the late 1990's), their paths of settlement and stories of re-entry into the Canadian workplace demonstrate a range of differing experiences. They mostly presumed that they would integrate into the Canadian workforce so that they could practice their previously attained profession; that expectation was also sound and fundamental to their immigration under highly skilled immigrant class, which means, they were allowed to migrate into Canada with their human capital or work credentials. Nonetheless, many cases showed variety, complexity, and dynamics.

Upon arrival, for example, some invested in education in order to upgrade their qualifications or widen their opportunities for a job rather than seeking work immediately with their current language facility or skills. Some were unable to get an appropriate position in their area of expertise in the Canadian labour market, so they turned to opening their own shops, such as groceries or restaurants, the behavior of which is categorized as a typical mode of modified adaptation of highly skilled Korean immigrants (Hong, 2008; Hurh et al., 1979; Kim, 2001; Nah, 1993). There were also people who experienced downward mobility, for example, from a position as an engineer to a job as a mechanic, after experiencing hardship in trying to get into their professions. In the meantime, however, there apparently existed another group of people who succeeded in obtaining positions and actively practiced their expertise in the same or similar professions they had belonged to in Korea, sustaining their social positions. For example, I have seen many Korean nurses actively participating in the Canadian labor market after

attaining the certificate of registered nurse, and I have also seen some Korean engineers contributing to the Canadian economy as professionals.

All their trajectories differ from one another depending on their individual factors such as their past histories, personal desires or goals, personalities, and macro aspects such as socio-economic and political contexts where they were situated. It is neither possible nor appropriate for an outside observer to determine the various lived experiences as successes or failures in a despotical way. They had their own plausible stories as the actors of their own lived experiences. Regardless, I have noted common elements from their different experiences. First of all, they voluntarily<sup>4</sup> chose Canada as their migration destination, envisioning their particular workplace communities where they desired to belong and participate as professionals utilizing their human capital. They expected to integrate into the Canadian labour market, sustaining their social identities, despite the fact that they would live in a linguistically, socially and economically different country. More importantly, many of them commented on the significance of language in relation to their professional integration let alone living concerns, and difficulties both in getting into a workplace and in practicing their professions appropriately in Canadian workplace settings. Although they were competent skill-wise, for example, different Canadian workplace cultures such as different ways of talking and interacting were combined with specific linguistic forms and communicative strategies they lacked, and thus, challenged them. Lastly, those challenges they encountered in their adaptation or in their paths to re-enter their chosen professions, were also inseparable

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<sup>4</sup> Longer-term transnational migrants belong to two broad groups: voluntary migrants and forced migrants. Although the dichotomy is problematic, it is usually described that voluntary migration is carried on by well-developed networks that link the supply of labour with the demand for both highly skilled and unskilled workers, while forced migration is fuelled by conflicts, human rights abuses and political repression that move people from their home communities.

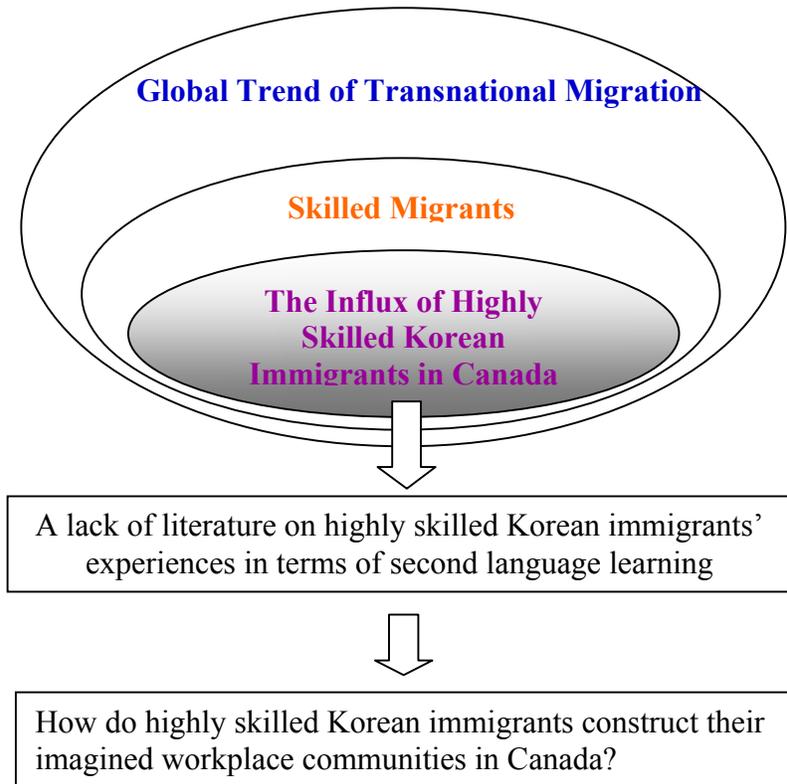
from issues of identity, in other words, who they were, who they are, and who they desire to be (Norton, 2000; Weedon, 1997). All these insights have been possibly gained from my experiences as an immigrant over the years.

Longitudinal natural observations as an ethnic insider over the past decade, thus, have incited my interest in the following queries: what desires and expectations of working highly skilled Korean immigrants held with their migration to Canada, how they integrated into and participated in their chosen professions in a culturally, socially, and linguistically different country, and more crucially, how their language learning was related to their paths to their target workplace communities.

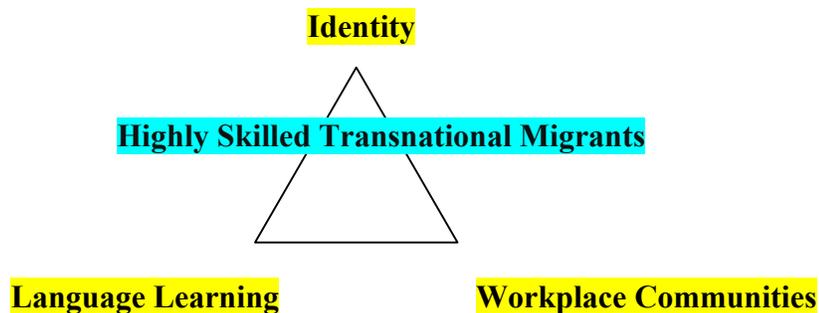
Specifically I note the power of imagination as an impetus to the actions or behaviors of the highly skilled transnational migrants, and explore how their future images of themselves affect their trajectories from migration to paths of entering and practicing in the Canadian labour market. I apply the notion of “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983; Kano & Norton, 2003) to my central inquiry about how highly skilled Korean immigrants construct their imagined workplace communities in Canada. In a broad sense, imagined communities are all multiple communities constituted by the historically, culturally, and socially situated imaginations of individuals and groups, as I will show in Chapter Two. Thus, imagined workplace communities stand for the workplace communities where highly skilled immigrants desire to belong, feel attached, and actually participate as full members.

Under the central phenomenon of how highly skilled Korean immigrants construct their imagined workplace communities in Canada, this study focuses its lens on the interplay of their language learning, workplace experiences and their identity

construction. For a clear understanding of the inquiry and the focus, I provide figures which structure this study. It is placed at the beginning of the chapter so that readers can refer to it in reading the background and literature review which follow.



**Figure 1.1: Overview of the Inquiry of This Study**



**Figure 1.2: Focus on the Interplay of Language Learning, Identity, and Workplace Communities**

## *The Influx of Korean Migrants in Canada*

International or transnational migration has been an issue since the 1990's. As Appadurai (1997) describes, more people than ever before imagine the possibility that they or their children will live in places other than their current locations. Electronic mediation and mass migration mark the world of the present as the era of imagination, and people's imagination is actively practiced "across large and irregular transnational terrains" (Appadurai, 1997, p.9). In fact, nearly 191 million people, about three percent of the world's population, lived outside their country of birth or nationalities in 2005 (Global Migration Group, 2008).

Korea, which encountered an unexpected economic crisis<sup>5</sup> in the mid 1990's, has not been exempt from worldwide trends. Korea's economic predicament following an urgent International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan and the uncertainty prevailing at that time forced middle class families seeking economic stability and better living opportunities to widen their eyes to international landscapes. Rooted in the particular social economic context, the number of Korean emigrants has rapidly increased since the IMF crisis. Expanding their mindsets over territorial nation states and imagining future lives different from their present, more Korean people started looking for a land for a better life.

What has been remarkable regarding the phenomenon is that Canada has appeared as the most preferred immigration destination among Koreans since the late 1990's. In 1999, the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Korean MOFAT, 2008) indicated that the number of Korean emigrants to Canada exceeded those who did so for

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<sup>5</sup>The IMF crisis in Korea was created due to the financial crisis in East Asia in 1997. The Korean government had to receive urgently \$58 billion loan and rescue package from the IMF. The IMF crisis influenced all over the social, political, economic sectors, generating bankruptcies, mass layoffs, unstable employment, outsourcing and overall instability.

the United States. That is, Koreans' most favorable landing country changed to Canada from the United States, which had been the leading destination for almost 35 years. In the same vein, Korea was among the top ten countries providing immigrants for Canada in the late 1990's. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC, 2006), between 1999 and 2001, Korea was the fifth largest immigration source country for Canada, supplying an annual number of more than 7,000 new arrivals. During the peak in 2001, 9,664 new immigrants in Canada reported Korean as their mother tongue (CIC, 2001).

One outstanding characteristic of the recent<sup>6</sup> Korean immigrants in Canada is that they have either human capital or material capital so the majority of Korean immigrants have migrated under the class of independent/skilled workers or business, namely, economic class<sup>7</sup>. As an illustration, in 2001, the number of Korean skilled workers including principal applicants and dependents was 6,854, accounting for 5% of the total independent class migration in Canada. The number of Korean business class immigrants between 2000 and 2005 also accounted for 13 % of the total business class migration in Canada. In fact these numerical data clearly demonstrate a high contribution of Korean migrants to the population of immigrants in Canada as well as the Canadian economy and society over a recent decade.

This unprecedented phenomenon is primarily due to Canadian immigration policy, although push factors in the source country and pull factors in the receiving country are

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<sup>6</sup> In general, recent immigrants refer to people who immigrated to Canada 5 years or less prior to the date of the Census. For example, in the case of the 1996 Census, recent immigrants refer to those who immigrated between 1991 and the first 4 months of 1996. However, I adopt the term "recent" for the immigrants who have migrated to Canada since the late 1990's.

<sup>7</sup> The economic class consists of independents (skilled workers), entrepreneurs, self-employed and investors, and the last three sub categories consist of business class.

dynamically tied. At this point, it is necessary to describe a brief background of Korean migration to Canada for a better understanding of the socio-economic, political, and historical context for the influx of highly skilled Korean immigrants. Then I briefly present the features of recent Korean immigrants.

### ***Korean Migration in Canada***

With the official commencement of immigration of Koreans in 1962, Canada has shown a steady growth in its total Korean-Canadian population, although there was some fluctuation. Korean migration history roughly shows four time periods based on revisions in Canadian immigration policies: before 1976, 1977-1985, 1986-2001 and 2002-present (Source: Korean MOFAT & CIC Statistics, cited in Kwak, 2008).

In the first period, Korean immigrants left Korea for better economic opportunities although there were a small number of pastors and students. Also, the introduction of the point system (see page 12) in 1967 generated a more pronounced wave of Korean immigration from not only Korea but also Germany, Vietnam and South America where Korean immigrants had already lived. The second period was affected by a 1976 policy change that excluded siblings and other relatives from the family reunification class. This period witnessed a minimal growth of Korean population in Canada for almost a decade.

The third period showed a stable increase. In 1986, the newly revised business immigration program enabled an influx of migrants who had financial capital from Korea and other Asian countries (Nash, 1994). Since 1997, the number of skilled Korean immigrants has extraordinarily increased, especially affected by the IMF economic crisis in Korea. To escape from the unstable socio-economic conditions in Korea on one hand,

and to look for a better country for children's education and their future on the other hand, highly -educated middle class families began leaving Korea. Those who could afford to migrate into Canada were mostly either skilled /professional workers or wealthy immigrants, in terms of immigration under independent class or business class.

The fourth period reflects the negative effect of revised policies in the early 2000's. A fortified policy<sup>8</sup> on proficiency in the official languages, English or French and business experience has temporally hindered potential immigrants from Korea. Korean immigration slightly decreased until 2004, but began to recover in 2005. However, the rapid growth of temporal status holders suggests some Koreans come to Canada on a temporary permit first and then apply for immigration later on, the same phenomenon that has occurred in the United States (Hurh et al., 1979; Kwak, 2008).

Regardless, the most rapid unprecedented growth out of the four periods has emerged since the late 1990's. Although there has shown a decrease as a turning point of 2004, 5,000-6,000 Koreans yearly have attained permanent residency status in Canada. Overall, the number of immigrants who have arrived since 1996 comprises a majority of the population, accounting for 42.1% of the Korean population who immigrated in Canada from 1962 to 2005 (CIC, 2006). Thus, I adopt the term, *recent Korean immigrants* as the immigrants who have migrated since the late 1990's.

### ***The Features of Recent Korean Immigrants***

Recent Korean immigrants in Canada have shown distinguished features compared to their predecessors. As indicated in the above section, they tend to hold either

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<sup>8</sup> I note the implication of the negative relationship between the fortified policy on language proficiency and the number of Korean immigrants. This suggests that language barriers are an affecting issue to Korean immigrants, and the proficiency of English (or French) and communication skills may immensely affect the immigrants' trajectories and workplace experiences, which this study assumes.

high human capital as in the case of skilled workers or material capital as in the case of business investors. This is well supported by the fact that about 80 percent of the total Korean-Canadian immigrant population has flowed into Canada as economic class migrants since 1984 (CIC, 2006).

The prevalence of the economic class shows a positive relation with high education qualifications of recent Korean immigrants. Compared to the immigrants from the top ten source countries in Canada, Korean immigrants represented the highest proportion of those who had university or higher education at time of landing (Kwak, 2008). With their high education qualifications, their social positions or social class were also in the middle class in Korea. According to Yoon's (2004) study, most recent Korean immigrants in Toronto after 1997 belonged to the middle class prior to migration to Canada, with the majority of the participants holding post secondary education and professional and white collar careers in Korea.

Some research explores what motives led Korean immigrants to migrate to Canada. Kim (2001) describes that most Korean immigrants were attracted to Canada's social services such as public education, medical services, and pension system, economic opportunities, and educational opportunities available for their children. According to Kwak (2008) and Hong (2008), recent Korean immigrants left Korea significantly affected by the IMF crisis in the late 1990's: its social, economic, political instability. Their concrete motives were described as better living opportunities, better children's education and English language education, idealized aspiration to the Western, gender discrimination and Confucian family structure in Korea. In particular, Hong's (2008) study emphasizes gender equity as an important motive for migration for highly skilled

Korean women immigrants; the social and political constraints in Korea hindered their professional pursuits as women workers, and thus they desired for a space of gender equity. In most cases, Canada was imagined as a land for opportunities and a better life for them as well as their next generations.

Common difficulties Korean immigrants (in North America) generally encounter in their adaptation in a new environment have been identified as problems in language, employment, racial discrimination, health, interpersonal relationships, identity, and discrimination, which are similar to other groups of immigrants (Hurh et al., 1979; Hong, 2008; Kim, 2001; Kim, 2008; Ku, 2000; Nah, 1993; Park, 2006). Among them, the language barrier affects almost every aspect of Korean immigrants' daily lives, limiting their social relations. Although recent Korean immigrants have shown improved language facility compared to their predecessors, language facility appears within the major difficulties (Kim, 2001). Language barriers are often intertwined with unemployment, so their limited language facility functions as a main cause of Korean immigrants' adversity, hindering job opportunities. Hong's (2008) study also illustrates the difficulties highly skilled Korean immigrant women in Toronto face, especially when they step into the Canadian labour market. The difficulties include unrecognized Korean education and work experience, requirements for Canadian experience, limited language facility, Korean accented English, racism, lack of social and cultural capital, mental depression, and changed relations with family members.

To sum up, recent Korean immigrants who have migrated since the late 1990's, have either human capital or material capital, and had belonged to middle class prior to migration to Canada, holding post secondary education and professional careers in Korea.

Their motives for migration were better life opportunities, better education for their children and their future, idealized aspiration to Canada, and gender equity (for women immigrants). They encountered common difficulties such as language barrier, unemployment, racism, and identity issues while adapting in Canada and integrating into the Canadian labour market.

### ***Highly Skilled Immigrants in Canada***

#### ***The Influx of Highly Skilled Immigrants in Canada***

The phenomenon of transnational migration of the highly skilled is an incorporated part of globalization, a global process such as the internationalization of higher education and unequal global development (Castle & Miller, 1998). Transnational migration of the highly skilled in Canada also reflects its specific historical and socio-economic structural conditions. As described in the previous section, Canada's immigration policy has been openly inducing internationally educated skilled workers as "an occupational demand model" since 1967 (Job Start and Skills for Change, 2001, p.26). Canada reformed its immigration policy in 1967 due to the high demand of professional and skilled workers in the Canadian labour market. The changed policy was an adoption of a point system which considers education, age, vocational qualification, experience, pre-arranged employment, and knowledge of official languages (English or French), personal suitability and the destination of settlement in Canada. In a similar vein, Canada created a business class for immigration in the 1980's, pursuing global competitiveness. Simply put, the Canadian government has been overtly privileging highly skilled, educated, and affluent immigrants under independent or business class over other classes such as family and refugees (Arat- Koc, 1999).

Skilled workers, in particular, became the focus of immigration policy as early as 1999, reflecting the shift of the economy towards a postindustrial or knowledge - based economy. Skilled workers, according to Brouwer's (1999) report, were the "largest group of immigrants" (p.3) among all classes of immigrants to Canada. Approximately half of the permanent residents, Brouwer indicated, were skilled workers or independent immigrants, totaling 81, 146 out of 174,100, based on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada statistics from 1999. As shown, immigration policy expects immigrants to be "self-efficient" and "independent" labour market players to avoid social problems or "social service take up" (Reitz, 2005, p. 11). Indeed, the Canadian government's neo-liberal approach to the new immigration plan in 1994 was clearly revealed in its stated goal of "ensuring that newcomers to Canada can integrate and contribute to Canada as quickly as possible without adding to the burden on social programs" (CIC, 1994). Accordingly, the influx of highly skilled Korean immigrants should be understood in this climate. Thus, the influx of highly skilled into Canada actually reflects a reciprocal characteristic of globalization which has induced international mobility of all sorts of materials and people in general, and the Canada immigration policy which reflects its historical, social, economic, and political conditions.

Despite the huge influx of highly skilled Korean immigrants since the late 1990's and their impact on Canadian social economic sectors, however, their experiences have not been a focus of academic research. As described, most highly skilled immigrants are presumed to immediately contribute to the Canadian labour market with credentials for work. That assumption is explicitly reflected in the Canadian government's plan, as shown in the name of "independent" as well as the immigration policy. Nonetheless, the

Canadian government has reported that Korean skilled immigrants have difficulties in penetrating the Canadian labour market, due to language difficulties, cultural, social, and political differences, or other factors such as unrecognized foreign credentials, which other groups of new immigrants commonly face (CIC, 2008). In the following section, I provide the common barriers which internationally trained immigrant professionals face integrating into the Canadian labour market.

### ***The Barriers Highly skilled Immigrants Face in Canada***

There has been some research on the issues of integrating highly skilled immigrants into the Canadian labour market and the hindrances they face getting into and practicing in workplaces (Brauwer, 1999; Gurcharn & Li, 1998; Nash, 1994; Reitz, 2005; Wang, 2006). Noting the “brain drain”<sup>9</sup> phenomenon, many of the studies show that the Canadian labour market underutilizes the skills and high qualifications of immigrants, either through unemployment or employment in low menial work. For example, according to Brouwer (1999), out of all internationally trained engineers arriving in Canada between 1991 and 1994, only about half attained their jobs in their appropriate areas by 1996. The key barriers most research studies cite are categorized as lack of Canadian work experience, systemic barriers, discrimination based on race, ethnicity and gender, and language barriers.

Internationally trained professional immigrants are frequently exposed to the immobilizing “catch 22” of the “Canadian experience” rule (Foster, 2008, p.133). The contradictory situation requires professional immigrants to have Canadian work

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<sup>9</sup> The general meaning of “brain drain” is the loss of skilled intellectual and technical labour through the movement of such labour to more favourable geographic, economic, or professional environments. In Canada, brain drain has taken place as highly skilled Canadian workers moved to the United States due to better salaries and opportunities (see Torjman, 2000 and Murray, 2000). Immigration of the highly skilled in Canada, thus, can be seen as a means of balancing the outflow of skills.

experience in order to be considered by Canadian employers for job positions.

Furthermore, they encounter the circumstances where their past work experience in their home countries and foreign qualifications are not recognized.

Brouwer (1999) sees these problems (unrecognized foreign credentials and Canadian experience) not as individual factors but as systemic barriers associated with structures such as federal/provincial governments, professional organizations or occupational regulatory bodies, nongovernmental organizations, and employers. Their inconsistent policies and competing interests, Brauwer asserts, sustain the problems. Gurcharn and Li (1998) conducted a survey study in Vancouver and interviewed over 400 internationally trained professionals. According to the findings, approximately 90% of the respondents had at least a Bachelor degree and about 40% had a Master's or Ph.D. degree. Among them, 73% of immigrant professionals experienced downward mobility, and 22% held the same type of job after migration. The majority also revealed that their foreign work experience was not recognized by provincial governments, professional organizations and educational institutions. Thus, the refusal to recognize education and skills are institutionalized methods of exclusion, which hinder minority immigrants' integration into the Canadian labour market.

Racial discrimination, often interlocked with the above barriers, is also a well known barrier for immigrant professionals. Gurcharn and Li's (1998) study revealed that 65% of recent professional immigrants responded that discrimination based on their skin color was a factor that influenced the recognition of foreign experience. Discrimination, however, is not limited only to race, but is also combined with gender or ethnicity. It is well documented that immigrant women are disadvantaged in the Canadian labour

market in terms of their combined status as women, immigrants, and racial minorities (Hong, 2008; Ng, 1996; Reitz, 2001). As an example, Hong (2008) claims that there is a great gap between the point system set by the federal government and the actual labour market integration of skilled minority immigrants in Canada, due to the prevailing practice of racism and gender discrimination. Simply, minority women immigrants suffer from gender discrimination and racialization simultaneously, and thus they are doubly marginalized. As Foster (2008) analyzes, barriers which hinder immigrant professionals' integration into the Canadian labour market are closely interlocked in multiple ways: "Structural factors that contribute to racialized patterns of difference are noted as indicators of discrimination in the recognition of foreign credentials" (p.132). This suggests that "control of entry into professions has caused systematic exclusion and occupational disadvantages of professional immigrants" (p.132).

As many studies affirm, however, the language barrier is often regarded as the first and the biggest barrier with which most internationally trained professional immigrants face (Azuh, 1998; Prefontaine & Benson, 1999; Wang, 2006). Language facility is actually involved in all aspects of highly skilled immigrants' access to, entry into, and appropriate practices in their workplaces. Appropriate performance in the labour market depends largely on language facility, so more successful workplace experiences are linked to higher language communicative abilities. Wang's (2006) study on six professional immigrants in Manitoba, Canada, depicts how language and culture problems affect their integration into the new workplace environment. The findings confirm that linguistic and cultural barriers block immigrant professionals from demonstrating and performing their actual professional qualities, abilities and skills.

These challenges exist throughout the process of re-entry from designing their initial re-entry plan, entering the Canadian job market to participating appropriately in the accepted ways of their professions in Canada. Language facility and culturally appropriate practices in Canadian workplaces are crucial factors for the professional immigrants' re-entry into their area of expertise.

### ***Language Barrier and Korean Immigrants***

Language issues, as indicated, are the first and significant barriers for many Korean immigrants. Korea is a homogeneous country, where people share similar cultural products and common values, and more significantly, share a single language. Their historically and culturally experienced homogeneity poses various challenges to Korean immigrants during their adaptation process in Canada. Among the diverse needs facing new immigrants, language is an apparent barrier for Korean immigrants, akin to most immigrants from non-English alphabet or non-English colonized countries (Hurh et al., 1979; Kim, 2001; Nah, 1993). For example, Hurh et al.'s (1979) study on 283 Korean immigrants in Chicago, more than 73% of whom held professional and white color occupations in Korea, revealed that the most frequently cited problem is that of language.

For most Korean adult immigrants, the language barrier poses daily struggles involving a range of sociocultural parameters, especially if they had little exposure to English prior to migration (Kim, 2001). More importantly, the fluency of the second language and accent have implications for Korean immigrants' social and economic opportunities in Canada (Ku, 2000). Their fluency determines the range of occupational choices available to them regardless of their work credentials, prior experience, and educational background (Nah, 1993). The highly skilled immigrants of Hong's (2008)

study also reveal that their low command of English and Korean accents are the reason for their failure to integrate into their professions. Due to perceived limited language facility, it is also reported that many professional and skilled workers often begin at the lower level in their field of expertise regardless of their pre-migration experience or credentials (CIC, 2008; Kim, 2001; Nah, 1993;).

Language barriers, as seen, are often combined with the issues of unemployment and identity of Korean immigrants. According to Hurh et al. (1979) and Hurh and Kim (1990), status inconsistency among Korean immigrants has a unique dimension, that is, “the inconsistency between pre emigration socio- economic status in Korea and post emigration socio-economic status in a new country” (Hurh et al., 1979, p.10). If an experienced engineer in Korea works as a factory hand after migration, he is subjected to double status inconsistency in terms of occupation and education. All these issues are connected with feelings of ambivalence and severe identity problems among immigrants. The vicious circle, the relationship between language barriers and unemployment is also identified as a fundamental issue prevailing among other groups of immigrants in Canada.

Although language barriers have been reported as one of the main challenges for many Korean immigrants, affecting their employment and multifaceted social parameters, I have found that there is a paucity of studies which shed light on highly skilled Korean immigrants’ experiences with regard to their second language learning. There are studies on Korean immigrants’(rather than of highly skilled) overall settlement and their language learning experiences, but most of these were conducted in the United States (Chee, 2003; Hurh et al., 1979; Hurh & Kim, 1990; Kim, 2004; Nah, 1993; Park K, 2005). Thus, it is inadequate as well as insufficient to apply the findings to Canadian settings.

There is some research on Korean international students, but it also has limitations that research on language learning among Korean international students and temporary visitors in Canada lacks an accurate portrait of highly skilled immigrants, as their qualifications and purpose of migration are different from other groups.

A couple of research studies depict recent Korean immigrants' experiences in Canada in the sectors of geography, sociology, or health, but not in second language education. For example, Kwak (2008) explores a form of transnational economy that involves cross border investments of students, families and business people that are motivated by education. This study shows that both permanent residents and temporary visitors play a crucial role in promoting Canadian education in the global market. With strong motivation and spatial mobility, the rising demands of Korean students and their parents have also been important precursors of recent industrial growth.

Meanwhile Hong's (2008) study examines twenty-five highly skilled Korean immigrant women. The study illustrates the settlement processes of the immigrant women, how macro structures shape their migration, what kind of barriers they encounter, and how they respond to the constraints. The author also convincingly argues that highly skilled Korean immigrant women are excluded and marginalized under systemically racialized Canadian society, and yet the immigrant women negotiate their identities not as passive victims but as active organizers with human agency.

However, this study leaves undeveloped the highly skilled immigrants' language learning experiences and the interplay of language learning and their workplace communities. This gap in the literature suggests a need for research on recent highly skilled Korean immigrants' experiences in Canada through a lens of second language

learning. In what follows, I provide a brief literature review on second language education with relation to adult immigrants in particular.

### ***Second Language Learning and Immigrants***

Worldwide mobility and transnational migration have impacted researchers and teachers in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), since many adult migrants struggle with the challenges of learning their target language over the world. As a consequence, there is an increasing body of research that attends to the provision of formal second language instruction for adult immigrants, including community-based programs, workplace training, postsecondary education and family literacy programs (Goldstein, 1997; Morgan, 1997; Norton, 1997). However, as Johnson (1992) notes, research on the natural language learning of adult immigrants is less fertile than research on formal institutional language learning. Johnson clearly indicates that there is little research on the language learning of adults within a sociocultural context.

Considering sociocultural contexts has appeared as an indispensable aspect of understanding a learner's acquisition of a target language. As adult immigrant language learners are surrounded with a range of social parameters and relations outside classrooms, what sociocultural factors influence a language learner's use and practice of a target language has been an issue. This also inherently involves the relationship between language learning and learner's identities. In studies of language learning of adult immigrants, Norton (2001) also pinpoints a lack of "the voices of particular learners, their distinctive histories, their unique desires for the future" (p.47), suggesting the need of research in exploring adult language learners' own voices, life stories, experiences, and perceptions.

In general, learning English as an Additional Language (EAL)<sup>10</sup> is regarded as the first step for most immigrant newcomers in Canada, in making an effort to design their paths or reach their target workplace communities. Immigrant newcomers bring their desires into their EAL classrooms, expecting EAL programs to bridge the gaps between current levels of cultural and linguistic competence and the appropriate level required to participate in their target workplace communities.

EAL classrooms are also their first communities of practice, through which they are socialized in a new culture, and acquire language proficiency (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Morita, 2004; Norton, 2000, 2001; Toohey, 2000). Through participating in social activities and interacting with other social members, they acquire language, more specifically, the discourses (Gee, 1990). Second language acquisition, however, as many socioculturalists attest, is a complex process for adult learners, which entails new ways of making sense of social, cultural, and political practices that may be strange in contrast to their familiar and desired ways of being and speaking. Different practices and discourses confront most newly arrived immigrants, and they are repeatedly challenged by their limited control over the second language, which indicates both linguistic capital and a form of power (Norton, 2000, 2001; Weedon, 1997). Accordingly, their future images and desires they conceived with their migration are frequently challenged and reshaped through a continuous negotiation of their identity. Thus, language learning is a social practice which entails continuous negotiation of learners' multiple, conflicting identities.

### ***Korean Immigrant Learners in SLA***

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<sup>10</sup> An emerging trend in the field of SLA is the use of EAL, standing for English as an Additional Language in place of ESL, English as a Second Language. The Manitoba government approved the term EAL over ESL in 2006, since many non-native English speakers speak more than two languages, and English is not necessarily their second. I am faithful to the adoption of the new term. Out of respect to the literature review, however, I follow the traditional means of reference.

In this section, I introduce some recent studies in SLA, which shed light on Korean adult immigrants and the relationship between their language learning and identity. The literature review helps understand what issues come up for Korean immigrant learners. Kim's (2008) study delves into identity issues among Korean ESL (English as a Second Language) adult students in the United States. This study contends that struggles between their pre-established identity as a full member in their own society and the new identity as a newcomer in the foreign country challenge their emerging identity and influence their socialization to the American educational institutions. The main point Kim (2008) offers is that constructing a new identity involves obtaining social membership in target communities. In a similar vein, Park K's (2005) study on Korean immigrant women in the United States illustrates that immigrant identity is a complex dynamic process, and that it is mainly affected by their and their family members' successful experiences in the host country.

Meanwhile, Chee (2003) examines the SLA process experienced by 1.5 generation Korean women who migrated as teenagers to the United States. Grounded on identity politics and poststructural perspectives on language learning, Chee argues that understanding the language learning process entails the social and ideological relations and practices outside the language system that inhere in discourse practice or language use and the relative social position of the learner. The findings show that the immigrants acquired particular discourse of the target language through access and participation. "Furthermore", Chee adds, "identities of the learners were related to the commitment or investment they made towards learning the target language" (p.5), supporting existing findings (McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 1997, 2001). Similarly, Kim's (2007) research

on Korean ESL students and recent immigrants in Toronto illustrates that second language (L2) motivation is not static but mediated by L2 learners, agency, and facilitating environments or affordances.

Some documents reveal that recent Korean immigrants show improved language proficiency compared to their predecessors (BC Statistics, 2001). Kim (2001) explored Korean immigrants in Toronto comparing the experiences between old immigrants and newcomers, and found that newcomers were “actively attempting to become more integrated into mainstream Canadian culture” (p.95), emphasizing their human agency and mobility based on their capability such as economic affluence or language facility. Although it is not with Korean immigrants, Korne et al. (2007) conducted research on immigrants to the U.K. and the United States and their perceptions of bicultural identity, and argued that confrontation and differences between two cultures cannot be avoided, but the changes that may result are distinctly positive, providing immigrants with a balance, acceptance and critical awareness. Noting transnationalism, Kwak (2008) also disputes that unlike the old fixed images of immigrants, Korean immigrant entrepreneurs in Vancouver actively practice globalization providing recent industrial growth in Canada.

To summarize, all the literature reviewed confirms the interlocked relationships among immigrants’ multiple identity construction, language learning, and the parameters of their social relations and practices. Also, the importance of social membership through participation in a target community is critically revealed with regard to their identity. Some research on Korean immigrants, on the other hand, adds to the existing body of literature a voice that some recent Korean immigrants tend to shape their positions and identities more actively with strong human agency and mobility, so that essentialized

images of immigrants can be challenged. As shown, however, what is lacking in the existing studies on Korean immigrants is research in SLA focusing on recent highly skilled Korean immigrants in terms of their language learning and workplace experiences.

### ***Statements of Research Problem***

In this section, I clarify the rationales of the research problem. First, there has been a huge influx of highly skilled Korean immigrants in Canada since the mid 1990's, influencing Canadian society and economy as well as Korean society. Despite the huge influx and contribution to the population of immigrants in Canada, there is little literature which delves into highly skilled Korean immigrants' experiences, especially in terms of their language learning and workplace communities. Although some research studies on recent Korean immigrants describe their immigration experiences and challenges, their focus is not in second language education. Thus, there is a need of an in-depth understanding of the case of recent highly skilled Korean immigrants; how they integrate into their target workplace communities, what challenges they encounter, and how language learning influences their construction of their target workplaces.

Second, most SLA studies are performed in and serve academic settings or formal language learning environments such as classrooms (Morita, 2004; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton & Kamel, 2003; Pavlenko, 2003; Rossetto, 2006; Toohey, 2000). The transnational mobility of the highly skilled, however, is an apparent issue, affecting the parameters of the SLA field. There is an apparent paucity of studies that consider practical settings involving highly skilled immigrants. The purpose of their language learning would be different from those of other groups of immigrants, and their second language acquisition naturally entails acquisition of practical workplace discourses as

immigrant professionals. As Jonson (1992) and Norton (2001) recognize, this deficiency encourages this study to add to the existing body of SLA literature a voice which illuminates adult immigrants' natural language learning in workplace communities and the interplay of their language learning, identity construction, and participation in a workplace community.

Lastly, although this study is underpinned by the notion of imagined communities, there has been little effort to clarify the notion of "imagined communities" in relation to second language learning. Kano and Norton (2003) confirm the educational possibilities which the notion of imagined communities may present, and leave plausible space for future studies for exploration and application of the notion of imagined communities to understanding language learning and learners. With a strong belief in its promising functions which may elucidate individuals/learners, their living and learning trajectories, their motivation/investment in second language, and their identity construction, this study also aims to contribute to developing a solid notion of imagined communities in the field of SLA.

This study focuses on highly skilled immigrants' own perspectives and their introspective, retrospective accounts of their experiences. Various aspects of the lived experiences of highly skilled migrants can provide an in-depth understanding of how highly skilled immigrants construct their imagined workplace communities in Canada, and a great deal of insight into the nature of SLA and the factors that hinder or facilitate their language learning processes. Approximately 90 % of recent Korean immigrants settled down in English speaking areas in Canada (CIC, 2006). For the purpose of this study, I restrict my discussion to learning of English rather than French.

In addition, as Castles (2004) and Banks (2008) report, international migration has been more complicated and has broadened our horizons in recent years. In studies of migration, some scholars point out that motivation and actions of individuals need to be highlighted. This proposes a new perspective that new immigrants actively expand and uphold their multiple identities and social relations over space and time, discarding the essentialized static images of torn out and adverse immigrant adaptation in the places of settlement (Korne et al., 2007; Kwak, 2008; Park M, 2005). Postulating these perspectives also helps better explain and depict the experiences of highly skilled Korean immigrants in Canada.

### ***Statement of Purpose and Research Questions***

Overall, the purpose of this study is to explore and report on highly skilled Korean immigrants' language learning and workplace experiences, with an effort to understand how highly skilled Korean immigrants construct their imagined workplace communities in Canada as a dynamic process. This study, thus, will investigate the interplay of highly skilled Korean immigrants' language learning, their identity and workplace communities. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What expectations and images of working in Canada did highly skilled Korean immigrants have when they migrated to Canada? To what extent, do they perceive these expectations to be met or not?
2. How do they perceive language learning in relation to their target workplace communities? What were their language learning experiences in regard to integrating into their target workplaces?
3. What challenges and successes, if any, have the highly skilled immigrants experienced in their workplace? What role, if any, has language played in

their workplace experiences?

4. How did they negotiate their competence and identity to attain full membership in their workplace communities?

### ***Significance of the Study***

I clarify the significance of this study in terms of theoretical and practical relevance. The significant aspects of this study basically entail the research problem which I presented above, and also identify who potential readers are. The target audience of this study is academic scholars in SLA, immigration policy developers, immigrant service programs and language institutions, EAL instructors, and prospective highly skilled immigrants.

#### ***Academic significance***

As indicated above, there is a paucity of studies that consider second language learning in practical settings involving highly skilled immigrants, creating a gap in the SLA literature. This study responds to this gap, exploring adult immigrants' language learning in relation to their workplace communities, and accordingly, extends the scope of SLA theories of the notion of "imagined communities" and the "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) from their main academic settings into practical workplace settings. This study aims to share highly skilled immigrants' vivid voices, their own perspectives and interpretations on their language learning and workplace experiences. Thus, the information gained will add some insights to existing SLA theories, as part of the incipient body of qualitative research that frames the SLA process.

This study is also meaningful because it delves into the interplay of language learning, identity, and workplace communities, through an in-depth examination of three

highly skilled transnational migrants' lived experiences. This study could add some insights to the line of the SLA research within poststructural framework and sociocultural perspectives, while addressing some important issues which have recently attracted attention in SLA. They include the multiplicity of identities, and identity negotiation in language learning, the role of language and power, positionality and human agency, and the relationship between language learning and participation in social activities in terms of communities (Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2001; Pavlenko, 2003). Through investigating highly skilled immigrants' migratory stories, language learning, and workplace experiences, this study can contribute to issues mentioned above.

Next, this study tries to conceptualize the notion of imagined communities. Some scholars in SLA (Dagenais, 2003; Kanno, 2003; Kanno& Norton, 2003; Norton 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko, 2003) highlight the affirmative functions of the notion of imaged communities for language learners, but there has been little effort to clarify the notion in second language learning. This study is significant because it aims to develop Bonny Norton's initial concept of imagined communities in SLA into a process model, combining the theory of communities of practice (Lave& Wenger, 1991). The process model may help elucidate language learners, learning, and learners' identity construction as a dynamic continuum. To my knowledge, no study has developed the notion of imagined communities as a process model. Furthermore, few studies in SLA have adopted the notion of imagined communities in multiple layers. Some studies (Dagenais, 2003; Pavlenko, 2003) adopt the notion only for describing micro levels, and others (Kanno, 2003) only for macro structural levels. However, there are many contesting multiple imagined communities in which an individual is socially, culturally and

politically embedded. This study tries to connect micro levels and macro levels, which sometimes create a positive harmony, but sometimes conflicts. This effort is meaningful because considering the interplay of individual levels and structural levels informs scholars' understanding of individuals' fluid construction of identities and their alignment with societal structures (Canagarajah, 2006).

### ***Practical Significance***

My initial interest in this study starts with the query of how highly skilled Korean immigrants construct their target workplace communities in Canada. This study, thus, will provide their motives for migration, their language learning experiences, their successes and challenges, identity negotiation, and coping strategies in their workplace communities in practical ways. The findings and implications can be used for implementing immigration policies, especially regarding highly skilled or independent class of immigration. The challenges and successes the immigrant professionals encountered in their integration into the Canadian workforce may give important suggestions for future immigration policy decisions. This study could also help develop immigrant language training and settlement services, in terms of integrating internationally trained professionals into their chosen professions. This study will be useful for inventing future language/ vocational training orientation and development of practical language programs for skilled migrants.

In a pedagogical realm, EAL instructors can be informed of what to teach, how to teach, and how to understand immigrant language learners and their particular needs and desires which may change temporally. This study can inform EAL instructors of the nature of adult language learners' multiple, struggling identities and their motivation and

investment in learning, their linguistic, cultural, social, and individual differences, their affective needs such as language anxiety, and participation.

Lastly, this study provides the Korean government and potential immigrants from Korea with practical information and suggestions such as highly skilled workforce emigration, a range of paths to integrate into the Canadian labour market and attaining recognition in their workplaces, and more specifically, their L2 learning in terms of workplace communities.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

In the previous chapter I described the global climate of the transnational migration of the highly skilled and the influx of highly skilled Korean immigrants in Canada since the late 1990's. I also drew the central inquiry for this study, how highly skilled Korean migrants have constructed their imagined workplace communities in Canada. I presented overall background information on Korean migration to Canada, and noted a lack of literature on highly skilled Korean immigrants' experiences in relation to their second language learning and workplace communities. I also clarified this study's focus on the interplay of language learning, identity, and workplace communities, providing guiding research questions.

All the inquiries in a research study reflect a researcher's underlying set of assumptions. They are also inherently intertwined with the whole research design and methodology. The inquiries, therefore, fundamentally take up my particular assumptions and epistemological influences as a researcher. This study mainly espouses some notions of poststructuralism and sociocultural perspectives in SLA, which are interconnected. More particularly, as indicated, this study is informed by the notion of "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983; Kano & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2001) and the "communities of practice" theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

To frame the study, first, I briefly discuss poststructuralists' general perspectives on language learning and identity that allow me to appreciate the dynamics of language, language learning, power, and identity. Then, I conceptualize the notion of imagined communities as an overarching framework for this study. In doing so, I combine the

theory of communities of practice together, and delineate how each conceptual component constructs the whole notion of imagined communities. Conceptualizing the notion of imagined communities inherently follows a procedural flow, suggesting a possibility of building a process model.

### ***Poststructural Notions and Sociocultural Perspectives in SLA***

#### ***Language and Language Learning***

This study mainly draws on poststructural notions of language, language learning and learners (Morita, 2004; Norton, 2000, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko, 2003; Weedon, 1997). The basic assumptions of poststructuralism are the plurality of language and the impossibility of fixing meaning once and for all. The fundamental critique poststructuralists made against structuralists' notion of language is that structuralism cannot elucidate struggles over the social meanings that can be attributed to signs in a given language. Structuralists regard signs as having idealized meanings and linguistic communities as being relatively homogeneous and mutually consented. However, poststructuralists take the position that "the signifying practices of societies are sites of struggle, and that linguistic communities are heterogeneous arenas characterized by conflicting claims to truth and power" (Norton, 2000, p.14).

Language is the place where forms of social organizations and their social and political consequences are defined and contested. Language is also "the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (Weedon, 1997, p.21). The overarching assumption is that meaning is produced within language and that individual signs do not have intrinsic meaning but acquire meaning through the language and their difference within it from other signs. Simply speaking, this implies that language is social

and a site of struggle.

As Bakhtin (1981) claims, language should be examined as situated utterances in which speakers struggle to create meanings in dialogue with interlocutors (cited in Norton, 2000). This suggests that language learning engages the identities of learners because language entails not only a linguistic system of signs and symbols but also a complex social practice in which the value and meaning attributed to an utterance are determined in part by the value and meaning attributed to the person who speaks.

Poststructuralists, thus, view language learning as a process of identity reconstruction of learners.

### ***Identity***

Influenced by feminist poststructuralists, Norton Peirce (1995) criticizes the dichotomous perceptions of language learners, in which learners can be defined as motivated or unmotivated, and introverted or extroverted without considering that such affective factors are socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual. Thus, Norton Peirce (1995) calls for a need in SLA to develop a “concept of the language learner as having a complex social identity that must be understood with reference to large and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to day social interaction”(p.579). In terms of language learning, Norton (2001) adopts social identity over other forms of identity such as cultural identity. She defines identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p.5).

Social identity implies the relationship between the individual and the larger social worlds, so complexity and dynamics are its innate nature. Social identity also presumes that power relations play a crucial role in social interactions between language learners and target language speakers. Taking Foucault's (1980) poststructural positions, Norton (2001) describes power relationships as "the socially constructed relations among individuals, institutions and communities" (p. 7), where symbolic resources such as language and material resources are allocated. Moreover, she takes up Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "right to speak" and points out SLA theorists' uncritical assumption that all interlocutors consider each other as worthy to speak to and worthy to listen to.

Seen in this light, it is important to investigate how power relations are implicated in the nature of language learning and how social identities are co-constructed by different positions individuals take up in discourses and the positions they receive based on their social relationships. As Duff and Uchida (1997) describe, "identities and beliefs are co-constructed, negotiated, and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language" (p.452). Therefore, sociocultural identities are not static deterministic constructs, but multiple, locally negotiated, and constant fluxing ones (McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000, Toohey, 2000).

### ***Identity and Subjectivity***

In poststructuralism's terms, subjectivity refers to the ways in which our identity is formed through discourses. Weedon (1997) sees an individual, by virtue of his or her social existence, belongs to a range of discursive fields that include contesting ways of understanding the world and experience while providing the individual with diverse possible forms of subjectivity. According to Weedon (1997), subjectivity is "the

conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (p.32). Although subjectivity is socially constructed in discursive practices, it exists as a thinking subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the conflict between contradictory subject positions and practices.

Some poststructuralists, thus, presume that both the individual and reality are products of discursive and agentive actions (Davies, 1990; Weedon, 1997). As the discursive practices in which an individual engages are inherently contesting, multiple, changing over time and space, and a site of struggle over meaning, access, and power, so are the subject positions that the individual takes up. Therefore, our identities are multiple, contradictory, and a site of struggle, and each subject has human agency that negotiate in a variety of social sites. The multiplicity of identity is fundamentally built upon subjectivity because a “person takes up different subject positions as teacher, child, feminist...identity is a site of struggle” across different sites at different points in time (Norton, 2001, p. 127).

Similar to Norton, Wenger (1998) discusses notions of subjectivity and power in his social theory of learning. He shows how power can marginalize the illegitimate, but his point is that power is not limited to only marginalization. Since power exists in every social situation, it is through participation and negotiation of meaning that identities are constructed and reconstructed with many layered contexts. Participation means interaction with the target group that is indicative of an individual’s goals and investments. Negotiation of meaning refers to the act of reinterpreting the shared discourse or knowledge of a target group.

To sum up, the tenet of poststructuralism depicts the individual or the subject as multiple, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social space, exerting human agency. As Pennycook (2001) describes, if identities are a constant negotiation of “how we relate to the world” (p. 149), it is necessary to recognize that second language classrooms and workplaces are the very places of identity construction and transformation. Engagement in discourse practice, thus, is essential for the continuing construction and negotiation of identity.

To conclude, a poststructural lens widens the narrow concept of language learning process posited by the structural linguistics to include diverse practices and negotiations of social and ideological relations that inhere in language use and practice, and the relative social position of the learner (Duff, 2008). Many current second language researchers influenced by poststructuralism, thus, argue for the importance of looking beyond just the linguistic details of a learner’s competence or production. Language practices are always implicated in how people define who they are and how they subsequently act upon the possibilities such meanings convey (Morgan, 1997). This suggests that engagement with particular languages and cultures must involve identity formation, and identities or subjectivities are constantly being crafted in the positions learners take up in local situations.

The sociocultural turn in SLA has integrated the very idea of learners not as independent language producers, but as members of particular social historical communities. In the following section, I briefly provide the tenets of socioculturalists in SLA.

### ***Language Learning as Situated Social Practice***

Socioculturalists in SLA presume that language use in real world situations is fundamental to learning, and participation in various social activities is the product and the process of learning, rather than relying on an individual mental cognitive account (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). They view language learning as a socioculturally situated social practice, and second language learning as a relational activity that occurs between specific speakers situated in specific sociocultural contexts (see Lave & Wenger's situated learning, 1991). Socioculturalists in SLA, therefore, highlight "participation" and "context" (Johnson, 2006), assuming poststructuralists' notion of language, language learning and learners' identity.

Socioculturalists criticize the mental cognitivists in language acquisition. The narrow view of SLA presumes that learners are regarded as "a language learning machine" (Pennycook, 2001, p143) based on a positivistic research methodology whose emphasis lies in the quantification of results of experimental studies. To cognitivists, language is seen as a fixed code to be learnt rather than a semiotic system full of variations and struggles. Thus, the mainstream of SLA studies has tended to ignore the context of learning, regarding learning environments and learners as settings in which variables need to be controlled (Pennycook, 2001).

Regarding disagreements between cognitivists and socioculturalists, Lantolf (1996) suggests a plurality of approaches to the study of SLA, thus, some studies have started considering social contexts of language learning, power relations or identity of language learners. The studies underlie that the source and structure of L2 learners' sociolinguistic knowledge are rooted in the daily sociocultural practices in which they engage (Gebhard, 1999, cited in Pennycook, 2001).

In this perspective, second language educational research has focused on the social structures, in particular communities and the various positions available to learners to take up in the given communities (Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2001; Pavlenko, 2003; Toohey, 2000). This approach has engendered discussions on the relationship between participation and nonparticipation, for example, what do community practices learners, who withdraw from classroom activity, seek to learn and what constitutes the community for them? Norton Peirce's (1995) study reveals that certain identities of second language learners take up opportunities to interact with native speakers while others resist them. That is, learners' identities are situated in their local situation and the fashioning of their identities in forms of participation or nonparticipation affect their use of target language and thus, their SLA process.

However, Price (1996) criticizes Norton Peirce for failing to theorize how agency operates, how people actually come to take up positions within discourses. According to Price (1996), "her concern with resistance, power, and silence rests ultimately on an appeal to individual capacities and does not explore far enough the way the individual subject/learner is implicated in social and discourse practices" (p.336).

To conclude, immigrant language learners are situated "in the webs of social, political, economic and cultural relations that exert forces which push and pull the learner in diverse ways, influencing the SLA process" (Chee, 2003, p.4). Language learning, thus, should be understood in terms of learners' substantial participation in a new culture or a community of practice. Also, how the learners relate to sociocultural contexts is an essential part in understanding their language learning. I believe these socioculturalists' assumptions provide plausible landscapes through which I can explore the interplay of

language learning, identity, and workplace communities; how highly skilled Korean immigrants construct their imagined workplace communities, and how they craft their identities as a second language user, as a professional, and as a newcomer in their workplace communities.

### ***Conceptualizing the Notion of “Imagined Communities”***

As described in Chapter One, I note the power of imagination as an impetus to highly skilled immigrants’ mobility including their migration, since highly skilled Korean immigrants voluntarily chose Canada as their migration place, envisioning their particular workplace communities where they desired to participate. In this section, I introduce the notion of imagined communities in SLA, and then conceptualize the notion as an overarching framework, within which this study is discussed. The essence of the notion of imagined community, however, is the power of imagination. Thus, I explain the functions of imagination first.

#### ***The Function of Imagination***

One important aspect of poststructuralists, especially in critical pedagogy, is engagement with imagination (Pennycook, 2001). The vital point is that through the power of imagination, people can arrange their environments, expand their identities, and change their reality. Imagination, thus, works as “a way to appropriate meanings and create new identities” (Pavlenko & Norton, 2005, P.590). The notion of imagined communities actually presumes the function of imagination as its core phenomenon.

***Imagination as a Social Practice.*** In consideration of modernity and globalization, Appadurai (1997) focuses on electronic media and mass migration, and argues that “the two interconnected diacritics generate their joint effect on the work of

imagination as a productive feature of modern subjectivity” (p.3). He claims that the modern world is characterized by a role for the imagination in social life. Thus, “The image, the imagined, the imagery-these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice” (p.31). That is, people position their imagination in their everyday lives and create their visions through their socially and historically situated imagination.

Similarly, many language learners and prospective immigrants around the world practice their imagination, positioning their expectations and self images to the future worlds where they desire to belong. According to some second language education studies, Pakistani students imagine peaceful, religious future society in which English coexists with their vernacular languages (Norton & Kamal, 2003). Asian immigrant parents, who enrolled their children in French-English immersion schools, imagine that French Immersion education will enable their children to gain access to a legitimate bilingual Canadian community (Dagenais, 2003). Some privileged Japanese students imagine their future which transcends their current geographical terrain boundaries (Kanno, 2003).

Individuals’ historically, culturally, and socially situated imaginations project a variety of visions, which ultimately make a connection to their future worlds, their imagined communities. Imagination has its intrinsic projective function by which people connect themselves to future worlds over time and space. Through imagination, are their imagined communities noted or constructed. Furthermore, imagination stimulates people to actually reach the world through active involvement, participation and investment in learning (Wenger, 1998; Norton, 2000, 2001). As Simon (1992) asserts, imagination

helps establish what kind of future is worth devoting for. Here lies the educational function of imagination.

***The Educational Function of Imagination.*** The educational functions of imagination have been noted by some scholars. Vygotsky (1978), who emphasized the social construction of learning, explored the role of imagination in children's play. According to him, creative imagination develops from children's play activities into a higher psychological function that can be consciously regulated through inner speech. Vygotsky considers imagination forms a special unity with thinking and language, which helps the child to make sense about the world.

Meanwhile, Greene's (1995) imagination, offers social, educational possibilities and hopes. Greene (1995) believes all of the constructs and conditions under which we live are able to exist due to our imagination. Imagining things being otherwise, she argues, may be a first step toward acting on the belief that they can be changed; "when a person ....chooses to view herself and himself ...as beginner, learner..., and has the imagination to envisage new things emerging, more and more begins to seem possible" (p.22). Thus, without imagination in a search for openings, our lives would be constricted and "our pathways become cul-de-sacs" (p. 17). Greene's imagination progressively extends to restructuring schools as places where all the students look for meanings and where every student has a voice.

Wenger (1998) combines the work of imagination with identity construction and learning. Wenger views imagination as an essential part of the identity, an integral part of the sense of place in a given community of practice. His imagination is "a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space, and creating new images of the

world and ourselves. Imagination in this sense is looking at an apple seed and seeing a tree” (p.176). He argues that through imagination, people can locate themselves in the world and in history, include in their identities other meanings, other possibilities, and new developments, explore alternatives, and envision possible futures. Thus, imagination informs particular actions and motivation, and the innate feature of imagination is anchored in social interactions and communal experiences, which is distinguished from personal fantasies or individual withdrawal from reality.

Appadurai (1997) also distinguishes imagination from fantasies as the following:

The idea of fantasy carries with it the inescapable connotation of thought divorces from projects and actions, and it has a private, even individualistic sound about it. On the other hand, the imagination has a projective sense about it, the sense of being a prelude to some sort of expression. Fantasy can dissipate, but the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action. It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labour prospects. The imagination is today a staging ground for action and not only for escape (P.7).

In the same vein, Simon (1992) makes a clear distinction between wishes and hope.

While the former promises no possibility for action, the latter involves active engagement which is substantial to the fulfillment of desire. What Norton (2001) pinpoints in her examination on immigrant ESL learners is that although imagined communities are constructed and noted by learners’ imagination, engaging educational opportunities, their imagined communities should be inspected in terms of “possibility.”

### ***The notion of Imagined Communities***

Grounded on identitary and educational functions of imagination (see above section), some scholarly work has claimed that the notion of imagined communities expands its parameter to an actual engagement providing educational opportunities

(Dagenais, 2003; Kanno, 2003; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko, 2003; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton 2001; Rosetto, 2005). Once their attachment to an imagined community is built, people “engage in active attempts to reshape the surrounding contexts” (Pavlenko, 2003, p.266), in order to reach their imagined community. The notion of imagined communities, therefore, involves one’s future images, which are one’s extended identity, and the future images project one’s real life to particular commitments or investments such as learning a language and an actual participation in a tangible community. Projecting alternative visions of the future and producing its everyday practices as reverberations, imagined communities lead people to the notions of identity and belonging, whether their imagined community resides in a nation, a workplace, a school, in fact, any social forms that desire the same cultural products. Thus, imagined communities are no less than real (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

### ***The Term, Imagined Communities***

Anderson (1983) created the term, imagined communities taking notions of a nation state in an anthropological spirit. He defines a nation as “an imagined political community” (p.15) as “it is imagined because the members will never know most of their fellow-members...yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p.6). Paraphrasing individuals’ “*considering*” of forming a nation into “*imagining*,” (italic, I did.) he presents the societal context for the work of imagination.

In doing so, he particularly explores the crucial role of print languages such as newspapers and technology in imagining a community. To illustrate, newspaper readers have a sense of their fellow readers’ existence and they connect themselves to the members through the ideas or images in print over geographical terrain. Thus, each

individual's feeling of being connected leads to an imagined community which is "distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 1991, p. 7).

The term of imagined communities has been used more extensively in other social forms such as religion, gender, race and place rather than specifically for nationhood. Adopting the term in language learning, Kanno & Norton (2003) redefine imagined communities as "groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination" (p.241). Also, the notion that imagined communities are multiple has relations with the issues of multiple and hybrid identity, nation states, and globalization (May, 2008).

Phillips's (2002) study well shows the multilayered nature of self identification with imagined communities among contemporary Australians. The study demonstrates how local, national and global forms of imagined community can interconnect in people's minds in complex ways and shape their social manners: whether they accept or resist 'the inclusion of the Other' (p.614). Phillips argues that people's imagined communities take place over space, and their affinities to the imagined communities predispose their mindsets, their behaviors, and social attitudes. Further, holding Albrow et al.'s (1994) position, Phillips suggests that "there is a move towards viewing imagined communities as the successor concept to community in sociological inquiry" (cited in Phillips, 2002, p.614). In a strong sense, the term of imagined communities is a new name for all forms of modern communities, which are constituted by the historically, culturally, and socially situated imaginations of individuals and groups.

***Definition of Imagined Workplace Communities.*** To suit the inquiry of this

study, I adopt the term “imagined workplace communities” to refer to particular target workplace communities that highly skilled immigrants desire to participate in and through participation, belong to. Highly skilled immigrants migrate into Canada with their specific work credentials, envisioning particular professional workplace communities depending on their expertise. Thus, I focus on the immigrants’ desired workplace communities as their imagined workplace communities.

To conclude, the notion of imagined communities takes imagination as its core phenomenon, which is socially and historically situated and practiced in people’s everyday lives. The projective and educational functions of imagination provide people with a variety of visions which are alternative realities, and lead people to actual engagement and learning opportunities to reach the future worlds. The educational function of imagination also clearly draws a line between imaginations which are accompanied by proactive actions and fantasies which are mere wishes or escape. This study takes the notion of imagined communities as the main conceptual framework, because the notion can help explain highly skilled Korean immigrants’ transnational migration, their identity and learning trajectories.

### ***Communities of Practice: From Virtual to Actual***

Norton (2000, 2001) was the first scholar to introduce the concept of imagined communities to the process of SLA and ESL classrooms, by which she examined ESL learners’ non participation in their classrooms and their identity construction. Norton’s work on imagination was expansive since she made imagination as “another important source of community” (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p.241). Simply put, Norton (2000) moved forwards the work of imagination from virtual to actual. The underlying premise

of imagined communities is its inducing power to make learners participate in real communities, which she has called *investment*.

What she makes in the application is, thus, drawing on a “community of practice (COP)” framework provided by Lave and Wenger (1991). While imagination is a central phenomenon, the notion of “communities of practice” provides an indispensable framework for “imagined communities” so as to work effectively and meaningfully. Hence, it is necessary to connect the notion of imagined communities and the COP framework because through a COP model, imagined communities can be tangibly revealed and functional.

In this connection, it is essential to note that Lave and Wenger’s communities exist accessibly as everyday life practices, and learners’ involvements are actual and direct; which is juxtaposed to Anderson’s notion of participation in imagined communities, based on indirect social relationships. Fundamentally, Kanno and Norton (2003) regard imagined communities as “not immediately tangible and accessible” (p. 241). However, our imagination empowers us to extend ourselves to future worlds or relationships created through our feeling of attachment. In this juncture, Kanno and Norton convincingly suggest that “imagined communities are no less real than the ones in which learners have daily engagement and might even have a stronger impact on their current actions and investment”(p.242). This perception also has a thread of connection with Greene (1995)’s notion that imagining things is a first step toward change. Thus, the notion of imagined communities should be interpreted not as a simple considering, but as a way of prospectively living in and progressively employing the histories and the future. The very perception offers a turning point from virtual to actual, by which the notion of

imagined communities is truly meaningful and functional in understanding language learners and their learning.

***Investment.*** Before I explore the COP, I need to clarify the concept of investment as an important impetus which extends the notion of imagined communities to actual communities of practice. Norton (1997) denies investment is equated with a unitary, historical language learner driven by instrumental or integrative motivation. Rather, learner investment is an ambivalent desire to learn a target language, and explains learners' complex and contradictory engagement in learning. She refers to investment as a construct that articulates the socially and historically mediated relationship of learners to language, education, identity and community.

The notion of investment is explained as the following:

If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. Learners expect or hope to have a good return on that investment –a return that will give them access to hitherto unattainable resources (Norton, 2000, p.10).

Her definition emphasizes how learners craft or construct their identity and relationship with the social world as they invest in language. The notion presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constructing their identities as social beings. In terms of investment, thus, language learning is an incorporative process which embraces involvements from both language learner and learning context.

McKay and Wong (1996) extend the notion of investment to a study of Chinese adolescent immigrant students in the United States. They demonstrate that the desires and negotiations of the learners were not distractions from the commitment of language

learning, but must be regarded “as constituting the every fabric of students’ lives and as determining their investment in learning the target language” (McKay & Wong, 1996, p.603).

I believe the concept of investment is a useful tool with which I can explore highly skilled Korean immigrants’ language learning experiences. The first community most immigrant newcomers participate in is language learning classrooms, and workplace communities can be the next. They spend their time, effort or commitment to learning their second language in order to get into their imagined workplace communities and attain competence and full membership in the workplaces. Their commitments can be well illustrated by the notion of investment.

### ***Communities of Practice for Imagined Communities***

Lave and Wenger (1991) combine imagination, identity and communities in order to explain learning processes in an anthropological spirit. Lave and Wenger ask what kinds of social engagements provide the proper environment for learning to take place. This suggests an interactive and productive role for the skills that are acquired through the learning process that takes place in a participation framework, namely the community. Communities are composed of participants who differently engage with the practices of their communities, and through the very engagement or participation in practice, learning takes place. A community of practice is “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p.98).

Communities of practice (COP) presume that engagement in social practices is the fundamental process by which we learn and build our identities. Thus, they claim

“identity and practice are mirror images of each other” (p.149). Thus, a COP defines learning as a process of social participation, emphasizing the intersection of community, social practice, meaning and identity.

***Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP)***. Lave and Wenger develop a process of participation in a community, by which newcomers move toward fuller participation in a particular community’s social activities and relations. This process is referred to as “legitimate peripheral participation” (LPP). One learns as one (the newcomer) enters a community and takes part-first peripherally, and later more fully- in its particular practices interacting with more experienced community members (old timers). Peripherality is a constructive term which means “an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.37). The COP theory confirms that learning entails a process of gaining competence and membership in a discourse community, involving an LPP process.

If a highly skilled immigrant starts participating in a culturally, linguistically, and politically different workplace, the immigrant is presumed to learn gradually the particular community’s practices by interacting with colleagues or experienced members of the workplace. According to Wenger’s (1998) term, the practices in a COP are “a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action” (p.5). Through knowing the practices of a community, the new immigrant worker gains competence in the particular COP and a full membership. However, LPP does not guarantee a peaceful transformative learning process because legitimate peripherality is implicated in social structures where power relations inhere (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The process of learning in a COP, therefore,

involves struggles over access to resources, conflicts and negotiations.

*Negotiation of Competence and Identity in a COP.* The COP model has recently been applied to second language research and has been useful for interpreting a wide range of second language learning situations, especially various classrooms or academic community settings. The presumption is that a classroom is a community of practice, and new language learners are the newcomers and the target language users are old-timers (Kanno, 2003; Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997, 2001; Toohey, 2000). Community-based metaphors are used to describe language mediated social practices.

Taking the COP theory, some SLA research has also developed the issues of language learning, identity construction and participation. One rich account is Morita's (2004) case study which depicts how a COP process involves constant negotiation of conflicting identities, competence and power relations. Her qualitative research illuminates the academic discourse socialization experiences of second language (L2) students in a Canadian university: how L2 students participate and negotiate membership in their new L2 classroom communities (a COP).

As advanced in poststructuralists' positions on language learning, L2 participation and socialization is closely related to identity, competence, power, access, and agency. Learners' identities and participation change over time by exercising their personal agency and negotiating their positionalities, which are situated in the local context of the classroom. Furthermore, Morita (2004) argues that "Their identities extended beyond socially or institutionally defined roles and conventional labels, and induced a wide variety of subject positions that were locally constructed by the individual student and the classroom context" (pp. 596-597). She concludes that participating in a community

through a second language ultimately leads to a conflicting and transformative process of learning. This asserts that a COP entails a dialectic dynamic learning process due to its innate nature of power relations and situatedness.

The theory of COP, I believe, can elucidate how highly skilled immigrants participate in their target workplace communities let alone formal classrooms. The theory is useful in explaining how highly skilled immigrants gradually gain competence and full membership in their community of practice, showing the dynamic shifts of their identities, positionalities and power relations constructed by local situations. The dynamic co-construction of participation and identity is also plausibly understood from the immigrants' real experiences.

Although the COP model has been widely applied to various communities related to second language learning settings, it is noteworthy that there is little research which sheds light on practical settings such as workplace communities of immigrants. In this study, I apply the notion of COP to practical settings which are immigrants' real workplaces, where highly skilled Korean immigrants eventually participate in and practice their professions. Moreover, the workplaces may be their imagined workplace communities to which they desired to belong. Applying the COP theory to practical settings is also faithful to Lave and Wenger's genuine intention<sup>11</sup> of the theory.

***Belonging to Communities.*** One's feeling of belonging to imagined communities is crucial to building any form of community (Anderson, 1983). Self attachment to a certain imagined community is not only associated with one's identity but also echoed in one's consequential behaviors or participation in social practice.

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<sup>11</sup> Lave and Wenger (1991) originally explain the learning process through midwives' actual engagement and participation in their workplace communities. Their learning process reflects natural practical settings rather than formal institutional settings.

Extending the notion of COP, Wenger (1998) clarifies that one's sense of belonging is an important dimension in any community involvement. Wenger proposes the following three modes of belonging: 1) engagement which means active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation and meaning; 2) imagination which is the realm of goals wherein we create new images of the world and ourselves; 3) alignment which refers to the extent to which we coordinate our energies and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute broader enterprises.

Admittedly, a community of practice is a proactive process of belonging as well as learning which demands from people purposeful participation and involvement. When an immigrant gains full membership through a COP, s/he is presumed to attain a full sense of belonging. The personal sense of belonging of each member is essential to building a community, no matter if it is a workplace, school or nation.

To conclude, I introduced the concept of COP to connect with the notion of imagined communities. When combined with the COP, the notion of imagined communities, as a logical flow, can function more effectively. Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities exist tangibly as everyday practices, and learners' involvements are actual. Imagination empowers people to extend themselves to future worlds or future relationships created through their feeling of attachment. Thus, imagined communities are no less than real and furthermore, have a stronger impetus to their current actions and investment.

The notion of imagined communities should be interpreted as a way of prospectively living in particular communities. At this point it is necessary to take up the notion of COP as a procedural component for the notion of imagined communities. The

very perception offers a turning point from virtual to actual, by which the notion of imagined communities is truly functional in understanding and exploring how highly skilled immigrants construct their imagined workplace communities.

### ***Multiple and Contesting Imagined Communities***

The multifaceted aspects of identity suggest that imagined communities are not restricted to a single group membership. Also, imagined communities are constructed not only by individuals but also by groups. That is, the notion of imagined community takes place on multiple levels, for example, within individual micro levels or between an individual level and macro structural levels, possibly contesting each other.

Some research studies which have embraced the notion of imagined communities adopt the framework either at an individual level or at an institutional, governmental or global level, or both ( Blackledge, 2003; Dagenais 2003; Kanno, 2003; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2001; Norton & Kamal, 2003; Pavlenko, 2003). Framing the levels in which the notion of imagined communities takes place means whose desires are projected is important. When imagined communities are created by macro societal structures reflecting groups' imagination or visions, they work as ideologies or hegemonies, and these may function as social, political, and economic constraints against individuals' desires or their imagined communities.

Regardless of whether participating in EAL programs or workplace communities, new immigrants are situated overtly or covertly in the nexus of multiple layered imagined communities, which may conflict with and regulate the immigrants' desires. It is necessary to recognize that the notion of imagined communities involves not only personal micro levels but also the interplay of personal levels and societal levels.

As Canagarajah (2006) notes, understanding individuals' fluid construction of identities at micro levels should consider their alignment with structural considerations. Immigrants are situated within diverse social cultural political relations, which reflect the interface of bigger societal structures and individual realms. To frame the levels where imagined communities are created is necessary to understand the contextual factors which immigrants encounter while constructing their imagined workplace communities.

***Individual Level.*** Through an examination of ESL adult women learners in Canada, Norton (2000, 2001) claims that different language learners have different imagined communities and their future images powerfully affect their current learning. Thus, a learner's imagined community is best understood in the context of the learner's investment in the target language and the circumstances in which the learner practices it. Learners not only see their classrooms with four walls, but also envision a community that transcend time and space (Norton, 2001). As an illustration, one participant, Katarina, chose non-participation "as an act of alignment to preserve the integrity of her imagined communities" (Norton, 2001, p.164). The learner had continued to view herself as having legitimate claim to professional status as an experienced adult. And she demonstrated her desire to maintain her identity when her identity was merely reduced to her linguistic competence. Norton construes that the learner's nonparticipation resulted from a conflict between the learner's imagined community and the teacher's vision.

An interesting point Norton (2001) makes is that the second language learners in her study were most uncomfortable speaking to people they saw as members (gatekeepers) of imagined communities they were trying to enter. This discomfort may result from other factors such as situation specific anxiety or individual characteristics.

Although Norton leaves this issue for a future study, this argument confirms that learners' imagined communities reflect learners' identities that are challenged, negotiated, and reconstructed within a range of competing contexts.

Pavlenko (2003) adopts the concept of imagined communities for an examination of pre or in-service ESL/EFL teachers' identity and pedagogy in a MATESOL program. The critical point Pavlenko makes is that approaches that view the dichotomy of native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) not as a linguistic construct but as a socially constructed identity underestimate the power of linguistic theories to legitimize social identities. She argues that classroom discourses<sup>12</sup> help some teachers to reimagine themselves as legitimate members of the community of multicompetent, bilingual *L2 users* rather than that of non-native speakers or *L2 learners*. Thus, noting imagined communities is a way to capture "a real live phenomenon rather than an abstract framework" (p.263).

Similarly, albeit not specific for second language learning, Rossetto (2006) examines pre-service teachers' imagined communities. She argues that prospective teachers visualize themselves in imagined communities and experience belonging as participants in communities of practice in which they engage and align with new horizons and imagine new images of the world. In the actual practicum, this study demonstrates, the ideas generated in their imagined communities came to represent the terms of investment in their chosen profession and provided a means whereby they could weigh a situation clearly. This highlights that without communities of practice, imagination by itself does not necessarily result in substantial actions, although it is one essential mode

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<sup>12</sup> Pavlenko's emphasis on course content is also identical to Norton's (2000, 2001) notion of the critical role of course structures.

of belonging. It implies that imagined communities are truly meaningful in actualized practices, and these, as feedback, reinforce their future worlds and their future images.

Meanwhile, Dagenais's (2003) study indicates that the immigrant parents who desire to see their children get into multiple language networks, enrolled their children in French Immersion schools in Canada, and this can be an investment in imagined communities. The parents believe multilingualism and transnational identities are essential for their children to gain access to their imagined language communities at an advantage with respect to monolinguals. This discussion aptly shows the process from the notion of imagined communities to actual engagement or investment. Regardless, Dagenais voices her doubts about whether the parents will gain a return on their investment, thinking of possibilities of contradictions and tensions between parents and children. The imagined communities are conceived and projected by parents, not by children who will actually participate and practice in the communities. Without a subject and willing projection from oneself, this indicates, imagined communities created by other subjects may lose their integrity and sustainability.

***Structural / Institutional Level.*** Kanno (2003) studies four schools in Japan that serve large numbers of bilingual students, and examines the relationship between schools' visions and their policies and practices. Kanno asserts that schools have visions of the imagined communities in which their students will participate, and these visions exert a prevailing influence on schools' policies, which are ultimately linked to students' identity construction. She regards bilingual children who are socialized into "the least privileged imagined communities as the least privileged" (p.286). It is worth noting that Kanno extends the notion of imagined communities to institutional levels from personal

levels. This extension allows us to interpret that a school's visions (or imagined communities) reflect a society's collective visions, in other words, social ideologies. How groups' imagination shapes individuals' imagination and their futures is succinctly indicated in this study.

***Local & Global or Dominant & Subordinate Levels.*** Some research shows the unavoidable interaction and the conflict between individuals' imagined communities and structural macro imagined communities. Norton and Kamal (2003) show multiplicity of imagined communities among Pakistani students and the conflicting relationship between individuals' or local identities and global or transnational identities. The critical point this study makes is that the students' imagined communities are best understood where English (global) coexists with vernacular language and local knowledge is balanced against imperatives of globalization, both nationally and internationally. On the other hand, this study illustrates how current social, political and economic constraints influence individuals' imagination.

Social restraints are usually produced by governments or societal structures to maintain their social, political and linguistic ideologies. Social restraints on an individual's or minority groups' imagined communities are well shown in Blackledge's (2003) study. Blackledge (2003) reports on Britain's covert institutionalized *racism* of the cultural practices of the Asian minority families visiting their heritage country. Blackledge argues that educational discourses that devalue the legitimate cultural practices of minority groups, are racialized and representative of "Otherness"; that is "such cultural practices do not belong in the "imagined community of Britishness" (p.334). The domain view of the imagined community of Britain is of a nation-state,

which is culturally and linguistically *homogeneous*, whereas the parents of British Asian children or the children take a different notion of imagined community, in which *heterogeneity* and a wide range of different cultural linguistic practices coexist.

The most decisive point here is whose voices have more influential power to change, when two imagined communities are conflicting; policy makers and government inspectors have more power than those from minority groups, and bigger societal structures have more power than individuals. Kanno and Norton (2003) poignantly criticize these monolingual tendencies in Britain as ironic since these tendencies “of the nation-state apply most strongly to the bottom rung of the country’s socioeconomic hierarchy, where linguistic and cultural diversity is most extensive” (p.247). Blackledge (2003), at this disjuncture, recognizes that “imagination is as much subject to power relations in society as anything else” (p.343).

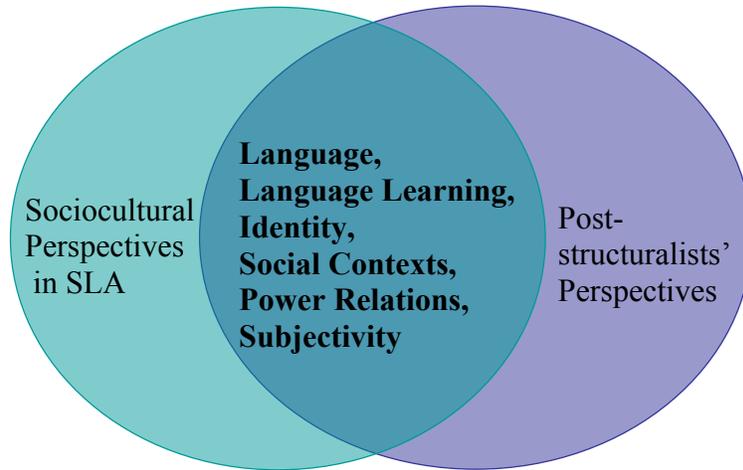
Individuals’ identities become more hybrid and multiple, and nation states become plural (May, 2008). Thus, nations are “imagined and reimagined in diverse and complex ways” (Blackledge, 2003, p.332), reflecting the individuals’ diverse identities. Also, many people around the world no longer identify with one imagined community (Banks, 2008; Dagenais, 2003; May, 2008, Phillips, 2002). This view is related to transnationalism, which can be construed as transnational centers of power, or an extension of Anderson’s notion of imagined community from nationhood to the world. According to Appadurai (1997), the processes of globalization have radically changed the relations between subjectivity, location, and political identification. These perceptions are unsurprisingly connected with how multiple or multi layered imagined communities interact, and how societal constraints influence transnational migrants’ ability of

imagination and their construction of an imagined community. Highly skilled migrants who this study tries to explore are situated in the complicated web of multiple and contesting imagined communities.

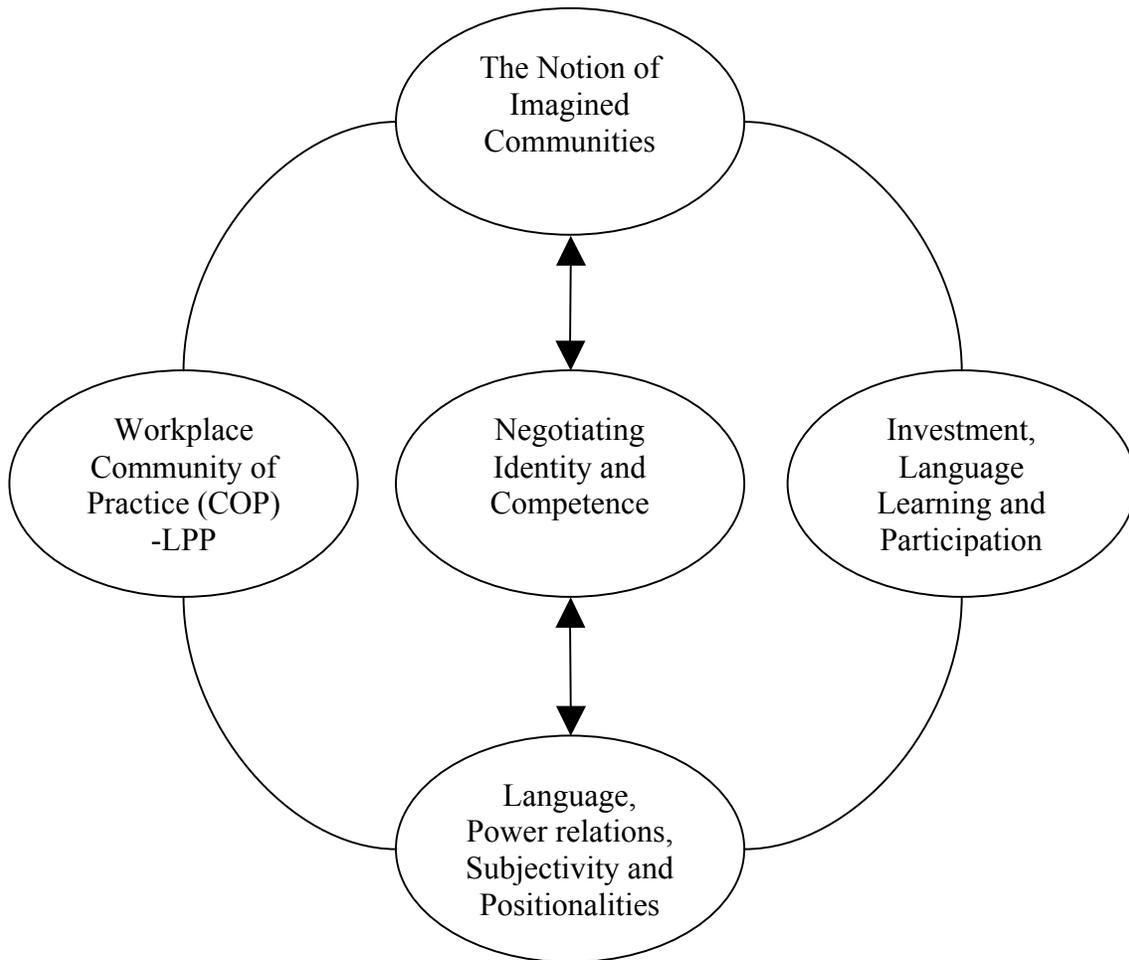
### ***Conclusion***

To conclude, imagination gives us alternative realities whereas social constrains limit the ability of imagination. This contention implies that multiple imagined communities, whether in one's mind or within the relationships between personal levels and larger societal levels, are struggling sites involving conflicting fluctuating identities. All social identities are innately contestable in that they involve imagined communities that might be imagined differently, so they inevitably involve power relations (Schmidt, 2002). Therefore, imagination itself should be understood as conflicting, multifaceted, and changing over time and space, and so should imagined communities. This may be the critical point in understanding the social feature of imagined communities.

I conceptualized the notion of imagined communities and connected it with the theory of COP as the theoretical framework for this study. This study focuses on highly skilled migrants' experiences with an effort to understand how they construct their imagined workplace communities, how they practice their professions in a culturally, socially, and linguistically different environment, and how language learning influences their paths to their target workplace communities. Their imagination, investment in language learning and identity construction, participation in a workplace community of practices, negotiation of competence and identity, power relations and positionalities, and attainment of a sense of belonging to the community, I believe, will provide the tools by which I can illuminate the inquiry of this study. It is also important to recognize that the



**Figure 2.1: Assumptions of the Study**



**Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

framework I provided implies a chronological flow based on an immigrant's presumed flow of life experiences.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

Research methodology encompasses all aspects of inquiry, reflects researchers' epistemology and assumptions, and bounds methods of data collection. Underpinned by the notion of imagined communities and the COP theory, this study aims to explore and report on highly skilled Korean immigrants' experiences, with an effort to figure out how they construct their imagined workplace communities in Canada. Throughout the discussion, the goal of this study is twofold: 1) to understand how highly skilled Korean immigrants construct their imagined workplace communities, focusing on the interplay of language learning, identity and workplace communities; and 2) to develop Norton's (2000, 2001) notion of "imagined communities" in SLA, by combining the community of practice model into a process model, which may elucidate language learning, learners and their identity construction. Given the inquiry and the goal of this study, a qualitative approach is naturally employed.

#### ***Qualitative Inquiry***

As the previous section explained, the overarching paradigm and perspectives which I draw on involve a qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research is fundamentally conducted "to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.2), as opposed to "objective, detached stance toward research participants and their setting" of quantitative research (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

The sociocultural perspectives, initially developed and applied within the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, have influenced the conventional positivistic

paradigm in SLA (Davis, 1995; Duff, 2008). The inclusion of social and cultural considerations in language acquisition studies resulted in a split between those who took this position and mainstream SLA researchers called cognitivists, thus namely the “two parallels” in SLA (Zuengler & Miller, 2006). The epistemological stance of the socioculturalists sees learning as a dynamic social activity that is situated in social, cultural, and political contexts, and distributed across persons, tools and activities. As illustrated in Chapter One and Two, immigrants are caught within the complex web of social, cultural, economic, political relations which immensely affect their use and practice of a second language, their investment, their construction of imagined communities and identity, influencing their SLA process.

Hence, many current SLA research studies influenced by poststructuralism and sociocultural perspectives have claimed the importance of the contextual factors which impede or assist a learner’s process of SLA, rather than focusing on the learner’s productive results of a target language. Accordingly, the studies focus on the interview content such as the changing social identity of the research participants, their social relations and sense of power and agency within them, or their investment in the target language learning pre- and postmigration, emphasizing contextual and personal aspects of the participants’ experiences (Duff, 2008). This study is informed by poststructuralists’ notions on language and identity and sociocultural perspectives in SLA, with the aim to add a voice to the existing SLA literature. Thus, the overall design of this research study is qualitative, espousing relativist ontology and an interpretive methodology.

### ***Features of Qualitative Inquiry***

Creswell (2007) delineates common features qualitative researchers share. They

generally take a holistic perspective in conducting research, attend to the interpretive nature of inquiry, and situate the study within the political, social, cultural context of the researchers, the participants, and the readers of a study.

To probe details, socioculturally oriented qualitative researchers generally take a semiotic approach, which considers “the immediate and local meaning of actions as defined from the actors’ point of view” (Ericson, 1986, cited in Davis, 1995, p.432). The semiotic perspective is commonly called as interpretive. A critical feature of interpretive perception is an *emic* perspective, different from the traditional psychological schools’ *etic* perspective. An emic approach focuses on insider’s (the actor) description of the actions by means of interviews, observations, and other forms of data collection, while an etic approach focuses on the outsider’s perspectives or interpretation according to external criteria. One more crucial attribute is *thick description*. Thick description means “taking into account all relevant and theoretically salient micro and macro contextual influences that stand in a systematic relationship to the behaviour or events one is attempting to explain” (Erickson, 1986, cited in Davis, 1995, p. 434). To the point, the meanings of actions from the actors’ perspectives are central interests and appropriate techniques such as interviews can be used.

In general, qualitative research entails a central phenomenon, which a study aims to explore. How to approach the central phenomenon finally differentiates all the research approaches such as narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2007). Among them, a case study approach is employed for this study for the following reasons.

### ***Case Study***

Depending on “the central purpose or focus of each approach” (Creswell, 2007, p.93), all approaches are differentiated. The primary intent of this study is an in-depth understanding and description of highly skilled Korean immigrants’ language learning and workplace experiences, in relation to how they have constructed their imagined workplace communities in a linguistically, socially, and culturally different country. Gall et al. (2003) describe case study research as “the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p.436). Case study, thus, requires realistic descriptions and narrations to pass on principal messages and information of the case to potential readers. Also, they identify case study is a type of research design and analysis as “the most widely used approach to qualitative research in education” (Gall et al., 2003, p.433). According to Creswell’s (2007) definition, case study is an approach:

in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems(cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case based themes (p.73).

Most definitions of case study highlight the bounded system, singular nature of the case, the importance of context, the availability of multiple sources of information or perspectives (Duff, 2008), and all these accounts, I believe, well support my research agenda with the goal of this study.

Case study is an in-depth study of one or more cases with a focus on a specific aspect of the case, and the cases can be events, programs, schools, settings, or individuals. Here, I define three highly skilled Korean immigrants, the individuals, as cases or bounded systems, since they are bounded to the same immigration category of the independent class or a group of highly skilled immigrants. They also migrated since the

late 1990's, so shared the similar time period of migration. Bounding the cases as recent highly skilled Korean immigrants, my study focuses on their identity, language learning and workplace experiences. In the case of an individual, the goal of the study is to explore the individual's story of life experiences and to understand his/her functions in the real context naturalistically. This fits the intention of this study.

### ***Multiple Case Study***

The research inquiry I brought up may focus on a single case or a number of cases, called a multiple case design (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). A multiple case, namely a collective case approach, is chosen for this study since evidence from multiple cases is often considered more convincing and more robust. A multiple case design also allows one to capture similarities and differences across cases, and provides compelling evidence of a phenomenon preferably to single case studies. Furthermore, the evidence can contribute to generating theories (Duff, 2008). One intention of this study engages in developing the notion of imagined communities in SLA, especially extending the scope of the notion to practical settings of immigrant workplaces. The aim of this study reinforces rationales for exploring multiple cases of three different professionals rather than a single case.

### ***Sampling***

I recruited research participants of highly skilled Korean immigrants using my social network, which I have built through 10 years of living experience in Canada. As an ethnic insider, I could utilize acquaintances and Korean communities. Thus, I purposefully selected three participants based on a convenience strategy, utilizing acquaintances and Korean communities such as the Manitoba Korean Language School

or the Korean Scientists and Engineers Association in Manitoba. The following criteria were set to limit the boundaries of the participants at the outset of recruiting.

1. The participants must be recent Korean immigrants who have migrated under the class of independent/highly skilled since the late of 1990's.
2. The participants must have had working experiences as a highly skilled in their field with post secondary education, a 4 year university, and professional qualifications prior to coming to Canada.
3. The participants must have learned EAL or are learning EAL.
4. The participants must have had experiences of looking for and practicing in a job either in the profession or in other areas of workforce in Canada.

In addition to the criteria, I considered diversity of the participants, for example, different background, gender, and age, and I selected three participants, two female and one male. Stake's (1994) criteria for sample selection also informed this procedure. That is, "balance and variety are important and the opportunity to learn is of primary importance...without strong argument for typicality, weighting the consideration of access and the primary criterion- the opportunity to learn" (Stake, 1994, p. 224). The overview of the participants will be provided in the following chapter with their life stories.

### ***Data Collection Procedure***

#### ***In –Depth Interviews***

In-depth, introspective and retrospective interviews and document review were employed as main data collection methods as well as data sources in this study.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> Although observation is one useful method of data collection for qualitative research, I omitted the method due to the nature of the central inquiry of this study as well as availability. Regarding observation,

focus of this study is the participants' own accounts of their experiences and their perceptions of language learning and workplace communities. The nature of the inquiry of this study requires life histories of the participants in narrative forms. Their lived experiences could be plausibly gained by in-depth, retrospective interviews, and the information gained could provide an understanding of the participants' own perspectives and interpretations rather than the researcher's point of view.

To gain holistic hermeneutic understandings of each individual's experiences, I created open ended interview questions, but included a few structured questions for background knowledge (see Appendix C for interview questions). Central to the data collection method were, thus, semi structured in-depth interviews with highly skilled Korean immigrants.

Interview sessions took place two to three times for each participant between March 2009 and January 2010, with each session lasting approximately two hours. I actually conducted a pilot study with one participant (Lily) and after gathering information from her through two interview sessions, I amended some interview questions, narrowing down the focus to participants' workplace experiences. For the participant, I conducted one more interview during the very last period of data collection.

I met with the participants individually for each interview session. The interviews were conducted at different locations: at the participant's home, the researcher's home, a seminar room at the University of Manitoba, Tim Horton's, and a restaurant. Before I met the participants, by phone, I initially introduced each participant the essential information regarding the research; its purpose, each participant's involvements in the research,

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Duff (2008) also describes that observations are not the main factor in case studies while observations function as an important data source in ethnography.

confidentiality, and compensation. I also sent each participant two versions of information letter (one for English version, the other Korean version), a consent form, and interview questions through emails so that he/she could get a sense of what the purpose of this study would be, and how they would be involved.

The language used in the interview was chosen by participants as Korean, one which they were most proficient at and comfortable with. They were also requested to choose a pseudonym they liked (interestingly, some of them wanted to use their real names), and their pseudonyms, Lily, Charles, and Whitney, were all decided on during the second interview session. The first interview focused on gathering each participant's background information, motives for migration, language learning, workplace experiences, and his/her perceptions of language learning in relation to the workplace communities. The consent form was also explained and signed during this session. The second and third interview session focused on overall challenges and successes regarding their workplace, their perceptions of sense of self, negotiation strategies and future plans. Through the interview process, the interviews drew out descriptions of how the highly skilled Korean immigrants perceived and interpreted their motives for migration, and language learning and workplace community experiences as "active agents" while positioned by surrounding social, economic, and political environments (McKay & Wong, 1996; Weedon, 1997).

I provided each participant with drinks and refreshments at each interview session. During the data collection period, however, I added a compensation of \$ 20 to each participant for participating in the research study, which was not contained in the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) proposal at the University of

Manitoba. Each interview usually took more than two hours for a session, so I felt I would have to express my gratefulness for their participation. I believe the compensation worked in a positive way although it was a small amount to all the participants. I gave a gift certificate of \$20 to each participant after completing the research.

A total of 4.5 to 6 hours of interviews with each participant was conducted, so the average interview time for each participant was 5 hours. The interviews were scheduled with one week or several month intervals, depending on the participants' schedule. In addition to the interview sessions, I also had frequent phone calls and emails to clarify information to avoid confusion or attain more information. The data collection including phoning and emailing was concluded for each participant when the interviewer and the interviewee felt that s/he had told all of the important experiences and happenings that they could remember about their experiences focusing his/her language learning and workplace experiences. That is, when the data were saturated and I noticed that no new information could be collected.

I audio-taped interview sessions, and I took verbatim notes of the interviewees' responses and observations during the interviews. The interviews were transcribed within a couple of days using both the audio tapes and the notes. The transcriptions were also translated into English, as Korean was used as the interview language. I did all of the interviews, typing of the interviews, and translating of the transcriptions. While transcribing, natural filtering may have taken place, and in the process of translating, subtle nuances may have been lost. However, when transcription is regarded as the initial part of data analysis (Duff, 2008), transcriptions encapsulate theory. That is, the procedure of transcription/translation might have been affected by the theories which I

brought up because various conventions of transcriptions have their own “epistemological precursors and interpretive consequences” (Duff, 2008, P. 154). Also, the final transcripts were reviewed to identify areas where more information or clarification was needed. The Korean transcripts were emailed to each participant for member checking and any missing information or clarification was added.

### ***Document Review***

As another method of data collection and source, I reviewed relevant documents which elicited the research questions, and reflected on participants’ accounts. In a case study, as Creswell (2007) describes, studying and analyzing documents are an important part, since systematic approaches are valued. Document reviews were conducted at the outset of this study in order to understand the phenomenon of the huge influx of highly skilled Korean immigrants into Canada, their background information, its historical, socio-economic and political contexts, Korean migration into Canada, common issues generated in the process of immigrants’ professional integration, and overall contexts. The documents reviewed were archival materials and reports from both federal and provincial governments (e.g., Citizenship and Immigration Canada), immigrant service agents, language and skill training programs for immigrant professionals, magazines, newspapers, Korean governmental documents, documents from the web sites of the Consulate General of Korea in Canada, Korean ethnic associations, and personal websites which illuminated relevant stories.

During or before interview sessions, documents relevant to the specific case of each participant were also reviewed. Document review was an effective way to reinforce the accuracy of the interview information and to understand the interface between an

individual and structures. Whenever each participant (profession) was selected and explored, I reviewed relevant documents in terms of the contexts where the participant was particularly situated. They included documents provided by professional affiliations/organizations such as the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba (CRNM) or the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of Manitoba (APEGM), and program descriptions or reports from language/job training institutions for highly skilled immigrants. Document reviewing, however, was an ongoing process which lasted almost until a first draft for this thesis was shaped.

### ***Data Analysis***

Consistent with a tradition in qualitative research, data analysis was inductive and interpretative. Interview transcripts were reviewed multiple times and salient themes and tentative categories were generated from the collective data. Data analysis was conducted following what Stake (1995) advocates for data analysis and interpretation in case study research. The data was fundamentally analyzed in the following steps.

1. Categorical aggregation: I made codes for the data first, and analyzed a collection of instances from the data, trying to figure out issue-relevant meanings.
2. Direct interpretation: I looked at a single instance and drew meaning from it. It was a process of pulling the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful ways.
3. Establishment of patterns: I looked for a correspondence between two or more categories. I found out patterns and the relationships among categories. In this stage, I found similarities and differences among the multiple cases.
4. Natural generalizations: I developed natural generalizations about the cases from

analyzing the data, generalizations that people can learn from the case either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases. In this stage, I also compared and contrasted with existing literature.

The final process of analysis was writing the report. Writing process was engaging in the interpretive act of the multiple accounts of the participants. As I was influenced by particular positions, assumptions, and theories as a researcher and a human being, writing could be a selective and incomplete action in this sense. However, I was aware of the partiality and limitation of this report, and the possibility of multiple interpretations of the data gleaned. I tried to reflect my positions in every phase of data analysis, from transcribing to writing.

### ***Researcher and the Participants***

Regarding the debate on insider/outsider, I was an ethnic insider in terms of the shared sociocultural contexts between the participants and me. I shared the same first language, Korean, culture and similar experiences as immigrants in Canada. As a contributor to the highly skilled immigration population, I also shared similar experiences with regard to professional integration in Canada. These aspects actually functioned as advantages on understanding and describing the participants' experiences in terms of accuracy and depth. Rich data, accordingly, was plausible based on the advantages. I developed a fairly close and supportive relationship with each participant not only through interview meetings and frequent phone or email contacts, but also through the intimacy of being neighbors or involved in Korean community events together. Sincere trust between the researcher and the participant was built, and it helped gather rich data.

On the other hand, however, I was also an outsider within since I had never

experienced and targeted their professions, and their particular life stories or individual contexts were unable to be shared. This aspect as an outsider within was also helpful in considering the contextual factors surrounding the participants from a distance and providing a learning opportunity for me as a researcher.

### ***Conclusion***

A qualitative multiple case study approach was adopted for this study, with the main methods of in-depth interviews and document review. This study focuses on highly skilled immigrants' own perspectives and their introspective and retrospective accounts of their experiences in order to explore the phenomenon, how they have constructed their imagined workplaces. The information gained from their lived experiences can provide a deep understanding of the phenomenon as well as a great deal of insight into the nature of SLA and the factors that hinder or facilitate their language learning processes. Thus, the research approach employed allowed me as a researcher to attend to the goal of this study.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Introducing the Participants: Their Life Stories and Contexts**

#### *Introduction*

Before exploring the research participants' experiences with language learning and workplace communities in detail, I briefly introduce their life stories focusing on their professional and educational background prior to coming to Canada, and their stories of integration into the Canadian workforce after migration. The participants not only had diverse backgrounds but also thereafter idiosyncratically differing paths of re-entry to their chosen professions, which were crafted by their particular situations, prior experiences, personalities, the nature of their profession and their subjectivities. How they have constructed their imagined workplace communities is the central question of this study, so each participant's differing path of re-entry into their profession makes each case for this study, comprising three multiple cases.

Descriptions of the participants follow in the order of Lily, Charles, and Whitney. I tried to be careful in describing the research participants taking the fundamental of respect of their dignity as human beings. Regardless, I acknowledge my position as the researcher who ultimately analyzes and interprets the data and writes about the participants based on my research purpose. The following chapters therefore should be read primarily as my interpretations developed in ongoing cooperation with the participants.

This chapter functions as holistic scenery for the following chapters where I compare and contrast the participants' experiences within the interplay of language, identity and their workplace communities. At the end of the chapter, an overview of the

participants' backgrounds (Table 4.1) and key elements in the participants' professional integration in Canada (Figure 4.1) are provided.

### *Lily*

Lily is a 42 year old registered nurse (RN), who is married and has three children. She moved into Winnipeg in the summer of 2001 as an international student with the intention to be an RN in Manitoba. She passed the RN examination at the end of 2002, applied for immigration to Canada in 2003, while practicing in hospitals, and finally attained immigration status in May 2004.

Due to the regulatory processes for internationally educated nurses in Canada, I offer a brief description of the steps involved and the examination they are required to complete to be a registered nurse. Each province in Canada has its own nursing licensing body, so this study explores the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba (CRNM) with regard to the participant, Lily. The information is mainly found on the website, <http://www.crnmb.ca>.

Internationally educated nurses must show their English language proficiency to enter their trained profession. The Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses (CELBAN) is an assessment tool designed to assess the English language proficiency of internationally educated nurses (IENs) who are applying for licensure in the nursing profession in Canada. According to the CELBAN, the required language proficiency is the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)<sup>14</sup>, 8, 7, 8, and 9, each in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

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<sup>14</sup> The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) are the national standard used in Canada for describing, measuring and recognizing the second language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants for living and working in Canada. The purpose of the CLB is to describe accurately where the learner's ability to use English places him or her within the national descriptive framework of

If the language proficiency is acquired, IENs can take an optional program called the Refresher program which is designed for IENs, for nurses who have been previously registered in Canada and are eligible for re-registration after completion of a nursing refresher program, and for nurses who are currently registered in Manitoba and want to review theory and/or skills. Refresher programs usually involve intensive study of the profession, a practicum at general hospitals, and competence in applying their nursing knowledge, skills, and their attitudes when treating patients in Canadian contexts. After successful completion of a Refresher program, applicants for registration with the CRNM are required to have passed the Canadian Registered Nurse Examination (CRNE). Upon passing the CRNE, they will be given registration and can start working. However, being registered does not guarantee their employment. Only when they search for a job, have successful job interviews, and are offered positions, can they be incorporated into the workplace. Getting into the workplace may also be different from being successful in maintaining employment. Lily has experienced all the steps described above in Manitoba. I return to Lily's story for a holistic understanding of her context.

Lily grew up in a middle sized city in eastern Korea. She left her hometown upon entering a 4 year university in Seoul, the capital city, majoring in nursing. After graduation, she started working as a nurse at the same university general hospital, and moved into a highly regarded general hospital later. She was proud of her participation in the workplace, but when her father passed away, she as the eldest child, felt a commitment to care for her lonely mother in her home town.

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communicative language. The CLB describe a person's ability to use the English language to accomplish a set of tasks at 12 Benchmark levels, in four language skill areas: reading, writing, speaking and listening. To access education or a certain profession, immigrants should provide their CLB to satisfy the required proficiency of English. Please refer to the website, [http://www.language.ca/display\\_page.asp?page\\_id=206](http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=206).

She got married and a branch hospital was founded in her hometown, so she voluntarily joined the branch hospital in 1996. She was promoted to a manager nurse which is the highest position as a nurse, entailing management skills for human resources, medicine, and hospital goods. Apart from primary nursing, the manager job generated everyday conflicts and stress due to the nature of the job. Although she pursued her master's degree in nursing, she had to quit because of her busy family life. At the same time, Korea was undergoing an economic crisis compounded by the Asian financial predicament, and the overall atmosphere in the workplace was apprehensive. Combined with the socio-economic, political, cultural factors, her familial and personal situation drove her to imagine an alternative:

I could not reveal that I was pregnant with my third child. My father passed away, I had a marriage and gave birth to two children in a few years while Korea was in the IMF crisis...I would be very sorry for the hospital if I had to have a maternity leave again. People used to say that if you come back from a leave, your chair would be taken away. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009) [English translation]<sup>15</sup>

She began imagining living in another country such as the United States or Canada. She desired for more time for family, improved working conditions, and quality life. One day she found an advertisement recruiting Korean nurses from the CRNM on the hospital bulletin board, which finally encouraged her to resign from the workplace. She contracted with an agency which the CRNM assigned and whose mission was providing Korean nurses who wanted to be an RN in Canada with relevant training programs until they passed the RN examination in Manitoba. Although she had never been to Canada, she decided to migrate to the country.

She left for Winnipeg by herself and the day after she joined a language program

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<sup>15</sup> All excerpts from participants' interviews in this thesis are translations from Korean to English conducted by me.

specifically designed for Korean nurses at the Red River College<sup>16</sup> with connection to the agency and the CRNM. Lily belonged to the second group of arrivals with each arrival having 15 to 20 Korean nurses. Her family remained in Korea, but they joined her in Winnipeg a couple of months later. Language learning, different from her initial optimistic perception, was extremely challenging, but Lily decided to endure any adversity to become an RN. Meanwhile she gave birth to her third child, and after a week's break she had to return to the English program for nursing purpose. With her strong goal of becoming an RN and responsibility for her family, she finished all the courses including the Refresher course successfully within one and a half years. However, Lily and other Korean nurses encountered an unexpected situation. The CRNM, affected by the change of chief members of it, abruptly announced that Korean nurses were not eligible to take the upcoming RN examination; the CRNM was reluctant to include the IENs in their profession. Their sudden change of policies made Lily and other Korean nurses panicked. They began to appeal to the CRNM, and as the result of their demonstrations and the effort of the agency, they were finally allowed to take the RN exam. Lily passed it at the end of 2001. She started working at a nursing home first, and a couple of months later, moved into a general hospital because a full time position is compulsory in order to apply for immigration. Overall, her professional integration was attained through following all the institutional programs.

While practicing primary nursing at the general hospital, she has persistently pursued qualifications such as Nephrology and Home-Dialysis to demonstrate her competence and attain job security in her workplace. Building up a more stable and

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<sup>16</sup> Lily was willing to share with people all the programs and the institution's name where she studied to be an RN. The Red River College in Manitoba was approved of nursing re-entry education programs by the CRNM, upon a shortage of nurses in Manitoba reported at the end of 1990's.

secure life as an immigrant, she changed her job position from a full time to four points (which means 4 days work time per every two weeks) mainly due to her children. At the time of my last interview with her, she had registered for a full time, six-month program to qualify in intensive care. She desired eventually to be a nurse educator which requires a variety of qualifications and practical experiences.

### *Charles*

Charles is a 42 year old professional engineer who is married and has two children. He moved with his family from Korea to Canada in November 2000 as a holder of the status of federal immigration under the independent class. He had never been to Canada prior to his migration.

He was born in Seoul and graduated from a University in Seoul. He worked for a couple of vehicle industry companies in Korea where his main job was designing and developing vehicles. Seeking more opportunities, he moved into a governmental research and development (R&D) centre for military weapons and worked for the government agency for 6 years until he migrated. His job in the workplace involved various projects such as developing and testing new missiles, and frequent business trips. As an illustration, he was on business trips for half a year, usually staying in uninhabited islands to test products. His work was highly rewarding and fulfilling, not only because of the dynamics and nature of the work, but also the commitment that he was contributing to a public sector, namely the safety of the nation. Meanwhile, he persistently pursued his professional development. He attained a Master's degree in mechanical engineering from a University in the local area where his workplace was located, and finished all the coursework for a Ph. D program. Satisfied with his job and his life in Korea, he never imagined living in Canada until his wife suggested migrating. As he described, "I

attained recognition as a competent worker in my workplace in Korea, and my supervisors appreciated my capability and diligence.” (Charles Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Although it was an abrupt and reluctant decision to quit his job to migrate to a different country, he respected his wife’s idea because there had been some conflicts between him and his parents due to religious differences and conventional duties he was expected to assume within the context of the traditional Korean Confucian culture. On top of that, his children’s education and the prospect for better opportunities for them were the biggest concern to him and his wife, in the same manner with most recent Korean immigrant families who acknowledge their children’s education as a main motive for migration to Canada (Hong, 2008; Kwak, 2009). The immigration process took place quickly, so he attained the immigration status in 6 months. He did not think at all about how to get a job in Canada; he thought that he would relax for the time being, and then he would get into his profession naturally. This initial optimism actually allowed him a lengthy amount of time to re-enter his profession. He designed his language learning as well as professional integration plans by himself, without enough information or any help from immigrant service programs.

He settled in a small town in Ontario, but soon he realized that he had not prepared at all for his professional integration. He was unaware of how to get into a workplace in Canada. Prior to coming to Canada, however, he had attained admission from a college in the local area, so he started taking a business information program. His goal was to get a job while improving his communication skills in English, learning overall information about Canada, through taking the program. Exposure to an actual

unexplored setting, he believed, was more useful than taking institutional EAL programs because his weakness lay in oral English. His particular belief made him not to take any institutional English program for immigrants.

While taking the business course, he searched for a job through posting his resume at job web sites. He witnessed some newly arrived highly skilled Korean immigrants who were hired very quickly when their skills fit the job descriptions posted. During the first half of 2001, he was frequently contacted for job interviews (on average, once a week) based on his career in vehicle companies. Despite the greater number of opportunities and his initial efforts, his employment was unsuccessful. One company which was about to offer him a job with concrete employment procedures suddenly went bankrupt, so the employment plan vanished. After 9-11<sup>17</sup> in the U.S., the job market cooled down as unemployment rose, so he hardly had any opportunities even for interviews. Unexpected factors ensuing from the economic recession combined with the fact that he did not have work experience in Canada made it impossible for him to re-enter his profession. He thought of working a menial job, but soon he realized that he was not oriented for that type of work.

To alleviate family financial issues, he went back to Korea to work for a company, but after 6 months he came back to Canada to reunify with his family. Finally he decided to open a convenience store as many Korean skilled immigrants choose this pattern as an alternative for unemployment (Hurh et al., 1979; Hurh & Kim, 1990; Nah, 1993). He cashiered at a Korean immigrant's shop for training. Shortly thereafter, he understood

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<sup>17</sup> The effect of 9-11, the terrorist attacks to the United States in 2001, generated economic recession in the U.S., affecting the Canadian economy. Manufacturing, construction, travel, retail, entertainment, restaurants, and temporary help industries shed jobs. Due to people's fear of flying, for example, airplane industries fell on recession, and lots of job-cuts were conducted at Air Canada.

that the work did not suit him. At that moment, he saw a Korean immigrant friend of his entering a Ph. D program at a university instead of looking for a job. Having seen the friend's path, he decided to change course and enroll in a Ph. D program. The underlying presumption was that he could make a living with scholarships and jobs such as research assistant (RA) or teaching assistant (TA), once he got into university. He hurried to get admission from universities and chose Manitoba because of the lower cost of living. He relocated with his family to Winnipeg in 2002.

He took a Ph. D program in engineering while working as an RA, TA, and instructor to support his family. Doing projects with his advisor and instructing university students were a worthwhile opportunity. He also demonstrated academic achievements in his area, publishing 22 journal articles, and attained his doctoral degree in 4 years, which led him to think of being a professor. Two months ahead of his graduation, however, he applied for a job position and started to work in a drug manufacturing company. Overall, his professional integration was attained through high education. He has been working for the company for three and a half years, providing stability and security for his family. At the time of our interviews, he also accepted an offer as an adjunct professor position, so he could advise a graduate student while practicing his profession.

### ***Whitney***

Whitney is a 31 year old Computer Aided Designing (CAD) technician who is single. With an experience of living in Canada for one year, she applied for immigration in the summer of 2006 while working for an engineering software program company in Korea, and attained the status two years later in 2008. She landed in Winnipeg, in March, 2009 by herself.

She was born and grew up in Busan, the second biggest city in Korea. She graduated from a university in Busan with a major in mechanical engineering design which involves competence in various computer programs in relation to designing machinery. After graduation, she began to work as a CAD designer, and after one and a half years, she moved into another company in Seoul, which involved relocation. A couple of years later, she quit the job and planned to leave for Canada with the intention to learn English and experience a foreign country. Acquiring English proficiency tends to be valued among Koreans, regardless of whether they are in a school or in a workplace, so living in an English speaking country to learn English has been a growing phenomenon among many young people in Korea (Kwak, 2008). Beyond that, she desired to develop her potential in terms of long-term goal. She unfolded a North American map and chose Winnipeg, Canada, due to its lower living cost and economical school fee. Her youth, flexibility, active personality, and economic stability actually characterized her migration, language learning experiences, and her professional integration story.

She felt a strong premonition that she would like to live in Canada forever immediately after arriving in Canada in 2003. Staying with a homestay family comprising native speakers, she took a couple of language programs for one year to improve her general communication skills. During her language learning in Canada, she made a concrete decision to migrate to Canada when her points were satisfactory in terms of the Canadian immigration point system for the skilled immigration class (see page 12). She came back to Korea and started working for a CAD program company in Seoul. While furthering her career as a CAD program instructor at the client supporting

department, she invested in English by taking English programs at private institutions, and realized her professional ambitions:

The CAD program was produced in the U.S., so I was skillful in operating the program. I was privileged to have business trips to the U.S. because I was the only person who has an experience in living in North America in the department. I also published a manual book for the program for my clients. I became recognized as a career woman in that area. (Whitney Interview I, Dec. 27, 2009)

Regardless, her decision to migrate to Canada was solid, based on her admiration for Canadian society combined with multiple factors such as her forthcoming career life as a woman after marriage and a better environment in which to raise future children, similar to Lily.

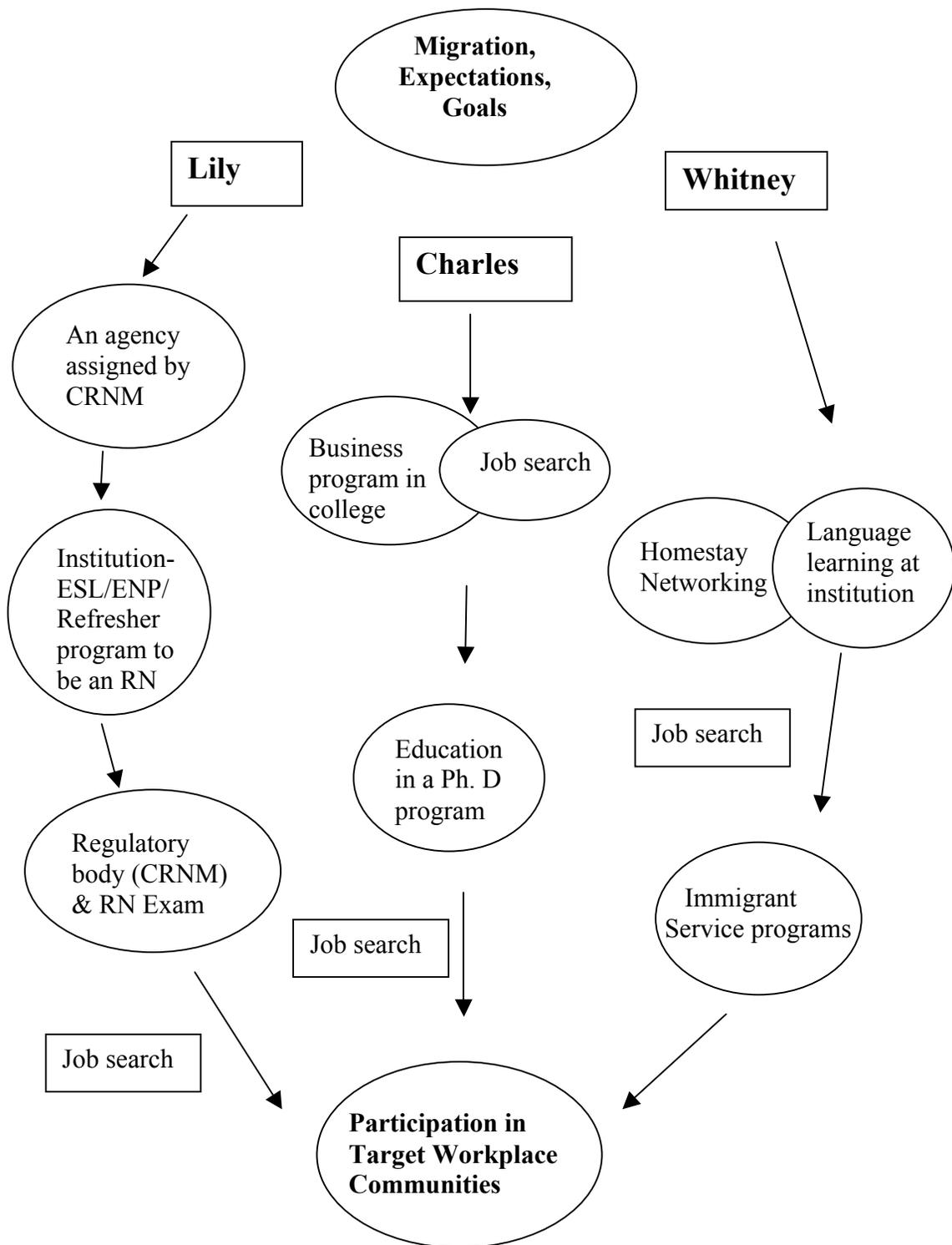
She moved to Winnipeg in 2009 upon attaining immigration. Her goal was to get into a workplace in Canada utilizing her career and specialty. Living with the same homestay family was hugely beneficial in terms of building personal networks, which actually influenced her language learning as well as her professional integration. Informed by the homestay family, she accessed all eligible immigrant service programs and participated in them. Following the homestay family's advice, she submitted her resume to an immigrant service program which assists skilled immigrants while taking a two week orientation for the engineering field, which provides practical information and tips regarding resumes, job search, job interviews, and workplace environments in Manitoba. However, she was confused with conflicting information regarding how to get into a workplace in Canada. The prevailing idea shared by the Korean community was "no educational background attained in Canada, no job," and thus, "go to school no matter if you repeat what you have learnt in Korea." (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 2009) The immigrant program, however, recommended her not to study at a

postsecondary institution because her skills were related to engineering programs which are highly in need and transferable in Canada. She decided to start studying if she failed to get a job by December.

Taking a part time language program, she began working as a waitress at a sushi restaurant. In October, the immigrant service program called her and informed that a company was interested in her resume. Two interviews were processed and after the second interview, the company notified she could start working the next day. Different from other participants, she integrated into her profession very quickly (within a year), through her personal networks and help from the immigrant service program. At the time of our interviews, she had been working for the company for approximately three months, and her work tasks were identical to what she had done in Korea. She had a plan to visit Korea this year to marry her Korean boyfriend, and invite him to join her in Canada soon. Through an email, Whitney also notified me that she would enter a graduate program at a cyber university this spring.

	<b>Lily</b>	<b>Charles</b>	<b>Whitney</b>
<b>Age</b>	42	42	31
<b>Gender</b>	F	M	F
<b>First language</b>	Korean	Korean	Korean
<b>Time in Canada</b>	8yrs	9yrs	1yr
<b>Educational Background in Korea</b>	Bachelor in Nursing	Master in Engineering	Bachelor in Engineering
<b>Professional Experience prior to Coming to Canada</b>	Nurse 11yrs	Engineer National R&D centre  8yrs	Consultant/instructor in Engineering Software Program  6yrs
<b>Education in Canada</b>	ESL/EPN/Refresher program Certification courses in Nursing	Ph. D in Engineering	EAL Various immigrant service programs
<b>Current Job in Canada</b>	RN -7 yrs in nursing	Professional Engineer -3.5 yrs in a manufacturing company	CAD Technician -3 months in a consulting company
<b>Other</b>			Lived in Canada for 1 yr for language learning (2003-2004) Trip to Europe

**Table 4.1: Overview of the Participants**



**Figure 4.1: Key Elements of Participants' Paths to Integrate into Workplaces**

## **Chapter Five**

### **Migration, Expectations of Working, and Imagination**

#### *Introduction*

I return to the research questions which guide this study: 1. What expectations and images of working in Canada did highly skilled Korean immigrants have when they migrated to Canada? To what extent, do they perceive these expectations to be met or not? ; 2. How do they perceive language learning in relation to their target workplace communities? What were their language learning experiences in regard to integrating into their target workplaces? ; 3. What challenges and successes, if any, have the highly skilled immigrants experienced in their workplace? What role, if any, has language played in their workplace experiences? ; 4. How did they negotiate their competence and identity to attain full membership in their workplace communities? These guiding questions inform the central purpose of this study, to determine how highly skilled Korean immigrants have constructed their imagined workplace communities.

To address the research questions, I present overall findings regarding the participants, and highlight particular aspects which attend discussions or implications. All the experiences of the participants were analyzed extensively and described in full detail in a narrative form. The descriptions of the findings primarily follow a chronological flow based on their life experiences such as their migration from Korea to Canada, their investment in learning, integration into their profession in the Canadian workforce, and attainment of membership in a linguistically and culturally different workplace community.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the notion of imagined communities and the COP

are central to the analytical framework. Combined with the chronological flow of each participant's experiences, the analytical framework unfolds according to the following steps: 1) from imagination to migration and investment in learning; 2) language learning and identity; 3) the transformation of target workplace communities from virtual to actual, which means participation in a target community of practice (COP); 4) negotiation of competence and identity engaged in a given COP; and 5) negotiation of multiple identities and multiple imagined communities. Based on this analytical framework, I describe findings about the participants, comparing and contrasting them, and sometimes emphasizing particular participants' experiences, rather than portioning emphasis on each participant's equally.

In this chapter, I examine what motivations and prospects the participants brought into Canada, focusing on their expectations of working as professionals. Then, I describe briefly to what extent, they perceived, their expectations were met or not. Their introspective and retrospective interview accounts were the main data for this chapter.

### ***Reasons for Migration and Expectations of Working***

Despite no previous experience in Canada with the exception of Whitney, the analyzed data showed that the participants moved to Canada, expecting to participate in the Canadian economy as immigrant professionals. Commonly, they imagined living in Canada with their family members or future family as legitimate members, getting a job, and practicing *the same profession* in the Canadian labour market.

It is noteworthy that each participant's particular expectations of working in Canada were deeply intertwined with their overall motives for migration, especially their life concerns. Describing their expectations of working in Canada without understanding

the general forces of migration would be decontextualized and artificial because their expectations were not static, but rather negotiable and flexible depending on their future situations and other influences such as family or financial issues. As I will show, the overall motives for migration influenced not only their expectations of working in Canada, but also their particular paths to re-enter their profession. They sometimes negotiated a balance between life style concerns and career expectations, so that if their career was not entirely satisfactory, they might find compensation in other aspects of their lives such as a better education for their children. Accordingly, their future images of working in Canada were relatively broad, flexible, somewhat optimistic, and thus negotiable.

I first examine the two women participants, Lily and Whitney, in order. Interestingly, their expectations overlapped with each other's in multiple ways. Although gender issues are not the main focus of my study, the two participants marked commonalities as women workers, sharing the same gender. They felt similar constraints from their workplace environments, and the socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts where they were situated as working women in Korea, and thus, they shared similar expectations of better workplace environments. Next, I explore Charles whose data revealed some differences, though some commonalities in regard to life style expectations. The essence of all the participants' common expectations of working, however, was identified as getting into the same profession as professionals so that they could sustain their social identity consistently.

***Lily: Sustaining Career and Family Life in Balance as a Woman Worker***

The migration of Lily encompassed a few important personal as well as social,

economic, political, and cultural aspects which were all tightly interconnected. Her workplace stress, a diminished focus on her family life due to her workload, better opportunities for her children's education and their future, and conflicts with her mother-in-law were the main reasons for her migration. The surrounding structures and constraints interacting with personal motives also critically influenced her decision to migrate. The unstable job security affected by the IMF crisis, unprotected maternity leaves for women workers, severe workloads<sup>18</sup> and the conventional practices in Korean workplaces, which emphasize *work* over family life or individual pursuits. Lily realized that it was almost incompatible for her, as a woman worker having children, to maintain both her career and family life in that atmosphere:

I was the top nurse and earned a good salary...but I used to leave frequently for a few years. My colleagues could help me as a substitute, but they did not. The atmosphere of the workplace created tension, anxiety due to the prevailing results of the IMF crisis. After I delivered my second baby, I had to start working in less than one month. I had to do frequent overtime work and even midnight shifts. It was a very hard situation for me. In this situation, I got pregnant with my third child... (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

The IMF crisis affected all social economic and political sectors, especially creating “middle class anxiety” (Hong, 2008, p. 102). Followed by the Structural Adjustment Program, the workplace environment became extremely unstable, challenging the concept of life-long employment. Furthermore, women workers were likely to be laid off over male workers in that perilous period. Some literature on the impact of the IMF crisis and the resulting changes in the Korean labour market claim that women were most affected by the crisis. Women were among the first to lose their jobs and the last to get hired because employers preferred to lay off women on the gendered

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<sup>18</sup> Korean nurses work for approximately 50 hours a week while nurses in Canada work for 40 hours. It is also common that Korean nurses are expected to stay extra (unpaid) time done due to the workplace atmosphere.

notion that women are secondary income source (Park H., 2005; Seo, 2004, cited in Hong, 2008). In addition, maternity leave systems for women workers in Korea were neither well established nor practiced.

Lily was a manager nurse at that time, which made her life busier, stressful, and difficult. She rarely had time to have meals with her family members. Under the constrained situation, Lily's pregnancy with her third child led to an epiphany which revealed multifaceted individual and social aspects of her life and finally drove her to leave for Canada. She apprehended that she would be laid off if she had another maternity leave in that situation. She tried to manage her social identity as a professional and her traditional identities as mothers and wives in a compatible way, but she realized that it seemed impossible in her surroundings. She dreamt of a better space for workplace environments, family life, her children's education and their future, where she could sustain both aspects of her life compatibly and peacefully:

If the welfare system had been well established, I would have been better off [with the pregnancy]. There were many people being laid off, so I had to work harder...I thought I might have to leave for another place such as U.S.A., or Canada. Since I was a nurse, I thought it would be easy [to move]... One day I saw the advertisement on the bulletin board in my workplace: the CRNM announced that there was a shortage of nurses in Manitoba in March, 2001. It was advertized by the Korean Nurse Association jointed by Human Resources Development Services of Korea. So, I applied for the position...and I was accepted. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

The images... What I conceived was doing primary nursing [in Canada]. As I was a manager in Korea, I had to resolve all the kinds of complaints and everyday meetings. My job became far away from patient care. If I had gone to Canada, I thought, I could have cared patients by myself. The image of Canada...was just "I would be *free!*" (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

Oppressed by the constraints of her surroundings, Lily began imagining an alternative reality, and her notion of a future workplace was clearly shaped by the

advertisement of the CRNM. As the above excerpts explained, her expectations of working in Canada were simple, though uncertain; she desired to work in Canada as an RN with the assumption that the workplace environments would be better for married women nurses. She also expected to integrate into her profession in Canada without big problems so that she could practice as an RN, respectively.

In summary, Lily showed main motives for migration which primarily originated from the workplace environments and policies in Korea, although other concerns such as her children's education, their future, life quality, and conflicts within family members such as mother in law, were combined. Lily's constraints, however, were multilayered, as an interwoven mesh of social, economic, political, and cultural conditions (e.g., the IMF crisis and the poor welfare system in Korea), which affected the social context for her decision to migrate. However, she conceived the possibility of her successful professional integration in Canada so that she could sustain her career and family life in balance.

### ***Whitney: Quality of Life and Better Workplace Environments for Women Workers***

It is notable that Whitney had similar motives to Lily, despite a big age gap between the two (11 years difference), their dissimilar marital statuses, and different professions. Her migration story was also influenced by social, political, and cultural conditions as well as her individual predisposition or concerns. The motives Whitney expressed were her intrinsic admiration for Canada, better environments for her pursuit of a life long career, the discriminatory practices in Korean workplaces on women workers and unsatisfactory welfare system for women, the conventional workplace cultures which deprive workers of personal life emphasizing loyalty to the workplace, and the quality of

her forthcoming life after marriage.<sup>19</sup> Although she was single, she hoped for a better environment for her future children's education and more opportunities for them as well. The following excerpt illustrates her frustration generated by the workplace culture in Korea and her expectations of migration. The strict workplace cultures which demand workers sacrifice their personal or family life for the workplace and its collectivism appeared as main reasons:

On top of that, I thought of forthcoming results after marriage for a career woman to encounter. I worked in the section of engineering programs. I instructed and consulted clients on how to use CAD programs and apply them to clients' products. Mostly I worked surrounded with male workers, which involved almost obligatory participation in frequent late dinner meetings and drinking occurrences. The Korean workplace cultures force employees to sacrifice individual free time for the workplace. Everything is centered for the workplace and teamwork, and you should show your loyalty, once you get into a workplace. It is about a survival issue. (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 09)

The relationship in the workplace is a class structured one, which means the relationship of order- obedience is always embedded in workplace practices like a military system. I was so overwhelmed with numerous workplace activities and events involved that I could not even go to my friend's wedding on a weekend. That is very common in Korea. The reality made me realize that I would hardly survive in the profession unless I become exactly the same as a male worker. But I want to work until I retire. I dreamt of living and working in a land whose workplace culture would be different from Korea. (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 09)

Like Lily, Whitney experienced constraints in her workplace, which forced her to envisage a better place for a woman professional. One distinguishable aspect in Whitney's data, however, was her expression of gender discrimination as one of the motives to leave Korea: *"I would hardly survive in the profession unless I become exactly*

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<sup>19</sup> This includes anticipated conflicts within traditional family relations. She mentioned that she would be unable to satisfy her role as a daughter in law in Korea. Traditionally daughters in law, affected by the traditional Korean Confucianism, have many family duties which make them give up their personal pursuits for the whole family. Lily expressed the conflicts with her mother in law as a reason for migration. Similarly, Whitney was aware of the conventions or responsibilities which fall on daughters in law in the Korean familial structures. For more information, please refer to Yi (2001).

*the same as a male worker.*” Different from Lily’s profession, where most nurses comprise females, Whitney’s profession was engineering, the majority of which consist of male workers in Korea. The reality overtly made Whitney perceive gender issues as major difficulties in her career life, and consider an alternative space for gender equality, aligning with the findings in Hong’s (2008) study. However, her expectations of migration embraced multiple aspects, including her future life style, common to other participants:

My expectations of migration to Canada are not limited to only my profession. Actually, if I had thought of only my career, I wouldn’t say Canada is the best. [The U.S.A. or Korea is better.] To illustrate, regarding payment, I was paid much more in Korea than now in Canada. All the expectations such as quality of life, long term pursuit of career after marriage, and future children and their education....I considered all these aspects together and made a decision about migration. (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 09)

The images of working in Canada...I would get more salary, no overwork, much better work environment, and I would be able to go home punctually. I imagined I wouldn’t have late dinner meetings or drinking occurrences, wouldn’t have to wear a formal suit and high heels for my workplace everyday and would be much *freer*... (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 09)

As seen, Whitney’s images of working in Canada appeared relatively concrete compared to other participants, although she stated that she did not have big expectations. The reason could be found in her experience of living in Canada prior to her migration. Furthermore, she felt a strong sense that she would live in Canada forever right after her arrival to Canada. Her conscious or subconscious admiration for Canada had been already constructed in her mindset, and the disposition affected her decision about migration as well as her expectations of working in Canada. Whitney used the word “freer” for her overall expectation, which Lily chose exactly for the same reason, suggesting their common constraints as women workers.

In addition, it is notable that Whitney did not witness any economic adversity such as the IMF crisis in her career life while Lily did. Nevertheless, Whitney felt similar concerns and constraints to Lily, which fall on most women workers, suggesting that their commonalities were derived from the fact that they were women professionals in Korea. They both encountered the query of whether they would be able to sustain their personal/family life and the pursuit of their career in balance. Feeling frustrations, they desired for a better quality of life, which would not be plausibly attained in their existing sociocultural, political surroundings. In doing so, their notion of working in Canada as an alternative was constructed in a negotiable way. This procedure precisely mapped out the notion of imagined community.

Regardless of multiple reasons for migration, it is important to note Whitney's firm anticipation of successful integration into her profession in Canada. As Lily considered it possible to be an RN and work in Canada, Whitney also conceived the possibility to get into the Canadian workforce based on her past career. Noting the possibilities, they finally began taking actions to arrange their futures. Although there was uncertainty, their expectations were constructed based on possibilities in a practical way, supporting the educational function of imagination, which is distinguished from a mere "escape" or "wish" (Simon, 1992; Wenger, 1998).

To sum up, Whitney showed similar motives for migration and expectations of working in Canada to Lily's. In a broad sense, Whitney expected to participate in the Canadian workforce as a professional, maintaining the same profession she had in Korea. She presumed that the Canadian workplace systems and environments would be better than those in Korea particularly for women workers so that she could sustain her personal

life concerns and a life long career. Her expectations of working in Canada were broadly set up, but her data showed some concrete aspects, compared to other participants, due to her previous experience of living in Canada.

***Charles: Getting into the Same Profession in Canada***

It is notable that Charles's motives for migration were not related at all to any constraint or unsatisfactory aspects in his workplace or workplace cultures in Korea. In addition to his different gender, I realized that he had nostalgia toward his previous workplace in Korea during the two interview sessions. Despite the fact that he reached the goal of migration, getting a job, he overtly revealed the pride and fulfillment he used to possess in Korea. Actually, his high satisfaction in his profession in Korea affected immensely how he created his future images or expectations of working in Canada as well as how he approached and constructed his target workplace in Canada respectively.

The main reasons for migration he accounted for were identical to other participants in terms of life concerns. They included a better place for his children's education and their future, freedom from conflicts with his father due to different religions and conventional duties he supposedly had to take as a son, and overall quality of life. As described, the initial idea to migrate came from his wife and he agreed with her, though reluctantly:

For myself, I was really happy with my life in Korea. In terms of my career, I was thoroughly fulfilled with my work, my position, and recognition from others at the time in Korea. Because of that, when I migrated to Canada, I actually gave up lots of things regarding my own pursuits or expectations, especially with regard to my profession. I imagined that workplace environments anywhere in Canada could not surpass the environments which I had had in Korea... I imagined that I would never have the opportunity to do the same work in the same environments which I did for the R & D center, a national military development centre... I could explore every research which I wanted to do... (Charles, Interview I, Nov. 14, 2009)

As for me, I am a kind of person who pursues work, achievements in my profession, and challenges in new areas...rather than leisure or time...I might say that I made a sacrifice for my whole family. Overall, I could say that family or my children's futures were more important values. (Charles, Interview I, Nov. 14, 2009)

Due to his reluctance to leave Korea and his satisfaction, his expectations of working in Canada were neither clearly crafted nor prospectively imagined. Charles thought that his position would not be the same as that he had in Korea if he migrated to Canada, embracing even a possibility of downward mobility. His initial thought was to have a relaxing time for the time being and to look for a job in Canada without high motivation in envisaging his future images of working in Canada.<sup>20</sup> However, one clear expectation or assumption he had was that he would get into a workplace without any problems so that his professional skills and knowledge would be utilized in the same profession in Canada. In addition, he imagined he would soon have reassured a job, with the belief that he was destined to work hard, and would be surrounded by work opportunities wherever he went. He explained:

Although my future images of working in Canada were vague and unclear, I absolutely imagined the possibility that I could contribute to the area where I was specialized, which implies I would get into a workplace in Canada without big problems. It was a natural thought as I had been working on those professional areas in Korea.(Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Charles's expectations of working were created in a vague, flexible, negotiable way on one hand and in an optimistic way on the other hand. The optimistic nature seen

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that many immigrant professionals suffer from financial issues that hinder them from searching for appropriate workplaces, wasting time. Many immigrant professionals encounter financial difficulties upon migration, so they are forced to begin working in a lower labour job (Canadian Heritage Multiculturalism, 1999). As I discussed in Chapter one, one feature recent Korean immigrants shared is that they have economic affluence compared to other ethnic immigrant groups. However, the feature of the recent Korean immigrants shows variation as well. Charles also experienced financial difficulties with his long period of unemployment after migration to Canada. He never expected his unemployment to last for a long time.

in the attitude of “*I would get into a workplace in Canada without big problems*” was also found in Lily’s. At the outset, Lily imagined that she would have a comfortable time studying English and enjoying her quality family time, and then she would be incorporated into a workplace without adversities. Interestingly, the two participants’ optimistic idea enclosed the perception that their language proficiency would not be seriously challenging to their integration into their professions in Canada. They did not perceive their limited language facility as an issue until they migrated into Canada. This issue will be discussed in the following chapter.

In summary, as opposed to Lily and Whitney, there was no evidence of restraining aspects in relation to his workplace in Korea in Charles; rather he showed strong pride and nostalgia toward his previous workplace in Korea, suggesting differing motives and contexts of the participants’ migration. His clear and natural expectation was to get into the same profession so that his knowledge and experiences could be utilized and his social identity as professional could be sustained. Since he did not initiate migration, his idea of working in Canada was not concretely portrayed, but rather in a negotiable way. However, he believed he would be incorporated into the Canadian labour market without adversities. Charles also shared similar motives with other participants in terms of quality of life, his children’s education, and their future.

### ***Images of Working in Canada***

It is noteworthy that all the participants shared certain images of Canada and Canadian workplaces. Although they did not expect to benefit from all the positively presumed images, they supposed it would be natural for them to work in the expected environments. To illustrate, Canada was imagined as a place where employees have

better pay, less workload, punctuate work time, and better welfare systems. For women workers, there were well established maternity leave systems, respect of personal life and individualism, and more flexibility in work, less gender discrimination, which could benefit them, as other studies attest (Hong, 2008; Kim, 2001; Kwak, 2008).

The above assumptions were based on their common images of Canada. According to the analyzed data, Canada was considered a socialistic society, which implies that overall social welfare policies are well established, and therefore not only the participants but also their next generation can benefit. Also, Canada was believed as a “safer and less urbanized” place than the United States, and also clean and of beautiful nature. Those assumptions made all three participants choose Canada preferably over the United States. In a similar vein, Canadians were imagined as “kind, smiling, and pure” (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009). As seen, the images of Canada were all positive; actually, negative aspects were not mentioned at all.

Some studies (Hong, 2008; Kang, 2004) report these shared images among Koreans as essentialized West centric views; something better exists in the West. The gist of the West centrism appeared rooted in Lily and Whitney’s accounts well, “I thought Canada would be better than Korea” (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009), “I tended to admire Canada in terms of their practical aspects.” (Whitney Interview I, Dec. 27, 2009). In fact, the West centric values, more specifically American values, are practiced in some individuals’ everyday life in Korea, assuming that the values are better or admirable. Although Charles did not have any anticipation of a better workplace environment in Canada, he negotiated his migration with the idea that Canada would be a better land in terms of living with family and his children’s future.

Another aspect was that all those expectations and images were constructed by the information about Canada or North America that they could access. The main sources for the images were the Internet, TV, videos, books, and pamphlets. The web sites were the most important source of information they accessed. “Through the web sites I searched for all the information about Manitoba. I saw the pictures of Winnipeg, the Golden Boy, University of Manitoba, and Red River College...” (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009). Lily and Charles had never been to Canada prior to migration. That is, they relied largely on the electronic technology as the main sources of information, reinforcing Appadurai’s (1997) claim of the feature of modernity, and the relationship between transnational migration, electronic technology, and imagination.

### ***Overall Fulfillment of Expectations***

In this section I briefly describe how the participants perceive to what extent their expectations of working were met in Canada. There are some overlapping themes with Chapter Seven, so this section explores only their overall satisfaction regarding their expectations of working in Canada rather than examining what factors created unsatisfactory parts, if any, and how they negotiated the challenging aspects. Their challenges and negotiations will be described and discussed in the following chapters.

All the data for this section was based on the participants’ perceptions and their own accounts, suggesting that their subjective satisfaction and evaluation was the main criterion. In relation to this aspect, two attributes should be indicated. First, the three participants had different time lengths of living in Canada, so their satisfaction might have fluctuated depending on what point of time they were at. The findings in this chapter were based thoroughly on the period of our interview sessions. The other attribute was that their evaluation on the fulfillment of expectations of working was interlocked

with their life concerns, constituting a supplementary and compensating relationship, as I indicated before. The two attributes confirm that the analysis relied on each participant's holistic, subjective, and present perspectives and evaluation.

A registered nurse, Lily showed the highest satisfaction with her career in Canada among the participants. She accounted for the reasons. First of all, she successfully integrated into a workplace she had targeted although she had many adversities due to her language facility, cultural differences, and lack of information at the beginning of her migration. Her successful re-entry story in Canada, on the other hand, should be interpreted in terms of the socio-economic and political situation where there was a shortage of registered nurses in Manitoba. The CRNM approved the influx of internationally educated nurses in the profession, and Lily was in the case. Despite multiple factors of her successful professional integration (I will show in Chapter Six), the high demand in experienced nurses accounted largely for her success: she actually did not encounter any systemic barriers such as Canadian experience or unrecognized foreign qualifications, which many immigrant professionals face in their re-entry paths. Next, Lily stated that her workplace reality matched her expectations, and even surpassed them compared to that in Korea. The satisfaction ensued from workloads, flexible shifts which she could choose depending on her needs, a variety of job positions within nursing, high salary (as an experienced nurse she was paid about \$40 per hour), and well established welfare systems, job security, and thus secured family life:

I would say the workplace environments would be better than my initial expectations. Compared to all the endurances and stresses I have gone through in the workplace in Korea, I would say here is much better. However, it does not mean that my whole immigration life has been always satisfactory. I encountered lots of adversities I never expected not only within the workplace but also outside the workplace....Language issues, cultural differences, lack of information about

this society, daycare, housing..... especially lifestyle concerns generated lots of stresses and dissatisfaction. Now I have been working here for 6.5 years, so I can handle them. I would say it would be much better and satisfactory if you endure approximately 5 years here. (Lily Interview III Dec.30, 2009)

Lily explained that her satisfaction from her workplace compensated some disappointing aspects of living, implying the negotiable relationship between the two. Her living experiences were not satisfactory, especially in the beginning. According to Lily, housing and daycare were the most serious challenges.<sup>21</sup> She was not informed properly regarding daycare and housing system, and immigrant services were not available to her, as she was an international student at that time. She considered them as the cost for constructing her imagined workplace community:

Due to my work...I was too busy to live here. The best thing, I thought, was to get a job as quickly as I could and to live in a stable condition...I could not care for my children and check the daycare in detail...these still remain as a burden ...My children's personalities changed due to daycare...That's why I am working as part time now...I am caring for my children... (Lily Interview II, April 1, 2009)

Whitney fundamentally believed that she was extraordinarily lucky that she could get a job within one year of her immigration without barriers such as Canadian work experience. Although she had expected to integrate into the same profession in Canada, she was not sure about her future. However, Whitney broke the prevalent belief shared among Korean immigrant communities, "No job without education attained in Canada." Similar to Lily, however, this aspect could be interpreted in terms of particular socio-economic and political contexts surrounding her; her expertise was within in high demand professions in Manitoba. The Manitoba government has identified occupations

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<sup>21</sup> Due to a lack of credits in Canada, she had difficulty renting a condominium. After she prepaid a one year rental fee and provided her bank account, she could get a condominium suite. She expected a good daycare system, but she expressed that daycare for her children was poor and she could not access information for daycare. Poor daycare system and inappropriate behaviours of caregivers were problems, but she did not know how to complain.

that are currently in high demand in Manitoba, and are expected to be in high demand over the next two years. Whitney's profession, mechanical engineering including auto CAD has been in the report since 2003 (Report on High Demand Occupations in Manitoba, 2007 available at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/tce/docreports>).

In addition to the luck, the work she did was almost identical to her previous work, which generated great satisfaction and comfort. The workplace environments and cultures also largely fit her expectations, for example, punctual work times and respect of private life based on individualism. However, she expressed that her expectation, "a better pay in Canada" was not met at all; she was surprised by a number of taxes and much less pay than she expected. Whitney expressed that her satisfaction would be 80% out of 100% in both her working and living in Canada:

Overall, I can say the expectations which I had are met. The workplace environment is pretty satisfactory. Regarding payment, however, I was entirely disappointed when I got paid for the first month. Simply too much tax....my expectation on this is not met at all. There are also some areas which I have to adapt myself for the new workplace, which actually challenge me. Also, rigorously speaking, my position here is a little lower than what I had in Korea. Regardless, I feel very lucky as I have got into a workplace in Canada relatively shortly after migration, which is very uncommon among Korean immigrants. My satisfaction, in terms of not only working but also living in Canada would be 80% out of 100%. (Whitney Interview I, Dec. 27, 2009)

On the other hand Charles showed a slightly different perspective even though his overall satisfaction was described as 80%, like Whitney. In a broad sense his expectations of working were realized since he attained the goal of migration, which was integrating into the profession in the Canadian workforce, and he has been actively contributing to the workplace as a recognized member. Nonetheless, there were some aspects where his expectations were not perfectly met. He wished he had taken advantage of his previous career and knowledge, in particular, military areas and robotic systems, but the current

company involved lots of different subjects such as pharmaceutical engineering and chemistry which challenged him. In a rigorous way, he suspected, his reality did not seem to satisfy perfectly what he had imagined in terms of his workplace. As described before, his high satisfaction with his previous workplace in Korea seemed to affect his fulfillment with his current situation:

However, I gave up the idea that I would work with the same position which I had in Korea when migrating into Canada. I accepted the idea of downward mobility with my migration. My current work, the quality, would be a little lower than what I did in Korea. (Charles Interview, II, Nov. 21, 2009)

I have more free time here than in Korea, but I am not accustomed to enjoying leisure time. I want to pursue professional achievements...more active dynamics in work...I really miss going on business trips which I used to have in Korea. (Charles Interview, II, Nov. 21, 2009)

If I omit this part, I can say that I am satisfied with my current life, and many expectations are fulfilled. My wife and my children are satisfied with their current life in Canada. I am really enjoying watching my children grow up. (Charles Interview, II, Nov. 21, 2009)

As shown, two ambivalent aspects interacted with each other from time to time within Charles's mind, which entailed reconciliation and negotiation; his satisfaction in life concerns compensated some unsatisfactory aspects in his career. However, he commented on his strong fulfillment in terms of his secure position and critical contribution to his workplace and the benefits it presented.

In summary, all the participants showed successful integration into their chosen professions, which were identical to their previous career in Korea. This meant their primary expectation with migration was substantially fulfilled, and through this, their social identity as professional was sustained in Canada. On the other hand, their successful integration stories reflected to some extent the socio-economic situations where their professions (nursing and engineering) belonged to high demand occupations

in Canada in general and in Manitoba in particular. Lily, an RN, showed the greatest satisfaction among the participants; her expectations were well fulfilled and her workplace reality even surpassed her previously constructed images of working in Canada. Whitney and Charles' expectations were mostly accomplished to extent of 80%. As the images of working in Canada were constructed in a flexible way, the participants seemed to negotiate their reality. Regarding the different levels of satisfaction between Lily and others, I suggest that there was one particular distinction between them with regard to the nature of their professions. Lily's career inhered in a public sector of health, while the other participants' workplaces were in private sectors. The difference appeared to create other distinguished features in their access to and practices in their different professions as well, as I will show later.

### ***Summary and Discussion***

I have explored the three participants' expectations and future images of working in Canada combined with their motives for migration, comparing and contrasting them. I have analyzed the participants by focusing on their viewpoints, perceptions, and personal histories. Also, I have added a brief examination of the fulfillment of their expectations in result based on the current point. The three participants showed similarities of motives, especially in terms of quality of life, their (future) children's education and better opportunities for them, while showing differences in their particular expectations of working in Canada.

Their migratory stories were bound up with an interwoven mesh of personal as well as familial, social, economic, political, and cultural aspects which affected their decision to migrate. This aspect was more clearly revealed in the data of Lily and

Whitney, suggesting the common restraints<sup>22</sup> and desires women workers may generally share in Korea. Oppressed by their workplace cultures and policies, Lily and Whitney envisaged similar expectations of better workplace environments for women workers, where they were free from the constraints they encountered as (married) women professionals. They desired for an alternative reality where they could sustain both their personal/family life and career life in balance. On the other hand, Charles's images of working in Canada were not concretely portrayed due to his fulfillment with his previous workplace in Korea. His expectations of working appeared negotiated with his other pursuits such as his children's future or family life.

This chapter has revealed some interesting points. Although the participants had differing expectations of working and motives for migration, they commonly shared the prospect that they would be incorporated into the Canadian workforce maintaining the same profession they had in Korea. We have witnessed their expectations influenced their future images and their extended identity over time and over space. They conceived of the possibility of their successful integration into their profession, and their primary desire was to maintain the same or a similar social identity as professional despite the fact that they imagined living in a linguistically, culturally and socially different country. Thus, the essence of their expectations lay in sustaining their previously attained social identity, and the way to do it was to get into the same profession in Canada. Their successful integration eventually confirmed their assumption, rendering them security

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<sup>22</sup> Although the two participants shared gender issues as their motives for migration, these issues did not recur at all after their migration. Their professional integration stories and overall fulfillment of their expectations of working in Canada did not contain any gender discrimination. However, many studies reveal that immigrant women professionals are disadvantaged occupationally in the labour market. (see Castle, 2000; Ng, 1996) In particular, a recent study, Hong (2008) argues that many highly skilled Korean immigrant women experienced both gender and racial discrimination with their unemployment in Canada.

and satisfaction with their immigration life. Their overall fulfillment of the expectations of working in Canada was mainly accounted for through their successful integration into the same or similar profession in Canada.

Next, I have framed the power of imagination and the notion of imagined community to explain the motives for transnational migration in highly skilled Korean immigrants. The analyzed data revealed the interplay of imagination and transnational migration, despite differences and variations among them. Appadurai (1997) claims that the modern world is characterized by a role for the imagination in social life, defining “the imagination as a social practice” (p.31), attributing its characteristic to transnational migration and electronic media. Aligning with the idea, the starting point of the participants’ migration was their practice of imagination. Through the power of imagination, the notion of an imagined community was created as Canada, and the notion of imagined workplace communities was set up as a hospital or an engineering company in Canada. Imagination provided a means through which the participants enacted their images of the future and extended their identity. To illustrate, Lily’s future images extended her identity as an RN in Canada. Once her attachment to an imagined community (Canada) and an imagined workplace community (A hospital in Manitoba) was built, she engaged “in active attempts to reshape the surrounding contexts” (Pavlenko, 2003, p.266), in order to reach the target communities; she quit her job in Korea, flew to Winnipeg, and invested in learning, and passed the examination. The notion of imagined communities projected her to take actions and particular commitments to learning, supporting the projective and educational role of imagination (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Imagination works as “a way to appropriate meanings and

create new identities” (Pavlenko & Norton, 2005, p.590).

One important aspect is the situatedness of imagination. Each participant’s differing situations and restraints critically influenced their imagination, their future images, and furthermore their investment in language learning and their paths of re-entry to their professions. To compare Lily (Whitney as well) and Charles, it appeared that the stronger their constraints, the stronger their desires, and thus, the stronger their desires, the more intense their motivation. As women workers, Lily and Whitney felt familial, social, cultural, and political constraints more harshly, so they began to desire for another space where they could sustain both their personal pursuits and career in a compatible way. Their desires, their imagination, were thus socially, culturally, and politically constructed (Wenger, 1998). As shown, Charles’s expectations or future images were not concretely envisaged compared to other participants. The main reason was his reluctance to leave his satisfying and rewarding workplace in Korea, so he was not active in imagining other possibilities. This also pinpoints that ‘who is the subject to imagine?’ is an issue and that ‘whose desire is projected into the imagined community’ affects the form of actual engagement to attempt to reach the imagined community. However, Charles negotiated living concerns and his professional desires compatibly, suggesting their transferable relationship.

Lastly, there appear some limitations of imagination due to its nature, which is, not actual but still virtual. Due to the lack of concrete information about Canada and no experience of working in Canada, the shared images among the participants appeared vague, uncertain, negotiable and somehow optimistic. Although Whitney lived in Canada, so her expectations contained more practical images, her perspectives were limited to an

international student's rather than an immigrant professional's who sought entry into the Canadian workforce. The overall images of working in Canada were ambivalent and negotiable, because they were relatively optimistic on one hand and uncertain on the other hand. This aspect also explained some participants' ambiguous perception of language before they migrated, especially Lily and Charles. I suggest that it is not easy for highly skilled immigrants to draw concrete future images or plans unless they have enough information or actual experiences in working /living in Canada. Clear images may be better constituted from more practical and concrete information and experiences. This supports Rossetto (2006)'s finding, which is, although prospective teachers had distinctive visions, in the actual practicum the ideas generated in their imagined communities came to represent the terms of investment in their chosen profession. In the next chapter, I will explore how the participants accessed their target professions in Canada or how they achieved their goal of migration, focusing on their investment in language learning.

## **Chapter Six**

# **Language Learning, Investment, and Paths of Integration Towards Workplace Communities**

### *Introduction*

As many studies attest (Azuh, 1998; Kim, 2001; Nah, 1993; Reitz, 2005; Wang, 2006), the analyzed data from the participants revealed that language was an essential part of immigrant professionals' integration into the Canadian workforce and their workplace practices as well. Regarding the necessities for employment in Canada, all the participants stressed the need for English, skills or professional knowledge, and previous experiences. The participants in the study were all competent in skills and knowledge as experienced highly skilled human capital, but language appeared as one of the biggest concerns which as a result created adversities in their migration experiences.

Norton (2000, 2003) claims that the notion of imagined community entails learning opportunities; once the notion of an individual's imagined community takes place, he extends his future images of himself and actually participates in a real community of learning. Thus, second language learners' language learning is a form of investment as well as integral to accessing their target communities. The analyzed data showed that the immigrant professionals' language learning was an apparent investment to access their target profession in Canada. To get into the same profession in a linguistically and culturally different environment, the common step each participant took was pursuing language learning.

As I will later present, their investment in language learning was varying and multiple, and their different language learning experiences actually characterized each

participant's unique approach to his/her profession in Canada. Combined with socio-economic and political contexts, their differing manners of investment and paths of re-entry to the Canadian workforce relied largely on the nature of their chosen profession, for example, the mandatory procedure of integration into nursing, personal historical situations, and personalities and their beliefs.

In what follows, I provide an in-depth examination of the three participants' language learning experiences in terms of their integration into the Canadian workforce. The examination includes 1) the participants' differing language learning experiences and their particular paths to access their professions; 2) their perceptions of the relationship between language learning and their target workplace communities, and the necessities they perceived as essential for immigrant professionals' integration into the Canadian workforce; and 3) language learning and identity. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the findings discussed in this chapter. It is placed at the end of the chapter, so readers can refer to it while reading the following.

### ***Lily: Institutionally Structured Process Approach***

We are very pleased to announce that, after successfully completing their course of study, all but one of the 16 Korean nurses in the program passed the national RN examinations and are now eligible to be licensed as Registered Nurses in Manitoba. Because of the very high pass rate on the national licensing examinations, something that is not typical in such circumstances, both RRC( training centre) and AAA (Agency's name) are pleased with what they can justifiably claim is an overwhelming successful collaborative project.

The nurses began by taking a 6 - month course entitled English for Nursing Purposes through RRC's Language Training Centre. Upon successful completion of that course, they then completed the CRNM-approved RN Refresher Program over a period of 6 months through RRC's Nursing Department. Their RN Refresher Program included a five-week, fulltime, instructor-supervised nursing practice experience.

All of the successful nurses received employment offers from the Winnipeg health care facilities, and are now working as general duty nurses...” (Karen Wall, Chair of Nursing, Document at RRC Website Dec. 09, 2002)

Lily was one of the 15 Korean nurses the above newsletter congratulated on their success. Upon a shortage of nurses reported at the end of the 1990’s, the CRNM initiated a jointed program with a provincial language and nursing institution and an agency in order to recruit and re-educate internationally educated nurses, especially targeting Filipino and Korean nurses. As a result, many provincial reports and institutional documents state that nurses were a successful model of integrating of internationally educated professionals in the Canadian workforce. Lily was one example.

As seen, the nature of Lily’s profession (see her life story section) mainly constituted her language learning journey as an institutionally structured process, which was generally applicable to other internationally educated nurses. Lily worked with an agency which guaranteed to provide her with all the programs until she passed the RN examination. She flew to Winnipeg and the first community she entered was an ESL<sup>23</sup> classroom consisting of Korean nurses who had similar future images to Lily’s. Her language learning focused on general communication skills for a couple of months and then focused on English for nursing purposes (ENP) and the Refresher Program. However, she remembered this period as the most challenging struggle in her life in Canada, because of her limited language facility. As she explained, she had a somewhat naïve perception of English before coming to Canada, thinking language would not be an obstacle:

I was confident at first. If I studied for a few months, I thought I would be fine with English, so I could get into a workplace. I thought language would solve

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<sup>23</sup> I respected the participant’s choice of the term ESL, since the term was formally and authentically used when she was taking the language course in Manitoba.

naturally if I came to Canada... until I started learning ESL. (Lily, Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

Her downplay of the importance of English stemmed partly from her professional competence and her successful experience studying academic English to enter a graduate program in Korea. Her initial thought, nevertheless, disintegrated on the first day when she entered the ESL program. Her confidence was substituted by strong anxiety and intimidation:

I joined the first arrivals of Korean nurses who had started the ESL program two months earlier. The reality was that I could not understand anything in the class. I could not understand what people said at all... I was really anxious; I was at a loss and worried with what I should do. I was not a nurse, but just a mere ESL student. (Lily, Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

The main challenge was her limited oral communication skills. Her language proficiency was assessed between 4 and 6 for all four skills by the Canadian Language Bench Marks, but her oral communication skills, especially listening skills, were weaker. She was required to reach the level of 7-9, and the CRNM indicated required listening proficiency as 9, the highest among other skills. Lily initially intended to work as a healthcare aid in Canada after a few months of learning ESL and she thought that while working, she would prepare for the RN examination. However, her limited language proficiency made the period of her investment<sup>24</sup> longer and tougher than expected, making her life more complicated. As a result, Lily's perception of language in relation to her target workplace community, shifted. English became the most important factor for

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<sup>24</sup> The investment was twofold, material and mental. She spent one and a half years in the institution completing ESL, ENP and the Refresher course without a break, and paid over \$ 20, 000. In addition, the opportunity cost was high since not only her time but also her family life was thoroughly dedicated to her goal. She gave birth to her third child during the period of learning, but after only a week's break, she had to return to her ENP classroom. Her language learning influenced not only her life but also her whole family. Different from her expectations, her life after migration was too busy, and her three children were sent to daycare during this period.

achieving her professional goals:

My proficiency of English has entirely affected my life as an immigrant. To get a job, English comes very first. I didn't need anything other than English. If my English had been enough, I wouldn't have gone through the adversities and would have gotten a job more quickly.... Many Korean nurses had the same adversities. I saw some Korean nurses give up being an RN in the middle and return to Korea. Compared to them, I overcame the difficulties, got a job and settle down relatively quickly. It was all about English [for immigrant nurses]. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

There were recurrent themes in her language learning experiences through the institutional programs. She mentioned that her institutional language learning was a necessity to take the RN exam and to get into the target profession through the credential. In addition, her language learning was critically connected to survival issues for her whole family. "If I failed this course, I might return to Korea with my family. I thought, just endure this time and stick to the program" (Lily, Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009). This situation enhanced her commitment to learning. She persistently maintained her future images as an RN and a landed immigrant in Canada. Her adherence to her imagined community and her responsibility for her family made her persevere through hardship. Simply, her language learning was a thorough investment to access her target workplace.

However, Lily mentioned what made her first language learning experience more difficult. According to her, the English Only policy employed in the ESL classroom made her language learning harder. The policy simply created anxiety, uncertainty, and intimidation which actually hindered her English practice, and challenged her identity enormously. The ESL class consisted of a homogeneous group of Korean nurses, and they were forced to use only English in class. Lily explained:

Nobody in the class helped me. Terribly enough, they all spoke English following the English Only policy. They were desperately dedicated to learning. But I could not speak and understand English properly. I seriously thought of moving to a

lower level every moment... but the final decision was ‘let’s just see what happens and stick to this class. I definitely lack a lot, but just try and follow this class!’ It took a few months to go through this adversity... Surprisingly, people started speaking Korean bit by bit while getting familiar with each other... (Lily, Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

Lily also experienced her identity constituted as “a mere ESL student who can hardly understand,” creating inner conflicts. She commented that a translation service would have been beneficial to lessen her anxiety and sudden identity shifts at the beginning of the language learning process.

On the other hand, her needs as an L2 learner were broad and multiple, so she was confused with where to put her focus. To illustrate, after completing one ESL course (focusing on general communication skills), she entered the ENP program (focusing on nursing), as designated. However, her needs, especially as a mother, entailed a variety of life parameters. She acquired classroom language, but she could not communicate properly at a dental clinic, a rental house office, or daycare. Her English in nursing content improved, but she did not have opportunities to improve general communication skills. She struggled to manage all the scenarios, and thus, confusion, anxiety, struggles, and negotiation were her everyday job. Although she crafted her identity as a prospective RN, dedicating to learning English, her everyday life was full of struggles and negotiation of multifaceted aspects of her identity.

In the same vein, classroom language was too limited to be applied to real world settings. After the RN examination, she was released to real world scenarios such as job searching, writing resumes and interviewing, which she had never prepared for. Her lack of general communication skills actually made her look for a position first in a nursing home where her language would be less challenged than acute hospitals. Moreover, her

limited communication skills actually remained as the most challenging factor in her workplace experiences as well:

I was able to follow the classes, but outside the classroom, my English was not enough. I could not understand other people. Even when I went to a dentist or a clinic with my kids, I couldn't understand. I thought if I could not even communicate here, then how could I work at the hospital? I could follow my classes, but in my real life, I needed more time. But...[I had to stick to the program to be an RN as it was the main goal]. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

Despite the limitations, Lily considered her institutional learning as the best choice and a success in terms of helping her reach her goal. She ascribed her success to both her efforts and the programs' supports equally. Lily's voice evidenced how the institutional program's systematic, prompt, and flexible implementations of learners' needs were helpful for successful learning:

Among ourselves, we split into two streams [due to the hardship of learning]. One group adopted the stance that we had to follow the program, while the other chose more individualized approaches, so they looked for other ways. For example, they looked for individual tutors, and dropped the course with the intention that they would come back later [after improving their proficiency]. However, in my opinion, following the program was the best. I thought, 'if I keep following the program even though I lack a bit, there might be a way later.' Some of those who quit the program never came back and finally returned to Korea. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

I: Did you feel that this program fulfilled your expectations?

Lily: It turned out well. My expectations were fulfilled; 50% was the contribution of the program, and the other half was my effort. Perseverance was absolutely essential, and the biggest contribution. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

There was one counselor at the institution...She did a lot of research and evaluation work. She would just see if the program was well fitting and if the students were keeping up...She conducted interviews with the students. She would specifically target the curriculum to our individual needs. She tailored the program to satisfy each individual's need. The program was implemented very quickly. That was the part I liked; the quick implementation. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

She also mentioned that her rigorous commitments, self trust, and the notion of "I can do

it”, were contributors to her success. Also, trust in the instructors and the program were essential parts of her success. Instructors’ genuine recognition of Lily and her potential boosted her commitments to learning as well.

Lastly, Lily’s data also showed an interesting and distinguished aspect, which other participants did not share: the confliction between an individual’s imagined community and a societal structure’s imagined community. Residing in public health sectors, the regulatory body of the CRNM exerted power to control the flux of internationally educated nurses, which constrained Lily’s desire, expectation, and actual access to her target workplace community:

As soon as we completed the program [Refresher], we were supposed to take the RN exam in October. But a new president of the CRNM took over the position, and they changed the policy, ‘You [Korean nurses] cannot take the RN exam.’ They didn’t permit us to take the exam. Their positions turned entirely differently from the former president’s. ‘We cannot accept you!’

It was a really tough experience nobody ever expected. We intended to hire a lawyer. Do we have to return to Korea? I was miserable thinking about it while looking at my children, who were deeply sleeping without any worry at night. We [the nurses] were all anxious and worried.

We suffered from tremendous stress. Finally, as a result of the protest and the help of the agency, we got the permission that we could take the exam only a short time before the exam. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

These excerpts powerfully demonstrated how societal structures can constrain an individual’s achievements and realization of his/her imagined communities. The institution’s imagined community was excluding internationally educated nurses in the profession, with the assumption that accepting them endangers public health. Although it was retracted, this incident implied that macro structural assistance, for example, regulatory bodies such as the CRNM, is crucial for internationally educated professionals to attain credentials and access the Canadian workforce.

In summary, Lily believed English was most significant for her professional integration. Combined with the nature of her profession, Lily's language learning was thoroughly engaged in institutional programs focusing on content in nursing, rather than acquiring general communication skills. During the period, she encountered everyday struggles, confusion, and conflicts within her multiple identities such as a prospective RN, an ESL learner, a mother, and an experienced nurse in Korea. With a strong sense of goals, investment, responsibility for her family, and the institution's systematic support, however, Lily finally accessed her target workplace community.

### ***Charles: School- Educational Approach***

Charles's language learning experiences consisted mainly of his academic participation in post secondary education, which eventually presented him with a Ph. D degree as well as successful integration into his profession. Like other participants, Charles perceived English as an essential part for his integration into the Canadian workforce, and his language learning was a substantial investment to re-enter his profession. Unlike other participants, however, Charles never relied on any institutional language programs available for new immigrants because of his particular belief in L2 acquisition; his personal beliefs, histories, and surrounding contexts such as financial support for family all shaped his particular journey to integration into the Canadian workforce.

As described in his life story, his investment was long term in reaching the goal of getting into the Canadian workforce. The data, however, revealed that there was complexity and variability, suggesting that any one dimensional and decontextualized interpretation of his particular investment is likely to fall short. His current workplace was his first workplace in Canada, and if we consider only the length of time, it took 5

years to get into the workplace. However, he valued the period of his learning since the time rewarded him with high self esteem, a realization of his potential, and attainment of his goal in result.

His main language learning strategy was participation in education. His goal of migration was to get into his profession, and with the two sided goal, “English and a job” he entered a business information program at a college upon arrival to Canada. His intention with the program was to improve his oral English skills by interacting with native speakers and exploring Canadian cultures. The reason he repudiated any EAL programs available for immigrants resided in his particular belief in L2 learning:

My theory which I had even in Korea was that ESL programs in English speaking countries focus on teaching written English. But, we learnt written English from middle school to university. What we need is oral English, but oral English can be acquired by practicing [in real contexts], it can't be simply learnt at institutions. I have stick to the theory, so I didn't choose to take ESL programs...

I planned to look for places where I could *practice English* when I migrated ...I needed places where I could communicate and practice my speaking. So college would be better than ESL institutions, I thought. (Charles, Interview I, Nov.14, 2009)

Interestingly, Charles had a clear and sound thought about the role of language and the meaning of language learning as well:

The theory that I have had since in Korea is that language is not the most important thing. I mean a language of a nation is a tool to deliver thoughts of people, so the most important thing is the thoughts, and the next important thing is how to deliver them, which is language.

As for me, thus, the meaning of language learning would be looking for the most effective way to deliver my thoughts and my knowledges to others. What would be the easiest and best way to deliver them is a topic to me. It doesn't mean that I need to pronounce fluently[like native speakers], but the bottom line is that I need to pronounce properly so that I can communicate with others, and I make myself understood...so I am always concerned with this issue.(Charles, Interview I, Nov.14, 2009)

Like Lily, he also had an optimistic perception of English. Although his English proficiency was not tested in Canada, he took some proficiency tests in Korea: he remembered his scores, for example, over 550 in TOEFL, and 780 in TOEIC. It has been a compulsory convention for most workplaces in Korea for employees to prove their English proficiency through authorized test systems. His level of proficiency was enough to get a permanent exemption from further proficiency tests in his workplace in Korea. Due to his confidence in English and some exposure to English speaking contexts through business, he initially thought English would not challenge him when he migrated to Canada. In fact, his particular beliefs about language combined with his optimistic perceptions of English appeared to craft his language learning experiences and his access to his profession.

Charles evaluated that the period at the college was the most successful language learning experience of his life. His focus was general communication skills as he felt relatively confident in reading and writing, and he experienced huge improvements in oral English. His active involvement in a variety of opportunities to practice English with native speakers such as car pool program, going on picnics, let alone listening to lectures all contributed to improvement of his oral English skills. He described that his acquisition of English had taken place naturally as he intended:

My proudest success was improving my English skills in general communication. It was natural learning which I intended...I interacted with native speakers in natural situations and tried to make opportunities to speak...I could feel my oral skills improving. (Charles, Interview I, Nov.14, 2009)

The most helpful experience, according to Charles, was an involvement in the Peer

Tutoring system the college provided.<sup>25</sup> He demonstrated competence in content, and taught young native English speaking peers who were less competent in academic content. He mentioned that his background knowledge and various experiences in Korea were the contributors to gaining competence over other young native English speaking students regardless of his limited oral skills. One interesting finding was the compensatory relationship between his competence in knowledge and content and his low competence in language skills, resulting in a cooperative environment beneficial to both sides. In addition, among English skills, his proficient writing and reading skills were translatable to his less fluent oral facility. The analyzed data revealed his strength in writing continuously benefitted him not only in the academic setting but also in his workplace.

When considering the goal, “English and a job” in a simultaneous way, nevertheless, his language learning rendered him half success. His expectation was to get into his profession and practice his human capital quickly, so he kept posting his resume on the internet sites while studying. However, his initial efforts were unsuccessful. Although the particular socio-economic situation such as 9-11 in the U.S. influenced his unemployment later, the reasons were analyzed in two aspects: his English facility in general, and his lack of information about how to get into a workplace in Canada in particular:

The reason why I was not employed when I tried to get into a workplace was due to my English as well. I had lots of job interviews and I did speak a lot at the interviews...but many people told me that I should study English more. (Charles, Interview I, Nov.14, 2009)

He was also not informed of how to get into a workplace and how to recruit in Canada.

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<sup>25</sup> Through the system, competent peers can teach less competent peers, and the peer tutors are paid a basic wage under this system. Charles got good marks in his courses, so he enrolled in the Peer Tutoring System and helped other peers.

Influenced by his perception regarding language programs for immigrants, he did not also rely on any immigrant service programs:

I just planned to re-enter my profession in the Canadian labour market only by myself without information. It was a wrong way. I was interviewed many times by employers based on my career in a vehicle company in Korea although the career lasted only one and a half years. I actually looked for military industries which were my main professional career in Korea, but I have never been offered even a job interview from those industries. The first thing was that there were not many job postings in those industries, and the next thing was that the job opportunities were usually open to citizenship holders rather than permanent residents like me. Now I know that, but at that time I didn't know about that. I also had no idea about internal recruiting in a company which has priority over applicants from outside. (Charles, Interview I, Nov.14, 2009)

His lack of information encumbered him in envisaging concrete pictures of his plans: "I didn't draw concrete images while I was studying. As I didn't draw concrete future images, I had difficulties in seeing the results." (Charles, Interview I, Nov.14, 2009)

Regarding immigrant programs for professional integration, Charles also had particular perceptions:

It might be better for new immigrants to get service from immigrant programs. But the programs seem to have limitations because they don't have any opportunities that can simulate various workplace experiences in a certain business. They just provide immigrants with how to write a proper resume or how to effectively look for a job. Actually everybody can do these things soon. The main purpose of immigrants who look for services from the programs is obtaining volunteering jobs so that they have opportunities to be hired. However, it is not easy to find a volunteer position and typically they have experienced downward jobs through the volunteer programs, the work they did not match with their aptitude and their target positions. (Charles, Interview II, Nov.21, 2009)

Although language learning was successful, it was the toughest time for him since he was unable to support his family financially. His unemployment created financial issues as well as confusion due to identity inconsistency. Combined with the living and financial issues, his language learning experience was continued in his participation in a

Ph. D program in engineering, featuring his investment as participation in high education. He thought he would take the Ph. D program while working as a RA or TA and then he would get a job.

What was notable in his data in this turning point was that this path implied his resistance to crafting his identity different from his goal with migration (e.g., a convenience store owner or a labour worker), and his solid integrity toward his imagined workplace community, which was the same profession. He suffered from identity issues at the college period due to his status inconsistency between an ambitious capable professional (in Korea) and an unemployed college student who was learning an L2 (in Canada). His desire for being incorporated into his profession was strong, but his reality posed a dilemma:

I always thought I would be able to work skillfully, but why they [employers] didn't give me any opportunity. My workplace in Korea was one of the largest corporations, like GM in terms of their scale and reputations. But I applied to middle sized companies which were subcontractors for GM. Although I targeted not GM but subcontractors, which means I leveled down my target workplaces, I could not get into any of them. I was terribly disappointed. (Charles, Interview II, Nov.21, 2009)

I: Did you think your English was an issue?

Charles: At that time I didn't perceive that language was an issue. Everything was uncertain and vague. I always thought that skills or work were the main thing, so I could work well if I was hired. (Charles, Interview II, Nov.21, 2009)

Although he accepted the idea of downward mobility with migration, it did not mean that he gave up his profession, his social identity, and past histories, but that he could accept negotiation within his profession. When confronted with unemployment and financial issues, he was about to open a convenience store, which many Korean immigrants have taken as an alternative route. However, he eventually refused the common path employed by many Korean immigrants and planned to invest his time in studying. In short, he

struggled to sustain his desire for and his integrity to his imagined workplace community, hoping that it would be better in the end. In addition, his experienced competence in academic content and a certain level of communication skills attained at the college helped him to choose this route.

During his Ph. D program, his language learning focused on academic discourses and writing. Although he worked as an instructor, so that he could develop his speaking and presentation skills, he rarely had opportunities to improve oral communication skills in natural settings. What was interesting in this period was that the academic community consisted of the majority of non native English speakers who were international students or immigrants; his advisor was also an immigrant whose cultural background was Asian. Simply, he did not have opportunities to learn Standard oral English. Rather, he was likely to be a role model for non native English speaking students due to his position as an instructor. This situation, meanwhile, assisted him in attaining psychological comfort, self confidence, competence and full membership in the community quickly and soundly. He actively participated in academic conferences and published in journals, which rewarded him and finally stimulated him to envisage another portrait of himself as a university professor.

Another finding in his data was that his language learning in academic settings was insufficient for him to practice in a practical workplace because of the gap between academic language and practical workplace language, identical to Lily. He explained that academic language was not applicable to a workplace setting because of different community discourses, and use of spoken and business language. The practice of

different discourses eventually challenged him after he got into a workplace, as I will present in the next chapter.

As seen, Charles's language learning and his professional integration was characterized as through education. He believed that investment in education was one of the best options for highly skilled immigrants whose personalities were like his. According to him, he lost many chances because of his shy and modest personality<sup>26</sup>: he was educated to be modest and humble although he was competent, seemingly influenced by Confucianism in Korea. According to his description, thus, for "those who are neither quick nor cunning in adapting to new environments, who are not skillful at selling their skills or capabilities to others, and who seem to look somehow passive and humble but make work done professionally once any opportunity is given," his particular path could be an alternative.

In summary, Charles had a particular belief in SLA and the role of language, which influenced his language learning and path to access his profession. His experience demonstrated that general communication skills were improved through exposure to a range of natural settings and opportunities to interact with native speakers. However, his integration into the Canadian workforce was realized after attaining higher education, a Ph. D program. His path reflected how he crafted his identity in Canada; he persevered to maintain his social identity as a professional, and invested in education to reach his target workplace. Although it was lengthy, his academic experience rewarded him in terms of his goal and realization of his potential.

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<sup>26</sup> He applied for professor positions a couple of times, but he mentioned that he failed to assure the committee members of his capability and strengths due to his humble and shy personality. The importance of personality was mentioned in Whitney's case. According to her, easy-going, somehow talkative, and good at presenting/selling their skills were preferable personalities in Canada. I will discuss this issue at the end of this chapter.

### ***Whitney: Networking and Immigrant Service Program Approach***

Whitney's investment in language learning was mainly divided into two periods, one year of language learning as an international student in 2003 and the period after she migrated as an immigrant, showing distinguished features. Compared to Lily or Charles, her language learning experiences were broader in terms of interactions with native speakers and inclusive of a variety of natural situations. Her language learning took place simultaneously by homestay living, institutional learning of EAL, and participating in immigrant programs. This variety was feasible because of both her flexibility and predisposition. To illustrate, her marital status of being single and youth, financial stability, and her positive personality offered more freedom in her choice of language learning.

The main purpose of language learning as an international student was to explore and invest in her potential for a better future. Although there were some other factors such as the compulsory atmosphere of having to learn English abroad among Koreans (see her life story section in Chapter Four), her language learning significantly influenced her life since through the opportunity, she was determined to migrate to Canada, extending her future images over territories. The below excerpt evidenced the interrelation between her language learning experience and her extended identity:

Language learning experiences in Canada have changed me a lot, rendering me lots of opportunities. If I had not studied English, I would not have thought of migrating into this country. Through learning English, my potential and possibilities were largely expanded so that my boundary of living was extended to another territory. Without that, I never imagined migration. As I learnt English and I can speak what I want to say in English, though it is not perfect, I can live here as an independent immigrant. My language learning experience was totally positive to me opening new possibilities. (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 2009)

It was noteworthy that Whitney's homestay experience was an important aspect which characterized her language learning and her particular path to the profession. She stayed with the same homestay family comprising a native speaking couple over the two periods. The homestay experience was meaningful in two ways. First, she controlled her everyday life to be in the situation where she had to speak English. She was involved in a variety of social opportunities to interact with native speakers through the homestay family's networks. The homestay family always helped her practice English, explained her curiosities ranging from grammar issues to culturally embedded expressions, and invited her to their social events:

When I was studying English in 2003, I was stricter. I tried not to see and even not to come across Korean students to prevent any opportunity to speak in Korean, and I strictly limited my speaking to English. I made efforts to be in the boundary of the homestay family's social life, interacting with their friends, relatives, and acquaintances who were native speakers. I went to movies, restaurants, and shopping together. (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 2009)

Of course the situation is a little different now because I am an immigrant. I am more relaxed, interacting with both communities, Koreans and Canadians. I think I will learn English forever living here, so I am less strict than as an international student. (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 2009)

Indeed, her single status enabled her to live with the homestay family having more opportunities to speak English. For example, Lily and Charles lived with their spouse and children so family member interactions always took place in Korean. Lily, in fact, commented that her marital status hindered her in practicing English since after class she had to go home, where the dominant language was Korean.

Second, Whitney's homestay experience provided her with opportunities to build personal networks and actually helped her in getting into a workplace. Whitney attributed her successful integration into a workplace to her successful personal networks, which

were attained by her homestay family. Her personal networks helped her to access information about employment for highly skilled immigrants and to get into her profession. During our interviews, Whitney called the homestay lady as mother, like a stepmother relationship, revealing the intimacy. It was also noteworthy that the good relationship was built by her mental and material investment. For example, when she came back to Korea in 2004, she kept contacting the homestay family, sending cards and gifts every holiday.

Her active involvement in immigrant services and language programs was another outstanding feature of her language learning experiences. After migration, Whitney's language learning focused on getting into her profession. She participated in immigrant service programs and institutional language training courses available for new immigrants. She first attended the ENTRY program<sup>27</sup> operated by the Manitoba government. Her Canadian Language Benchmarks were assessed between 5 and 6 there, and she enrolled in a full time EAL program. The ENTRY program "involves in-depth orientation on topics important to all newcomers, an opportunity to develop a social network of friends and professional contacts, and an opportunity to gain Canadian work experience as a volunteer or interpreter" (Documents from the ENTRY program). The ENTRY program provided all practical, survival information ranging from housing and health insurance to emergency calling. Interestingly, she actually applied what she learnt there to a real situation; when her homestay mother was abruptly sick, Whitney promptly looked for whom to contact and arranged a call so that the mother could go to a hospital

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<sup>27</sup> The ENTRY Program is a free series of classes that helps newcomers with their English skills and with adjusting to life in Manitoba. Newly arrived immigrants should participate in the ENTRY Program as soon as they can after arriving in Winnipeg. Please refer to the web site, <http://www2.immigratemanitoba.com/browse>.

without hesitation. This positive experience confirmed for her the practical benefits of immigrant service programs.

While taking an EAL course, Whitney took a two week workshop program designed for immigrant professionals in engineering offered through an immigrant service agency. The homestay mother had a personal network in the immigrant service program, and encouraged Whitney to take the program. The program was designed to help immigrants who have professional backgrounds in engineering.<sup>28</sup> She learnt how to write a resume, how to dress for the workplace, what to do and what not to do in terms of Canadian workplace cultures and mock interviews, which were different from those in Korea. She commented how helpful the practical information was:

I just thought the workshop would be a language learning opportunity. However, I experienced a great success. First of all, my resume was totally changed into a Canadian style. My first resume was a completely Korean style which was not applicable to the Canadian labour market. They told me that lots of companies in Manitoba accept only the appropriate forms of resumes which the service centre exactly teaches. On the cover letter, I also wrote, "I am a Korean, and I am new to Canada as I have been in Canada only for a couple of months..." to inform about me. But they told me that the information is not important at all to employers, so I should write professionally and formally to reach my goal. I realized that a resume is the very first impression for an applicant so it should not only be written appropriately but also not be sent carelessly. (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 2009)

As for her emphasis on the importance of how to write a resume, it is interesting to compare this with Charles's perceptions. Charles fundamentally perceived that although language facility and the appropriate ways of writing resumes were important for the integration of a highly skilled immigrant, the most important requirement was his

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<sup>28</sup> Whitney was willing to share the program she took, with others: Success Skills Centre. Success Skills Centre is a community-based, not-for-profit organization, dedicated to recognizing and promoting the skills, education and experience of immigrant professionals and skilled workers in the Canadian labour market. They provide employment preparation series, occupational training, mentorship programs, and employer partnerships. Please refer to the web site for more information, <http://www.successskills.mb.ca>.

skills and knowledge in that profession. In fact, evidencing his belief, he had many job interview opportunities despite the resumes he sent written in a traditional Korean style. Meanwhile, Whitney experienced success through the immigrant service program, so she believed that writing resumes or cover letters in a locally appropriate way was a critical aspect for immigrant professionals' successful integration into their professions.

It is important to note that Whitney's path of language learning and re-entry to her profession seemed peaceful, but it was a process of struggle as well. Her data revealed an interesting controversy in terms of how highly skilled Korean immigrants get into their professions in Canada. She was caught between the conflicting ideas of the immigrant service centre (the homestay family) and the Korean immigrant community. As described before, many Korean immigrants who believed that they would get a job through education in Canada, recommended Whitney to take education at postsecondary schools. Due to the widespread belief among Korean immigrants, "no job in Canada without education in Canada," she was confused. She relied on the service centre's advice, which was that she did not need to get a Canadian education because her skills were in engineering CAD programs which are in need in Canada. As mentioned in the previous chapter, her expertise belonged to the high demand occupations the Manitoba government reported. Recognizing her skills as one of the highest demand occupations, Whitney was likely to believe the governmental reports. However, she was always uncertain until her employment:

Because of the different advice, I had been anxious until I was offered a job interview. I was not sure which way would be working...I planned to study if I failed to get a job until December. But the result tells me that they were right. I was hired, and all the Korean immigrants who I know were all surprised. They said my case was extremely rare. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

Many Koreans rarely believe in the benefits of immigrant service programs. When I was taking the workshop, some Koreans said, “Why are you taking it which will be of no use?” Actually there were no other Korean immigrants in the workshop. However, when I am involved in any immigrant program, I think it is language learning as a second language user. As an immigrant who is living alone, I need to know about all practical information regarding not only career but also overall living. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

Determining the most appropriate approach depends on the context. Whitney’s case suggested that for her, the immigrant service program’s advice worked better than the guidance she received from the Korean immigrants’ community. Certainly, the Korean immigrants’ belief was created by their own experiences or observations of many other cases. In this study, Charles also chose the education approach to get into a workplace, which resulted in a success as well. According to Whitney’s understanding, however, there were two types of Korean immigrants: some who ignore or are not aware of the importance and usefulness of the service programs, and some who have no idea about how to access the immigrant service programs. Reinforced by her successful experience, Whitney believed taking advantage of a variety of immigrant programs would be hugely beneficial to new immigrants.

In addition to her homestay living and social networks, Whitney also attended institutional language programs continuously. Her institutional language learning experiences after migration consisted of a full time course and part time courses. The full time EAL course she took at first did not satisfy her expectations because of its perceived lack of structure and inefficiency. In particular, she pointed out the limitations of small group talking activities or discussions which EAL instructors frequently assigned the students. Whitney realized that the students’ proficiency levels were similar, and thus, she did not gain opportunities to learn advanced vocabulary, expressions or accurate

pronunciation. In addition, the full time program was not scheduled tightly, so she frequently felt the classes were a waste of time. Part time courses, which she was taking during our interview sessions, however, were more satisfactory in her opinion because of time efficiency, usefulness for her workplace practice (e.g., writing a memo or emails), its focus on the target areas such as writing or pronunciation, and a more intensive and strict classroom atmosphere which encouraged her to work harder; strong commitments and motivation were very important to Whitney. She felt intensive part time EAL courses were more helpful, especially for immigrant professionals like her.

In summary, Whitney's particular situations such as homestay, involved broad opportunities to interact with native speakers in the mainstream and to build solid personal networks. Her language learning and her path to enter her profession were also through personal networks and immigrant service programs. Unlike the assumption shared by some Korean immigrants she interacted with, she quickly integrated into her profession without education in Canada. Her data also revealed how to access resources and information available to immigrants was an important issue. Her personal networks in the mainstream appeared to be a critical factor for her successful integration as well as access to information and recourses, combined with the socio-economic situation where her skills were in high demand in the labour market.

### ***Summary and Discussion***

In this chapter, I have explored the language learning experiences of the three participants, which eventually characterized their particular paths to integration in their professions in Canada by examining their voices and perspectives reflected in their interviews and documents as evidence. The data discussed in this chapter has revealed

that first of all, language appeared as an important issue for the highly skilled Korean immigrants, and their language learning was an apparent investment in accessing their target workplace communities. In Norton's (1997) terms, investment is a learner's commitments to learning as well as motivation. Learners expect to be rewarded as a result of their learning of language. Evidently, language learning was an investment as well as a tangible participation in a learning community to all the participants, with the aim of reaching their imagined workplace communities. Their goals, the integrity to their target imagined communities, stimulated the participants to be dedicated to learning English.

Second, this chapter has demonstrated that there were multiple ways of language learning or integration into a target profession based on the participants' personal histories, beliefs, specific situations, and the nature of the target profession. The participants showed three distinguished approaches, the institutionally structured process approach by Lily, the education approach by Charles, and the networking and immigrant service program approach by Whitney. Their differing journeys suggest that different L2 learners have different needs, dispositions, personalities, histories, and more importantly, different contextual situations. Learners' different target professions also largely characterize their differing needs, focuses and approaches in language learning. As I noted in the previous chapter, there is a discernible aspect between public sectors and private sectors. Nursing, whose credentials and supply are controlled by the regulatory body, and private companies, whose pursuits lie in making profits show different processes and requirements for the integration of immigrant professionals.

As indicated at the outset, this study is fundamentally espoused by the sociocultural perspectives which emphasize contextual factors. That is, language learning involves a variety of social, cultural, economic, and political activities and participations, rather than an individual, cognitive and decontextualized activity. This chapter has demonstrated that all the participants actively engaged in actual communities of learning, ranging from government settlement programs to university. Gee (1990) has claimed that the way we acquire any language or discourse is through membership in discourse groups. Their membership in their learning community involved everyday social interactions and participation in social activities, which truly helped them to gain competence in the group discourses, as the sociocultural perspectives in SLA inform. On the other hand, however, some participants' experiences tell us that attaining competence in academic discourses did not guarantee competence in workplace discourses due to a big gap between academic/classroom language and practical vocational languages, implying future challenges they encountered after they entered a workplace. This suggests that immigrant professionals' learning opportunities should extend to real workplace settings rather than learning in classrooms depending on their temporal needs.

This chapter has also identified two important themes that emerged: the relationship between L2 learning and identity among immigrant L2 learners, and the necessities for immigrant professionals to get into a target workplace. In the following passage, I discuss the two themes in detail.

### ***Language Learning & Identity***

Akin to many studies which attest to the close relationship between L2 learning and learners' identity (Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003), the study

participants' identities were fundamentally challenged and negotiated while learning English. In fact, Lily and Charles's experiences clearly evidenced this aspect. For Lily, language learning was an everyday practice of nervousness, anxiety, and uncertainty which confronted her already attained identity. The interplay of an L2 learner, a prospective RN in Canada, and a Korean head nurse took place simultaneously, forcing her to query whether her future images would be realized. However, the goal, participating in her target workplace community and living in Canada as a landed immigrant, forced her to undergo all the procedures and overcome adversities in result. As a wife and a mother of three children, who was thoroughly responsible for the family's migration, her multiple identities were reinforced and exercised. Simply, her strong goals and the integrity to her imagined workplace community shaped and crafted her identities in multiple and negotiable ways.

In addition, in consideration of nonparticipation in classroom activities, Norton (1997) claims that a learner chooses non participation for the learner's integrity of his/her imagined community. Reversely, I suggest, Lily's case proves that a learner can be thoroughly engaged in learning when the goal of the learning or the learning community matches his/her imagined community. There has been little research on the issues regarding under what conditions a learner chooses participation or non participation. I suggest that Lily's experience can add an important aspect to the issues in SLA.

Similarly, Charles experienced status inconsistency which challenged his identity during his language learning. He struggled to maintain his position as a capable professional engineer in Canada and his integrity to his target profession refused to craft his social identity as a lower labour worker or a convenience store owner. He pursued his

Ph. D degree with the intention of reaching his goal by which he could sustain his social identity. Through Lily and Charles' experiences, this chapter confirms the relationship between social identity, which is influenced by personal desires and goals, and investment in learning, aligning with the findings by McKay and Wong (1996) and Norton -Peirce (1995).

### ***Language Proficiency or Skills***

In this section I discuss another recurrent theme, which may render practical information and implications for highly skilled immigrants: what are the necessities for highly skilled immigrants to integrate into their chosen professions in Canada? As shown, all the participants eventually got into their professions successfully. Their successful integration was inseparable from the macro socio-economic and political conditions where their professions were within high demand occupations in Manitoba. However, they commonly attributed their successful integration to their language facility appropriate to their target workplace or/and their professional skills, knowledge, and previous experiences, simply put, language or skills.

They all perceived the interconnected relationship between language learning and their professional integration. Without basic communication skills, they could not handle even job interviews, let alone the job search. Although each participant perceived differently to what extent language proficiency was required depending on their profession and job descriptions, language appeared as the most important contributor to gaining a job. Charles commented that a job seeker should interpret a job posting and the descriptions precisely when he was looking for an appropriate job. Understanding the

intention of the recruitment and the employer was a key to getting a job. Comprehension of the job posting inherently demands language facility related to their profession.

With regard to language, there were a couple of important factors which affected the participants' professional integration. Whitney emphasized the critical role of personal networks in terms of access to relevant information and resources, and actual connection to employment opportunities through them. According to her, maintaining solid, reliable personal networks required communication skills, an easy-going personality, and covert and overt efforts to get along with each other. Indeed her solid personal network was the result of her mental and material investment. Charles also emphasized this aspect:

In Korea, public job postings which take place yearly are the typical way to recruit employees. Here it's different. I realized that networking is a critical factor when you look for a job. Without any networks, it would be almost impossible. You have to make networks [to access all the information and job opportunities]. In this respect, networking is the most important. (Charles Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Interview skills, which involve a certain level of communication skills and awareness of Canadian cultures, appeared as an important contributor to the participants' employment. *Showing and telling* one's abilities and assurances at a given short interview time was a vital factor, which is also interlaced with one's personality:

In job interviews, you should present confidence and assurance of your ability. For my interview, I thought that I would have to *show my ability by telling something regarding my work*. Thus, I said, "A company or workers in the company should satisfy customers and their needs, no matter what work the company does. I am experienced in making customers satisfied and happy, so I am very confident in the work." I felt the CEO was moved with my answer... Interview skills are important in order to come over a gate. Many Koreans seem reticent in showing their ability, with modesty, but it doesn't work in Canada. (Whitney Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

Charles accounted for the interview skills in relation to his personality:

Personalities are one of the most important things in getting a job. In Canada I was supposed to sell myself, my skills and capabilities. However, most Korean engineers would be the same: they perform nicely once work is given to them... I failed to give job interviewers confidence and assurance, so they gave up on me. The biggest hindrance must have been my personality. Introspectively, I do not look confident... I am sure that my personality has impeded me in getting many good chances and opportunities. (Charles Interview, II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Common to every participant, was the perceived significance of their professional skills, knowledge, and previous experiences. This aspect is further connected to their successful experiences in their workplace practices, as I will show later. Charles identified this factor as most important for helping highly skilled immigrants to re- enter their professions:

I still believe language comes later than skills or knowledge. At least in my profession of engineering, if someone has excellent background knowledge and experiences, he will be hired although his language proficiency is low. The employers who are professionals in a specific area intuitively know whom they need while screening resumes regardless of the ways of writing resumes. Companies look for somebody equipped with specific skills rather than applicants' English. (Charles Interview, II, Nov. 21, 2009)

I believe the professional knowledge which a workplace needs is the key in getting a job. If your professional background and knowledge fits a company's need, even English is not necessary. I have seen many Korean skilled immigrants get hired right after they migrated into Canada... for example, I saw a Korean immigrant who had worked for Hewlett Packard as a machine designer in Korea get hired at Hewlett Packard in Canada very quickly. (Charles Interview, I, Nov. 14, 2009)

Similarly, Whitney gave her greatest emphasis on skills for professional immigrants' successful integration into a workplace:

English is important any way. However, regarding how I got a job, it is certain that my background skills and experiences come very first as the main contributor. If the company had focused on English skills of an employee, they would not have hired me. They wanted specific skills which the company needed and which I have. I would say 60% of the success came from my previous skills and experiences, and networking and my communication skills comprise of 40% of the success. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

Lily, however, had a different perception. Lily believed English was the most influential factor in her professional integration, although her experiences and skills were another critical contributor. She also witnessed some Korean nurses quit the programs due to their limited language proficiency, and return to Korea, giving up their dreams. Lily suspected that these experiences were “all about English.”

The participants’ experiences demonstrated that differing professions require different levels of focus and abilities from potential immigrant employees depending on the nature and needs of their jobs. All the participants agreed that appropriate language facility and skills and previous experiences were the main contributors to their successful integration into their professions. Charles and Whitney who were involved in the engineering area attributed their success more to their previously attained skills, knowledge, and experiences in Korea. Lily, meanwhile, emphasized the proficiency of English over her skills. Depending on the nature of profession and the role or position of the job, the necessities show variability. The analyzed data also suggests that if the profession operates in public sectors and its integration is restricted by regulatory organizations, like the CRNM, a certain level of language facility may be strictly required. In the next chapter, I will discuss participants’ workplace experiences in terms of communities of practice, focusing on what challenges and successes they encountered and how they negotiated their identity and competence to attain full membership in their workplace communities.

	<b>Lily</b>	<b>Charles</b>	<b>Whitney</b>
<b>Language proficiency at arrival to Canada</b>	4-6 Canadian Language Benchmarks	Never tested in Canada	4-6 Canadian Language Benchmarks
<b>Features of language learning</b>	institution ESL/ENP/Refresher program	education -business information program at college -Ph. D program	-home stay -natural interactions -immigrant service programs (both language and profession)
<b>Goal of language learning</b>	To pass the RN exam and get into a workplace	To get into his profession	To get into her profession
<b>Challenges</b>	-oral English -differences between classroom language & real world language	-oral English -lack of information about how to get a job -differences between academic language and practical language	-speaking skills -different practices in job search & interviews -conflicting ideas between immigrant service program & Korean community
<b>Strategies</b>	-stick to the program -self trust	-high education -strong belief & positive mind -utilizing academic competence & writing skills	-utilizing personal networks -immigrant service programs
<b>Professional integration</b>	pass the RN exam and searched for a workplace	high education(Ph. D degree in the profession)	immigrant service program
<b>Main contributors to successful integration</b>	1. English (language facility) 2. skills & previous experience	1. professional knowledge & skills 2. language facility	1. professional knowledge & skills 2. personal network & language facility (appropriate resume, job interview, personality)

**Table 6.1: Participants' Language Learning Experiences in Relation to Professional Integration**

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Participating In a COP: Challenges and Negotiation of Competence and Identity**

#### *Introduction*

I have explored, thus far, the three participants' language learning experiences and their differing approaches to integration into their target professions in Canada. I have also described multiple factors, such as personality, personal experiences, surrounding situations, and the nature of the profession, which influenced their language learning journey and, thereafter, their re-entry stories. As demonstrated, all the participants successfully integrated into their target workplaces. The data has also shown how their imagined workplace communities were transformed into actual communities from virtual ones. Through this transformative shift, they began participating in a workplace community of practice, which involved a new phase of learning locally appropriate ways of speaking, thinking, and doing in the community, and subsequently attaining full membership in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

As outlined in Chapter Three, I take up the COP model to explain the process of attaining competence and full membership in a linguistically, culturally, and socially new workplace community. To reiterate the framework, competence means situated abilities in a given COP, and practice entails the negotiation of identities, in other words, the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context (Wenger, 1998). Influenced by poststructuralists' positions, I also take up the idea that identities are fluid over time and space, and thus, a site of struggles. The process of becoming a full member in a given COP, thus, involves struggles accompanied by complete power relations (Morita, 2004;

Wenger, 1998). In the process, an individual's human agency, and positionalities are also exerted and co-constructed by the individual and a local context.

In this chapter, I investigate what challenges the participants experienced in their workplace communities and how they negotiated them, and what successes they experienced in terms of the community of practice perspectives. Then, I examine how they attained fuller membership in the workplace community, focusing on the negotiation of their competence, identity, and surrounding contexts. Lastly, I extend my examination to exploring their sense of belonging to the workplace community as fundamental to building of any community, and their emerging imagined communities reflected on their future portraits. The findings are summarized at the end of this chapter in Table 7.1.

Interestingly, the participants identified common challenges, regardless of their differing professions and backgrounds. The main challenges were: 1) language issues: lack of oral communication skills, lack of grasp of the workplace language, different discourses and ways of speaking in a locally appropriate manner to their workplaces, and difficulties in understanding culturally embedded expressions, jokes, and small talk; 2) different workplace practices and systems that sometimes conflicted with their old habits attained in Korea, and multicultural environments; 3) identity issues and power relations. Despite those shared challenges, different participants used different strategies in negotiating the challenges. I highlight some important aspects of particular participants' experiences and compare their experiences to stress commonalities or differences.

***“Revealing the Inner Character”, Language, Power Relations, and  
Positionalities: Lily***

***Challenges***

According to Lily, the “English” language was the only thing she lacked at her

workplace, and her lack of English proficiency created all adversities. Perceiving her limited oral communication skills, she actually began working at a nursing home which demanded a lower level of language. However, she had to move to a general hospital with a full time position, which was required to apply for the status of immigration. Her position naturally involved increasing contacts with higher need patients and greater exposure to a wide variety of situations-- all of which posed particular challenges to Lily.

The main challenges she encountered were her limited oral communication skills and limited grasp of the workplace language. More specifically, they included her limited listening comprehension and speaking skills, and difficulties in interacting with patients and colleagues in the Canadian settings. She was frequently unable to comprehend others, and at a loss about what to say in diverse situations. She also felt difficulties in communicating with colleagues, patients, and patient guardians in an appropriate and fluent manner. To Lily, however, listening comprehension was the most fundamental skill, which she perceived she lacked most:

My English was too limited to do the overall work for a nurse. Practicing in the workplace is very different from in the classroom. The institutional language learning was helpful until I was searching for a job, but after that, it was of no help. They [the program or agency] thought that the nurses could get into a workplace after the program, but they [the agency] were wrong. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

I believe listening skills are the most important necessity in my profession. You must comprehend accurately what your patients, colleagues, and doctors have said. Without listening comprehension, you cannot practice properly. (Lily, Interview III, Dec.30, 2009)

Her position as an experienced nurse added complexity. She was expected to understand hospital discourses without problems, and perform at the same level of speaking fluency as other experienced nurses in the Canadian hospitals. The language she used was also

expected to be at the same professional level as her colleagues in order to be recognized as their equal. Functioning as an experienced nurse using an L2, however, was harder than what she expected.

There were some reasons Lily identified for her limited oral communication skills. First, although she learnt English in Canada, she had never been exposed to authentic and practical workplace settings in standardized Canadian contexts. Her language learning in Canada was limited to an institution following the prescribed process of being an RN, without opportunities to practice spoken English or practical workplace discourses. Classroom language was far different from practical workplace languages, suggesting that more broad and practical language training was necessary for internationally educated nurses to practice in a Canadian workplace:

Working in a hospital was entirely different from learning in the classroom. I couldn't speak properly in the workplace. I was a worker there, so I was not supposed to speak in a way I had done in the classroom as I was not a student any longer. I have to perform the approximate level of proficiency which other workers do, as I am a nurse employed. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

Second, how she learnt English in Korea largely accounted for her limited oral communication skills. Charles showed a similar concern as well because the two participants learnt English in the same educational system in Korea. Although she began studying English early (at the age of 12), the English education in Korea focused on reading, grammar, and writing because of the difficulty of accessing authentic resources and interaction with native speakers. In her CLB assessment, she showed high skills in reading and writing, but her listening and speaking skills scored low.

Due to the nature of her profession, her challenges stemming from her limited oral communication skills surfaced as struggles in her everyday practices. Patients and patient

guardians tended not to trust her, because of her speaking skills, pronunciation, and accent. They confirmed or double checked what she had said with other nurses, showing distrust. Some colleagues were reluctant to interact with her, and some were not patient listening to Lily. Her limited oral communication skills frequently hindered her recognition as an equal among other nurses. Her workplace life at the beginning was full of anxiety and insecurity:

The first year was extremely tough. I was always anxious, nervous, and constrained because of my limited understanding skills. “What is going to happen today? I didn’t understand again! Was it what they meant? Gosh, I caused trouble again. Work was delayed due to me. If I had not been there, the work would have gone through smoothly without any trouble.” (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

In addition, the different philosophical approach to nursing in Canada perplexed Lily. According to her, nursing involves every aspect of patients’ lives in Canada, so nurses supposedly function as *holistic facilitators* or *social workers*, while nursing in Korea focuses on curing the diseases that a patient has. The different approach was demanding in two ways. First, she was expected to demonstrate competence and language skills in areas beyond nursing. Second, she was required to understand standardized Canadian cultures and mentalities. The extensive involvement of nursing actually called for a variety of vocabulary, expressions, and contents as well as an understanding of cultures. The different approach also led to quite different practices in her workplace:

I was so surprised that there could be this much work. I had only learnt about nursing and disease in Korea, so I usually worked with diseases. But here in Canada, they take an overall point of view. A nurse’s job in Canada is overtly engaged in the overall life of a patient, so you have to deal with all the problems related to the patients. I also felt like a social worker. If a patient was poor and had no clothes, I needed to connect him/her with a social worker. If a patient was being abused or if his family member stole things such as a book from him, then I would have to report that. It’s my duty. You need to have the nursing skills, but

the hospital is a place where patients live. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

We also had confidential visitor “black lists” [the lists where those who are not allowed to contact patients are written] in Canada, but I had never been educated about it before. So, in the beginning, I was really tired, but now I began to realize that nursing is a very big responsibility. (Lily Interview III, Dec. 30, 2009)

Similarly, different practices between Korea and Canada were one of her main concerns. According to Lily, *familism* is central to Korea, so if a patient gets in a trouble and needs consultation, nurses generally contact his/her family members. Most responsibility falls on the patient’s family by Korean standards. Meanwhile, influenced by *individualism*, nurses in Canada should contact only legally approved people indicated on patient files. Private information such as patient history was also strictly confidential, so nurses could not access it:

I think the different practices in Canada are interlaced with language and culture. In Korea, it is easy to know all about a patient, for example, her past history, social position, and even family members’ jobs in a couple of day. As I shared the same culture and language, I could catch all the subtleties, implications of expressions, and embedded cultural backgrounds. I could identify even what a patient’s job was only by listening to her way of speaking. However, in Canada, I had no idea about patients due to my lack of understanding of Canadian cultures and mentalities. When I asked a simple question about what the patient did for a living, I got another question back, “why do you ask about that?” I was also not supposed to ask about patients’ private information. (Lily, Interview III, Dec. 30, 2009)

The above excerpt simply suggested that without work experience in Canadian contexts, it would be difficult for newcomers to understand the differences between professional contexts in Canada and in Korea. Lily tended to bring her old understandings to the new context. For example, she tried to help a nurse while on her own break time. Lily soon realized that she was not supposed to help because it was not her job. Her behavior caused misunderstandings with others, hindering her in gaining recognition as a competent member in the community. Each hospital also had different policies from one

another, which confused her whenever she moved into another hospital. Carrying the assumption that policies would be the same across hospitals could cause critical problems. For example, some drugs were allowed for certain patients in a hospital, while they were prohibited in other hospitals:

Following the workplace policies was hard for me. In Korea, we are provided with various opportunities to practice through a few month orientations so that we can accustom ourselves to the workplace and tasks. But, here, “You are an experienced nurse, so you carry out the work!” Then I had to desperately complete the given work by myself, frequently asking people in order to recognize what and how to do in a tactful way. It was the matter that I couldn’t say that I didn’t know how to do because I was not a rookie nurse. And I am also paid more. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

Repeatedly, Lily’s challenges appeared more multifaceted due to her combined position of an experienced worker and a newcomer who used an L2.

### ***Negotiation***

To Lily, overcoming the challenges was a survival issue, critically combined with her whole family’s future: “If I failed to survive in the workplace, my whole family and I had to return to Korea.” (Lily Interview I, Mar.20, 2009). Thus, she promptly attempted to improve her situation. At first she hired a tutor to improve her overall communication skills and information about standardized hospital workplace cultures in Canada.

However, she encountered frequent spontaneous interactions and unexpected circumstances every moment in her workplace. At this point, Lily employed another strategy. She began asking native speaking colleagues, whom she considered kind, to model what to say in each scenario, for example, phoning for a blood supply or speaking in the X-ray room. She wrote down all the language used by the colleagues for future use for her:

I was always carrying a notebook and wrote down what others said. When I had to phone, I asked others to model it. I always requested others, ‘Please you do first

because English is my second language. If you show me what to say, I will try next time.' After listening to it [the modeling], I wrote down it on my note, realizing that oh, that's how you speak in an X-ray room! I wrote down even a particle, then studied at home and practiced on phoning next time. I also caught the situations or atmospheres relying on a quick wit or sense. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

The same rule was applied to new policies and different practices; she first explained her situation as an L2 user and a newcomer in the workplace to others, asked about new policies, and then memorized them for her next practice. Taking up her identity as an L2 user and a newcomer, she made efforts to acquire the workplace language and culture. She remembered it took approximately two years to feel comfortable with the workplace language.

However, the process of attaining competence in the workplace was not a linear peaceful process. Rather, Lily's experiences were full of struggles and power relations, which involved continuous negotiation of her identity, human agency and positionality. The LPP (Legitimate Peripheral Participation) model suggests a newcomer learns with old timers' help, although the process sometimes entails struggles (Wenger, 1998). In Lily's case, old timers were not always presumed to help or mentor newcomers. Due to her ambivalent position of an experienced nurse and a newcomer as an L2 user, old timers' attitudes were different from one another, making her situation complex:

I: Did your colleagues help you when you ask them of help?

Lily: Not all. First, I targeted a person in order to ask a favour for modeling. If I decided to target the person, I had to treat her well, helping her a lot. I did a lot of skillful work for her. Then, I told her that I needed help [as an L2 user] and asked her to help me. Even to a clerk, I begged for help. Usually white workers who were native speakers were targeted. (Lily Interview I, Mar. 20, 2009)

Lily was competent at skills, and thus she negotiated her skills with other colleagues' linguistic competence. When mutual trust was built, she got help from other members.

The LPP process in Lily's case was co-constructed in locally situated conditions or relations: exchange of competences between two experts.

In particular, Lily's limited oral communication skills surfaced as struggles in her everyday practices, involving power relations. Her limited language facility was often taken advantage of by other members. For example, health aids did not listen to Lily or pretended not to comprehend what she said, picking on her pronunciation and her accent. At the beginning, Lily performed the health aids' tasks, unaware of what a health aid's tasks were, but she finally realized that "I was doing the health aid's job, but my health aid never let me know that it was hers" (Lily Interview, II, Apr.1, 2009). Indeed, the situation confronted the overt power relations which characterize the workplace and Lily's identity as a 'Registered Nurse' simultaneously. She also realized that her oral communication skills surfaced whenever any trouble in work happened. Some nurses blamed her, saying "Because of Lily... her pronunciation", and "That's what you meant?" The irony was that despite that Lily was developing her competence in the workplace language and practices, *people's perception of her language* did not change, frequently positioning her as an incompetent, disadvantaged and trouble making member of the community. At this disjuncture, Lily clearly apprehended that language issues, her pronunciation or accent were not the central issue but a hidden expression of exclusion for some colleagues. There was a language issue on the surface, but at the core was a power relationship where other colleagues placed her in an inferior status or exclusion. One day, a serious happening took place, exhibiting what lay beneath:

I was caring for a patient whose nurse was on a 30-minute break. The patient guardian complained that the patient's arm was aching, once. I just followed the prescribed directions. But he complained again, so I went to the charge nurse asking whether I had to report the patient to a doctor. The charge nurse said I

didn't need to. So I explained to the patient guardian about what medicine was being injected...

Then he started threatening me, saying that he would report me to the hospital and the CRNM in order to suspend my license. Doctors showed up but they would not listen to me. The terrible thing was that the charge nurse denied what she had said. She said, "That was what you said? I didn't understand you." The nurse was trying to escape from the trouble. I was really upset about her attitude. It was a clear situation and a simple sentence "Do we have to report the patient to a doctor since the guardian is complaining?" How could I not say such a simple sentence? I had been working for almost 2 years. Having seen the situation which was disadvantageous to me, I felt, something bad would happen, so I started writing about what happened on the day.

The patient guardian actually reported me by writing to everyone [the CRNM, and the head quarter of the hospital]. The manager called me and showed me the complaint letter. The important thing was that he just wrote about his assumptions, which were not facts. Just subjective assumptions! But I wrote objectively, regarding only what really happened, every minute, every second, using quotations. I wrote in such a way: the guardian said "...", I said, "...". I showed my report to the manager and sent it to everyone as well.

The main issue was language, and my accent. People took advantage of my accent, positioning me in trouble. Fortunately, I had a witness. If I had not done what I did, I am sure that I would have been fired. I saw some Korean nurses being fired because they reacted as they had done in Korea, assuming that their intentions and goodwill would be understood by others. Due to the Korean people's characteristics...But they should've responded to any situation actively. (Lily Interview II, Apr. 1, 2009)

The occurrence affected her significantly. She was forced to change her identity by which she started claiming her full membership as a recognized experienced nurse in the workplace. She refused to be attached to essentialized images of a linguistically low competent member in the workplace. She began positioning herself as a linguistically and culturally competent nurse, and exercised her strong agency, which resulted in an emergence of a new power relation between her and her coworkers, and others' recognition of her in the workplace. Other nurses never brought up her language or accent since the event. Lily's strong agency created a new phase where she could feel

herself equal to other nurses. Lily also adopted a new strategy, which was having a witness when an important message regarding work was communicated among colleagues: “If there is nobody there, I would call a person over to listen.” (Lily Interview II, April 1, 2009) To help aid, Lily employed a new way of speaking, “use simple, overt, and direct words rather than polite, subtle, and complex sentences.” She experienced the strategies worked successfully. The incident clearly showed the cross section where conflicting power relations and language issues were intertwined, and the nature of struggles involved in a COP, the process where a newcomer attains full membership. Lily’s agency was also engaged in multiple ways as she interacted with the workplace surrounding her. Lily emphasized the importance of exerting one’s human agency when confronted with conflicts in a workplace:

Many Korean nurses tended to behave in a Korean style in such a serious situation, assuming that others would understand their innocence or that things would solve naturally in a positive way. However, it doesn’t work in Canada. “*Revealing the inner character*” was an essential part in negotiating any conflicts. You can practice a different aspect of you. Without that, you might be victimized. (Lily Interview II, Apr. 1, 2009)

Nonetheless, the contributors to attaining full membership were not limited to her active positioning and continuous identity negotiation. The main contributor she mentioned was her previous career and outstanding skills. Other contributors included upgrading professional qualifications, efforts, and diligence. To upgrade her qualifications, Lily invested in completing two certificates on Nephrology and Home – Dialysis. Upgrading her qualifications was a good way to compensate for her limited language skills and to claim her full membership. All these “abilities” and “efforts” assisted others in recognizing her contribution, her existence, and her voice in the workplace:

The career is important too. For me, I was lucky thanks to my past career. Although I could not speak well, there was a need for experienced nurses, so I was hired quickly. I was competent in skill performances since I was skilful in dealing with all the facilities in the hospitals. The unique feature of diligence of Koreans was a great contributor as well. (Lily Interview II, Apr. 1, 2009)

Now, nobody picks on my language skills. If I don't understand others nowadays, I just ask them if they can repeat it. In the past, if I didn't catch what someone else said, I used to feel very intimidated. However, these days, I say it very naturally, without hesitation, "Can you tell me again?" Due to my confidence, I can say this now. (Lily Interview I, March 20, 2009)

The [power] balance level between them and me became equal now. We are on an equal footing. I was in a lower level than them because of my insufficient language. I attained many higher qualities and practiced the high quality work which they did not hold and carry out, so the relationship became equivalent. Now, I still lack a bit of English, but people appreciate me due to my abilities. You must show both efforts and capacities. (Lily Interview II, Apr. 1, 2009)

In summary, Lily's challenges in her workplace were her limited oral communication skills, and different practices and policies generated by different approaches to her profession. All these aspects necessitated English competence as well as a strong sense of standardized Canadian hospital workplace practices and overall Canadian cultures and their mentalities. Adopting a couple of strategies, however, Lily overcame all the adversities with her skills, diligence, efforts, and strong dedication to her goal of being an immigrant with her family members. Her process to attain competence in the workplace showed the complicated interplay of language, power relations, identity, and positionalities. Negotiation of identities was an important aspect of her participation in the workplace, and more importantly, her positionalities were co-constructed by her and the surrounding contexts.

***Incorporating and Transforming Old Practices in the New COP: Charles Challenges***

Although Charles had attained BICS<sup>29</sup> as well as academic content or discourses in Canada before he entered a workplace, his challenges appeared similar to Lily's. They included his perceived limited oral communication skills, lack of understanding of culturally embedded language and jokes, new discourses and content in his job, and workplace systems and practices which were different from his previous workplaces in Korea. Language issues, however, were the persistently recurring theme as a major concern due to his lack of exposure to practical workplace discourses:

In the workplace, the issue which has shown up repeatedly was language. Language has always appeared as an issue after I began to work in this workplace. When I was studying, it was not an issue. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

As the excerpt described, Charles had never perceived his oral communication skills as a limitation until he entered the workplace. It would be helpful to briefly examine the reasons for his changed perception. First, his role as a student legitimized his learning of academic content and language as an L2 user, and seemed to alleviate any anxiety or nervousness in relation to language. Second, as a student he demonstrated competence in the academic community. His positive experiences, such as instructing at the university and participating in conferences, enhanced his competence and self esteem. Utilizing his strength in writing skills, he also managed a variety of situations where oral communication skills were required. For example, he handled conference presentations or instructions with preparation. Last, but more importantly, the environmental features of the academic community were influential. The community consisted of multicultural

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<sup>29</sup> The BICS stands for Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills referring to social, conversational language used for oral communication. Described as social language, this type of communication offers many cues to the listener and is context-embedded language. Usually it takes about two years for students from different linguistic backgrounds to comprehend context-embedded social language readily. Jim Cummins (1978) coined the term as a counterpart of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Cummins found that while most students learned sufficient English to engage in social communication in about two years, they typically needed five to seven years to acquire the type of language skills needed for successful participation in content classrooms.

members, non-Canadian born, non –native English speakers. Charles’ advisor, a gatekeeper of the community, was also an immigrant professor and shared Charles’s Asian background. All those environmental features presented him with psychological comfort and security, and actually helped him use and practice English without any constraints. Interacting with native speakers, especially native white people, has been a proven factor that creates language anxiety which seriously affects some learners’ second language use and practice negatively (see Horwitz, 2001; Von Worde, 1998; Woodrow, 2006). Charles’s case reversely evidenced that interacting with non native speakers, tended to help L2 learners in use and practice of English. In all these situations, his oral communication skills were not perceived as a challenge:

I never thought that language could be an issue like that. In the college I had lots of opportunities to speak in natural settings without anxiety. In the university, the majority of students were immigrants and foreigners who were not good at English. They were likely to learn from me because I was an instructor. Thus, language was not an issue in those periods. Here, in my workplace, however, I am supposed to perform highly advanced business English and encompass management skills through language, which I lack. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

His workplace community, however, challenged his secure perceptions. In the workplace his role was as an experienced worker and his position required him to perform fluent oral communication skills and highly advanced business language. He perceived his limited oral communication skills in a couple of ways: attending and reporting at meetings, discussing work relevant issues, talking on the phone, and conversing with colleagues with sophisticated socio-cultural skills. All those situations also engaged in spontaneous interactions, which he could not prepare for in advance. Similar to Lily, Charles emphasized that academic language was different from real workplace language:

Academic language is easier to me. But we don't use academic vocabulary at the workplace. If you attend a very formal presentation, you might be hearing a couple of academic words...but in my workplace, every conversation is spoken language. However, I didn't have enough opportunities to be exposed to that kind of practical language. I also often attend meetings with headquarter staff or directors. I report what I have done, and discuss issues emerged. In those meetings, I am supposed to use advanced business English as well. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Aware of his position as an experienced worker with a Ph. D., he sometimes regretted his speaking skills at meetings or when he was asked to explain his work using easy spoken language. Making people comprehend by using spoken language was difficult for him.

It was also noteworthy that his perceived limited *speaking* skills were multifaceted. The analyzed data revealed that the participating members of the workplace were important to his perception. Unlike the academic community, the majority of his workplace consisted of white native speakers; actually his workplace was 95% white, which made him feel uncomfortable. His psycho-linguistic affect was evidently related to how he perceived his speaking skills in the workplace:

Most colleagues and workers in the workplace are white. I admit that I feel most uncomfortable when I interact with *white native speakers*. I feel naturally under pressure. I wish I had lots of Asian colleagues in my workplace. Everything is centered on the white people here. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

In the same vein, his limited understanding of culturally embedded jokes and expressions, and soft social skills in interactions with coworkers also challenged him. He sometimes faced struggles with his lack of soft conversation skills and his mismatch with local behavioral expectations:

In the morning at the office, people often make jokes. The pleasant conversation should go back and forth promptly, but I cannot keep up the conversation. I miss the whole rhythm of the discussion, sometimes my dialogue is not appropriate, and other times I have no idea what they are talking about... Specifically when people make jokes, I cannot understand. Jokes spring up abruptly during meetings, and then I get embarrassed. They even ask me whether I am agreeable...then I

just laugh without answering. [How ridiculous the situation is!]. This limited my social opportunities. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Sharing jokes and laughs tends to create a sense of solidarity among the members in a workplace community. His inability to make jokes or participate in soft conversations in an appropriate way created conflict with his social life and identity. His social parameters became limited and he sometimes felt alienated in the workplace. He worried about being perceived as serious, taciturn, and unsociable, which did not match his self portrait at all.

New content discourses and knowledge of his workplace were an unexpected difficulty for his first year in the workplace. His engineering background was essential for his job, but the overall context of the workplace was situated in drug manufacturing which he had never experienced before:

I thought I could handle it well although my background was not the best fit for the company. But it was hard...it is a drug company, so the content language involves pharmaceuticals and chemical areas with which I was not familiar. I had to study the new contents and discourses by myself. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

I registered for a membership in the Pharmaceutical Engineering Society. I began to receive journals through the membership, and I read lots of papers relevant to my work. I also tried to connect my knowledge [engineering] with the new knowledge [pharmaceuticals]. In fact, there were lots of things I could connect with my background knowledge. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

To Charles, this challenge was not serious because he was confident about his abilities to learn new knowledge. Charles appreciated his experience of studying at the university as an important contributor to his successful adjustment. His flexibility and adaptation skills within similar professions would be another necessity for immigrant professionals' success in workplaces, since any best fit workplace was not often guaranteed.

Adapting to different workplace practices was another theme for Charles, similar

to Lily. This challenge originated from the differences in workplace cultures, mentalities, and systems between Korea and Canada. He realized that the philosophies regarding workplaces in Canada were quite different from those of Korea. Employees in Korea are encouraged to take pride and feel ownership in the company, which is called *Ae-sa-shim*, no matter what their position. Workers are inspired to collectively imagine that they are contributing to their nation's economic prosperity, through participating in the workplace. Collectivism is actually embedded in every workplace practice. In the Canadian workplace, he identified individualism as fundamental, so every worker cares about his/her own work and interest rather than the whole workplace's future:

In Korea, I always imagined that my work was not limited to the bounded, substantial work I was doing. Rather, my work was connected to the security for my nation, the government policies, and international dynamics. I always thought I participated in the big picture. That kind of mind was disseminated in Korean workplaces. In Canada, however, you just work what is required in a given time. That's all. You satisfy the job descriptions. You don't need to overwork. It is not your business to think about the company's future. Thus, if you maintain and practice the Korean mind in Canada, you feel troubled. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Unaware of the differences, he actually faced troubles in carrying out his old habits. He worked hard, staying late every night *for the sake of the company*, but other workers considered his manner strange or awkward. When he tried to work more, he was discouraged as others had to work more due to his initiative. In addition, his desire for achievements in work often confronted the workplace system whose procedures were too slow and inefficient. Innovatory changes in the workplace seemed to be hardly realized due to unnecessary procedures which hindered quick decisions:

All the procedures take too long here. For example, if I submit proposals, it takes at least 3 months to be signed, although they are very simple. It is hard for me to wait for the final signature. Everything is delayed due to the unnecessary procedures. I try to initiate some changes, for example, changes in designs, but

they involve others' help. Without their help, we cannot make any change. I long for some developments rather than following given designs, rules or fixed standardized procedures. But it takes too long and requires engagement from lots of people such as production teams or validation teams. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

He inevitably negotiated to embrace the standardized rules and practices, which most workplace members took for granted. Nonetheless, Charles believed that following the existing workplace practices was not necessarily the best, and different viewpoints and different ways of doing things should be incorporated into the old systems positively.

### *Negotiation*

In terms of a COP perspective, Charles's participation in the workplace community entailed a process of learning as well as attaining full membership, and the process also involved struggles and constant negotiations. Unlike Lily, however, Charles's challenges did not overtly surface in his workplace and his struggles remained internal without involving any tangible power relations. The main reason for the difference seemed to be his particular workplace tasks, situations and his privileged position. To illustrate, the first work given to him was to analyze data about the stability and quality of the products and report it to the Food and Drug Administration, the regulatory organization. The company had never done the work before, and Charles was hired for that reason. In charge of the work he had nobody who could help or manage him:

It was a really tough time for me to adjust. I was desperate to perform the work. I worked out almost everything by myself through studying manuals or specs because I was thoroughly in charge of the mission. There was no weekend for me. During weekdays, I worked until 11 p.m. and for almost one year, I lived that way. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

He could not gain any help from more experienced members, so he had to make more

efforts, but the situation made him feel independent, secure, and motivated. Although it was a struggle, his struggle remained unnoticeable to others.<sup>30</sup> Charles evaluated the situation as more affirmative than detrimental.

There was nobody who knew about the work. Those who had been involved were already transferred to other departments, and what the former workers could do was giving me the history of data. I was the only Ph. D. holder in the company. Reporting work involved advanced writing skills, and the analysis should look academic and professional, which I felt competent to do. I was not in the situation where ex-workers or other colleagues could point out my lack of knowledge or inabilities, because I worked by myself. Due to the situation, I was much less stressed. My lack of knowledge was rarely exposed to others. This made me feel comfortable and more dedicated. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Charles finished his first mission successfully and gained recognition in the workplace. The success was the result not only of his internal capabilities or qualifications (such as his thorough investment, diligence, competence in writing skills and educational background), but also of the environment where he could perform without stress from other workers or old-timers.

Charles also attempted to negotiate his limited speaking skills. The natural strategy he employed was to take advantage of his competence in writing skills as a supplement. His work entailed mainly “formal, professional, technical and prompt” writings; actually 70% of his work engaged in writings while 30% involved oral communications. He tended to avoid situations where he had to perform orally, but rather, he used written communication methods. For example, he sent emails rather than make phone calls if possible. Charles acknowledged his writing skills in his work:

I phoned directors in the headquarter office directly a couple of times at the beginning, but now I email them. They also ask me questions by email rather than

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<sup>30</sup> Charles’s experience was quite different from Lily’s because her struggles were revealed in her everyday concurrent interactions with various types of people in her workplace, for example, patients, health care aids, and nurses etc. Charles’s struggles and negotiations were thoroughly managed by himself unnoticeable to other members while he was gaining recognition in his workplace.

by phone. I have thought that I would have been at a great disadvantage if my writing skills had not been good enough to do the work. My writing has been really helpful so far. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Utilizing visuals or power points was also a successful strategy for Charles. He prepared and used lots of visuals when he reported and presented at meetings. Although it started as a compensation strategy to alleviate his limited speaking skills, he experienced its positive effects. Using visuals and power points produced quick and clear comprehension of his reports and messages from his audience so that he worked more efficiently. He also witnessed how effective concise documents were rather than relying only on verbal reports. Documenting provided clarity and accuracy. Intriguingly, the practice seemed to be informally adopted as a new practice in Charles's area. Charles's experience was important because it suggested a community of practices is not fixed, but rather, it can be changed, negotiated, and co-constructed by newcomers. However, language issues still remained as the main concern for Charles. His desire exceeded his actual proficiency, and the gap between his current proficiency and his desired proficiency created inner conflicts. The reason why he perceived his oral communication skills seriously was his clear understanding of his role and the role of language in the workplace:

I have not experienced anybody who has ignored or looked down upon me due to my English or my accent in my workplace. But I feel sorry for them because it would have been much better if I had been able to explain and make them comprehend in a clear way. I understand that what they want from me is my professional knowledge and ideas in relation to my work. That would be the only thing they want to hear from me, who has an accent and is not good at pronunciation. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Charles also actively participated in the workplace practices which featured the community in order to gain competence. He took all workshops or training programs to gain new knowledge, disciplines and locally appropriate practices for the workplace. He

attained 60 certificates, ranging from engineering and pharmaceuticals to business writing.<sup>31</sup> His data simply confirmed Lave and Wenger's (1998) insight that learning takes place through participation in a variety of activities in a given community of practices.

Maintaining to some extent his philosophy, habits, and identity in the new workplace was an important aspect for Charles. Although he encountered conflicts in carrying out his old habits/beliefs in his new workplace, his positive attitude sometimes resulted in success:

Despite the hard work, I volunteer to do it if everybody else is reluctant to do the work. The ultimate goal is getting everything done in the workplace. I am willing to help my supervisor in even typing or making a power point...as all these are relevant to my work. I have been sustaining the philosophy since I lived in Korea. If you think in a negative way, everybody around you is affected. Those people tend to keep thinking negatively and give up before starting or doing the work. They also invest themselves only when everything looks obviously successful. But I am different. I persevere and then believe that it naturally ends in good results regardless of whether you actually start or not. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

As he illustrated, an employee's work in Canada seems to be done if he satisfies the job description. However, Charles applied his personal beliefs or his desire to the new Canadian workplace environment. His persistence received recognition from others, and his position became solid and secure:

The results are that I have had the highest evaluation score on personal efficiency rating by supervisors every year. The attitude I have is that I just do it in order to get the work done. I practice the positive attitude which I had had since in Korea in my current workplace. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

In the same vein, sustaining his ethnic identity was an important theme for Charles. (Whitney also showed the same theme, as I will show soon.) Facing the different

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<sup>31</sup> Recently, he attained professional engineer membership from the APEGM (Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba) and at our interview periods, he was pursuing an engineering membership from the U.S. He also thought of taking an MBA program to prepare for his future.

workplace environment where the majority was white, he maintained his ethnic identity and even practiced Korean etiquette to other members, while he made efforts to understand differences. As an illustration, he bowed to any elderly person as a manner to show his respect:

I believe maintaining Korean identities would be better than following others in Canada. My belief is simply “the most local, the most global”. I do bow to any elderly person and call them in an honorific way in Canada, whether it is in the workplace or outside the workplace. My behavior is completely a Korean style. However, I also try to embrace diverse cultures with an inclusive and open mind. Understanding different cultures/people is a necessity in living and working in Canada. (Charles, Email, Nov. 26, 2009)

The above excerpt showed how he negotiated his multiple identities as a transnational migrant in the new Canadian workplace. In particular, Charles’ experiences offered that gaining competence in a different community of practices does not necessarily mean discarding one’s identity, old habits and previously attained practices, but rather continuous negotiation of conflicting identities between old practices and new practices.

In summary, Charles encountered challenges, such as his perceived limited oral communication skills and different workplace systems and practices. His particular position and workplace situations and his internal capabilities contributed to attaining his competence in the workplace. While he tried to embrace the new community of practices, his negotiation involved incorporating his beliefs and habits in the new workplace and sustaining his identity.

### ***Embracing the New COP and Negotiating Identities in a Multicultural Environment: Whitney***

#### ***Challenges***

Whitney’s workplace experience in Canada (less than 1 year) was relatively short compared to Lily and Charles (6 and 3.5 years), respectively. This feature implied some

limitations on a full description of the whole process of attaining competence in the workplace community. However, Whitney's experiences as a newcomer input vivid and emerging issues in this study, and multiple factors such as her personality, past histories, and her different workplace situations offered insights.

The challenges Whitney mentioned were her limited oral communication skills, especially speaking skills, which were needed in various formal and informal interactions in the workplace, different workplace cultures between Canada and Korea, and a difficulty in adapting to a multicultural environment which she never experienced in Korea. Oral communication skills and different workplace cultures were recurring themes shared by other participants. Unlike other participants, however, Whitney commented on a difficulty in dealing with multicultural members constituting the workplace community, due to their different perspectives and attitudes.

Whitney perceived her limited language facility, especially speaking skills, as a challenge in her workplace. However, according to her, her limited language facility had never surfaced in the workplace (similar to Charles's), and her current language proficiency did not cause any trouble in her practices. Simply, her limited language facility was not an obstacle for her in the workplace. Compared to other participants, her perception and positionality in regard to language appeared quite confident and different, although her language proficiency was not higher than others. I briefly examine the backgrounds of her particular perceptions. First of all, it is important that her perceived role as a *young newcomer* embraced the idea that her limited language skills and lack of cultural awareness should be reasonably accepted. Although she was hired as an experienced worker, she considered herself as a newcomer. She thought that she was in

the accepted process of adapting herself into the linguistically and culturally new environment. Second, she already demonstrated her competence in skills and gained recognition in her workplace, and her successful experience confirmed the idea that limited language facility was not an issue if work was done professionally. Due to the match between her skills and the workplace's needs, she could gain recognition in the workplace extraordinarily quickly:

There is another worker who can use the program. But, the difference between him and me is that he has studied the program by himself through trials and errors while I learnt it in an authentic way and I am experienced extensively in practices as well as manuals. He made efforts to manage the work, but his way was not authentic, consuming time which was inefficient. In only one month, I finished the work which he had not completed for eight months. Of course, I really worked hard, dedicated to solving the problem. The result was a great success, and everybody was excited about the result. One day my reference called me and said, "Your CEO told me that you did a great job solving the long existing problem although you are not proficient at English." It was a compliment to my capability. (Whitney, Interview I, Dec. 27, 2009)

During our interviews, she actually foregrounded her identity as an experienced CAD technician whose contribution was significant to the workplace. Lily and Charles did not attain their recognition within that short period, although they were all experienced professionals. Whitney's quick attainment of competence in the community affected how she positioned herself and how she perceived her language facility in the workplace. Third, she was equipped with basic general communication skills, so her language did not hinder interactions with other members in the workplace. According to her, her workplace tasks engaged largely in skills and professional knowledge (60%), and in language facility (40%), which meant, her language functioned properly in the workplace. In addition, different from Charles, Whitney did not suffer from uneasiness or anxiety when she interacted with white native speakers, who were dominant in her workplace

community. Her experience with the homestay family was influential. Due to her frequent exposure to Canadian born-native speakers in a variety of natural settings, she did not feel any psychological restraints in her use and practice of English while interacting with native speakers in the workplace. Last, Whitney pinpointed that other members in the workplace also made efforts to understand her so that her limited language facility did not surface. Although her competence in skills made the positive atmosphere possible, mutual efforts of interlocutors were essential parts in communicating in a community, which she experienced:

If you are accustomed to one another and their way of speaking, it seems that there is no big communication problem among them. What I felt working with my supervisor for two months is that he quickly understands whatever I try to express. Even though I speak in Konglish (Korean styled English), he understands me in English. It means that he is already accustomed to my way of speaking and expressing ideas, assuming that it is my style rather than my limited language facility. We share the same profession and related terms, manuals and specs together, so it is possible. Regarding my limited language, they just understand me. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2009)

As seen, her secure perception of her language was a product of multiple factors such as her position as a young newcomer as well as a competent professional, her basic communication skills, and mutual efforts in the workplace community.

Interestingly, nevertheless, Whitney still perceived her limited oral communication skills as a *dormant hindrance*, which would affect her future life in the workplace, rather than an existing barrier. Her limited speaking skills were often challenged in presentations, spontaneous interactions at meetings, and formal or informal discussions among supervisors, colleagues and clients. Those speech occasions entail more meaning negotiations, natural responses and decision making, requiring a socio-cultural understanding of how to react in a manner culturally appropriate to the moment.

Whitney often felt limitations in expressing her ideas and thoughts in a comprehensive way, using not Konglish (Korean styled English) but English. When her communication skills did not satisfy her intention as well as her professional position, her identity as an experienced worker was also disrupted. She desired to speak as a well educated and experienced professional, matching her identity, but the reality hindered her from matching her identity in a synchronized way. She tended to ignore this discrepancy, adopting the position of a new immigrant using an L2, but she thought her limited language facility could function as a hindrance in the future when she was not a newcomer any longer.

Similarly, participating in social communicative small talk and informal conversations in the workplace was a concern, similar to Charles. The conversational topics extended to any possible area not limited to her professional terms or what she was used to, and were also highly culturally embedded:

It is not easy for me to participate in small talk among coworkers because I am not familiar with culturally socially embedded expressions. For example, I kept covering a blanket on my knees while working because it was cold in the office. One day the CEO told me that I was like “Linus.” I had no idea about what Linus meant. Then he asked me, whether I knew “Charlie Brown.” Of course, I didn’t know what it was. I didn’t know how to react to him. Later, I became to know what all those words meant. “Linus” was a character who showed up in the Snoopy cartoon. On that day, however, I could not maintain the small talk. I am pretty clever in reading clues in atmospheres and good at guessing things because I have been interacting with native speakers continuously, but it is still challenging. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

Sensing difficulties when contributing to others’ conversations, she realized that her inability to participate in small talk might also disadvantage her position as a result. She thought her role in the community might be essentialized as partial membership rather than full membership. The prospective disadvantages she thought of were substantial

forms such as failures in promotions. This awareness was corroborated by a role model in her workplace:

I think I may not survive in the workplace only with my skills without enough proficiency of English, especially in terms of promotions. The managers and supervisors consist of White native speaking people in my workplace, while most technicians consist of multicultural people such as Asian immigrants. But there is an Asian manager whose case is extraordinary in the company. The reason he became a manager was that he immigrated in Canada at the age of 10, was educated here, so his English is almost a native speaker. Because of his English, he became a manager. He is treated equally as other White Canadians. It will take 10 to 20 years for me to reach his position. If I am not equipped with high level of language proficiency, I consider I will be discriminated against. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

Working in a multicultural environment was a major challenge which she had never expected. As the above excerpt indicated, her workplace consisted of approximately 10% multicultural immigrant workers, and the supervisors were mostly white while technicians were multicultural. Whitney as a technician was situated in various interactions with multicultural colleagues, and she felt difficulties in understanding their ways of thinking, speaking, and behaving:

There is an immigrant technician who is from AAA (a country in Europe). I have been often perplexed by her way of speaking and thinking. I have no idea about how to understand her. Her way of speaking always embeds her superiority to others for no reason. She speaks as if she made an order to others. I thought it's about her particular personality, but I realized that it is about cultural differences. She must have been grown up and educated that way in her country, but I cannot accept the way. Some Asian immigrants like Filipinos seem relatively easy to understand. But there are still things for me to try to understand. It's not an easy job, so I sometimes give up trying to understand them. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

Interestingly, Whitney considered Canadian born-white native speaking workers and their ways of speaking and behaving as standard. She mentioned, "Canada is their (white) country, I moved into Canada to live, so I have to accept and follow their ways." (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010). Because of her particular understanding of Canada

and the tangible power relation in the workplace where her supervisors were all white, she rendered them the ownership. Her understanding of multiculturalism, thus, seemed to be limited to interactions among diverse groups of immigrants.

Following different workplace cultures, though minor, was a challenge to Whitney. Like Charles, she was simply regarded as strange whenever she stayed at her workplace after her regular work time. Following the locally appropriate way sometimes confronted her identity. For example, calling a supervisor's name in the workplace was conventional in Canada, but it was nothing but an impolite, offensive practice in Korea, one she never imagined doing. What seemed to be language or culture related challenges on the surface were sometimes her challenges of constructing and reconciling her identities.

### ***Negotiation***

Regarding negotiation strategies in a new workplace environment, Whitney simply described, "Demonstrate skills required in your work, do you work professionally, and *don't tell, but show!*" Whitney thought this way would be the best, especially for immigrant professionals whose language proficiency was not equal to those of native speakers. She had a similar idea to Charles that one's competence in professional skills can compensate for his/her limited language facility. The effects of her significant contribution to the workplace through skills, however, were multifaceted. One unexpected result was that the higher her contribution to the workplace community was, the higher the expectations from the supervisors. At this point, Whitney openly explained the limitations of the program, although it disappointed them. She mentioned that too many idealized expectations for a newcomer were not helpful at all.

Meanwhile, Whitney attempted to adapt herself to the ways of speaking, thinking, and behaving others demonstrate in the workplace community, discarding her old habits. For example, at the beginning, she worked hard so that she could not even find time to go to the bathroom. Her diligence was rewarding but made her extremely tired. She realized that she was carrying out her old habit attained in Korea, rather than following the conventional practices most workers do in the given community. She began controlling her work habits “as other workers do” and fitting her behaviors to the community of practice.

Whitney ascribed her successful negotiation in the workplace to her flexible personality as well. She tried to resolve conflicts or challenges utilizing her personality that is “brave, strong, and clever in reading situational clues.” She also negotiated her multiple and sometimes ambivalent identities, for example, as a competent experienced worker and a young immigrant newcomer, appropriately over situations:

Still I think I am doing little lower work than what I had done in Korea. Consulting was the main job I did in Korea, but here I am a simple technician whose position is lower than that in Korea. But I never thought it is unfair since all the work is practiced and done in English which is not my first language. I still feel lucky that I am employed in less than a year of my migration. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

Maintaining her ethnic identity in a multicultural environment was an important theme to Whitney, identical to Charles. While trying to understand others who are different, she also maintained her ethnic identity as a Korean. She delivered the message that her cultural linguistic differences (or deficiencies) should be understood and respected as others’ are. Her ethnic identity also played a role of counterpart to challenge other multicultural members in subtle power relations:

I feel that it would be possible for me to be covertly or overtly ignored or excluded due to my limited language facility, especially when I am unable to fully participate in informal conversations with co-workers. But, I utilize my inner personality to overcome the intimidating situation, so I ignore any possible subtle exclusion, if any. I also expose my identity as a Korean. In my workplace, every worker writes on a birthday card when it is on a coworker's birthday. Of course, I write congratulating comments in English, but I also write some good words for the person in Korean. They are usually happy with the Korean language, some of them even asking me to write their names in Korean. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

The excerpt showed a cross section where all the issues such as language, power relations structured by linguistic and cultural competence, and identity construction were complicatedly intertwined in a multicultural community, which was seen in Lily's case similarly. Her negotiation strategy was to craft and practice her ethnic identity as a new Korean immigrant. Covertly or overtly, Whitney exercised her human agency and flexible positionalities in delicate power relations in the community.

Her investment in language learning nonetheless was an ongoing process since she identified her limited language facility as a prospective obstacle. During the period of our interviews, she was taking writing courses at an immigrant service centre, which she believed, had been helpful practically in writing emails, memos, and business letters. Sustaining personal networks with Canadian native-born speakers was an essential contributor to improve her English and to understand the Canadian workplace cultures. A great deal of support from her homestay family members guided her to deal with the conflicts encountered in her workplace in a manner consistent with Canadian styles. Whitney's data plentifully demonstrated such network functioned as mentoring whose help was significant, through her migration to her workplace practices.

In summary, through demonstrating her skills, Whitney gained competence and recognition in the workplace quickly. This positive experience confirmed that

professional skills constitute an essential part of participation in a workplace over other factors such as language. She also exerted her ethnic identity while dealing with multicultural environments and subtle power relations. However, she perceived her limited language facility as a prospective obstacle which could hinder her future in the workplace.

### ***Multiplicity of Identities and New Imagined Communities***

#### ***Sense of Belonging***

In terms of the COP model, Wenger (1998) clarifies that one's sense of belonging is an important dimension in any community involvement, which entails processes he refers to as engagement, alignment, and imagination (see the theoretical framework section in Chapter Two). He also contends that engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and build our identities, claiming "identity and practice are mirror images of each other" (p.149). As seen in the participants' experiences so far, all the participants actively engaged in the practices of their workplace communities as recognized members regardless of their differing challenges and negotiations. Their actual engagement in practices was critical to their sense of belonging to the workplace.

It is noteworthy that their sense of belonging to the workplace community was robustly supported along with their attainment of competence and recognition as equal in the community. To illustrate, for Lily, her sense of belonging was built mainly by her attainment of language competence. She came to be able to express her feelings, explain her situations, and so make herself understood. Others' understanding and recognition of her was achieved, and this provided her with a good relationship with colleagues.

Reciprocally, a good relationship with colleagues enhanced her sense of belonging to the

workplace, with security:

Having a job and practicing it is what makes me feel the sense of belonging [to this community]. It is really important to me, since the feeling makes me feel proud and sustain my social identity as a registered nurse in Canada, which the government officially recognized. I can claim my social position anywhere in Canada. (Lily Interview I, March 20, 2009)

And when my colleagues and I help each other without any problems, and those moments when they trust me and ask me a question. The relationships among colleagues are really important. My voice can also be heard in the workplace. The [power] balance level between them and me became equal now. (Lily Interview I, March 20, 2009)

In addition to engagement, what actually made them feel attached to the workplace communities was more practical and material. Their workplace ID cards, salaries, and all the benefits such as pensions and medical/personal insurance were all tangible signals which made them feel a sense of belonging to the given community. Actual engagement in everyday practices in the workplace community and tangible material benefits are inseparably connected, presenting members with a solid feeling of attachment to their workplace.

I: What makes you feel attached to the workplace community?

Charles: My ID, of course, and when I get salaries...Also I feel attached to the workplace when I have the benefits such as health insurance, life insurance...my family enjoys all the benefits. All these make me feel a sense of belonging to my workplace. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Their sense of belonging to a workplace was tremendously meaningful for all the participants, combined with their social identity, self esteem and self fulfillment, and their whole life. They were secured by the feeling that there is a place where they belong, and where they practice their human capital, so they contribute to this society. The feeling made them confirm and claim their social positions and social identities, which were all the participants' primary desire and expectation for their migration. For example,

both Lily and Whitney mentioned that outside the workplace, their IDs functioned as an emblem or shield which protected their social identity so that they were not looked down upon as *mere immigrants*, whose terms contain negative connotations such as menial work and inadequate English. Simply, they could claim their social identities as mainstream professionals:

I claim my position both within and outside my workplace. If somebody tends to look down upon me and shun my language, I clearly say, "I am a registered nurse who Canada officially recognized, and have been working for more than six years here. I am good at English, but I have an accent and my pronunciation is not perfect because English is my second language". If I say that I am an RN, others' attitudes quickly change. I feel happy that I have such a workplace. (Lily Interview, II, Apr.1, 2009)

There obviously exist social classes in terms of what you do in Canada. When I said that I was working for an engineering company to people including both Canadians and Koreans, their response was totally different from when I said I was a waitress at a sushi restaurant. The fact that I can sustain my social identity here which I used to have in Korea is really important for immigrants, let alone the benefits the workplace gives. You have to have a job to live in Canada. To me, the sense of belonging to the workplace is frequently reinforced outside the workplace. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

The analyzed data revealed that all the participants felt proud of the fact that they participated in the mainstream society as professionals which Canada recognized. Their sense of belonging was critical to sustain and claim their social identity both within and outside the workplace. Furthermore, they commonly felt that they were contributing to the society where they as well as their children were currently living.

### ***Multiple Identities and New Imagined Communities for the Future***

It is notable that the multiplicity and ambivalence of identities and feelings of belonging were commonly shared by all the participants, despite differing degrees. As I described in Chapter Three, poststructuralists claim that identities are multiple, fluid, and shift over time and space, and thus our identities are a site of struggles. Underpinned by

the notion, I also took up the multiplicity of imagined communities. Imagined communities take place in multiple levels, in micro levels and in macro levels. One's membership is layered in multiple ways and sometimes conflicting within themselves or between the individual and other "social ideologies or hegemonies" (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 247). The findings of this study evidenced a few important aspects of the nature of contesting multiple imagined communities and differing negotiations.

Showing contradiction, the participants' sense of belonging to their workplace community did not seem to transform into a sense of belonging to Canada, although their imagined communities were set up in multiple ways as Canada and a workplace community. The participants identified they are still Koreans, feeling that they belong to Korea rather than Canada regardless of their nationality (Charles was the only participant who had attained the citizenship of Canada). Although they felt attached to their workplace communities with pride, and recognized that they served the Canadian society, their memberships showed ambivalent pluralities. The reasons were multiple. According to Lily, she tried to be assimilated into the Canadian society, but she realized that there were differences between "them" and "us": her categorization was based on skin color and native language of English. She felt comfortable with interacting with the Korean community. For both Lily and Whitney, ethnic churches appeared as an enclave to sustain their identity and seek for mental consolation. To Charles, his life was to some extent isolated due to his limited social parameters, and his lack of involvement and participation seemed to be the main reason. His multiple ambivalent modes were well explained in the following excerpt:

As to me, I just go back and forth between the workplace and home. Due to that, I rarely feel that I belong to the Canadian society, while it's clear that I belong to

the workplace. It could be ambivalent...Canada means the place where I am living now. Technically I am neither living in nor working for Korea, although my mind directs towards Korea. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

Whitney also showed similar ambivalence, but she seemed to negotiate her multiple memberships:

I think I belong to both communities: the Canadian and Korean. However, I feel more comfortable with interacting with Korean people. When I was an international student in 2003, I did not interact with any Korean. But now, I am an immigrant who will live in Canada forever, and I am certainly a Korean. The Korean community also gave me lots of information and helps for my life. When I rent an apartment, the person who cosigned for me was a Korean not a Canadian. The Korean church also gave me mental peace and calm, so that I can sustain my identity. (Whitney Interview II, Jan. 1, 2010)

The analyzed data from the participants also evidenced the multiplicity of imagined communities and the appearance of a new imagined community. They all participated in their workplace community which they targeted with migration, but they were also conceiving of another target community at the time of the research. Their new target communities were evidenced through their future plans and their current investments. To Lily, she currently wanted to be a nurse educator whose job focuses on teaching, rather than primary nursing which had been her goal with her migration. She began imagining a nurse educator as her future portrait, and the educators' community was noted as her new imagined community. As demonstrated, the notion of imagined communities stimulates an individual to relate her visions of the future to her prevailing actions, involving an investment in learning. Actually she was taking an intensive care course for that reason. She also thought of taking a Master program as an investment to reach her new target community:

Teaching! A nurse Educator in the hospital! I want to reach that level of work. Many students come to the hospital [and the educators teach them]. It requires a career background, experience, it would be better if there was a Master's degree,

skillful communication in [various relating topics], and confidence... I keep considering the option of teaching. There are a great number of nurse educators at the hospital. If there is something that I do not know, I have to ask the educators to teach me. They do individual teaching and group teaching. They set up programs and plans. I am sure that I have an advantage in terms of my career, but... In this sense, I want to keep learning English, but I'm busy caring for my children. (Lily, Interview II, Apr.1, 2009)

Charles had complex future plans. A career as a professor already appeared as his target community, and he seemed to still hold the portrait as one possibility; as an adjunct professor, he already had one graduate student. He was also thinking of taking the Management Business Administration course as an investment to acquire management skills for preparation for his future. His ideas and imaginations were multiple, sometimes combined with his nostalgia to his previous career in Korea:

I have many thoughts. I desire to do the same professional area which I had done in Korea. I really want to do the same work, having lots of business trips and a more dynamic life, if there is any chance. I also want to take an MBA for my future as well. (Charles, Interview II, Nov. 21, 2009)

I want to be dedicated to studying and researching, when my children are independent. The area would be in Earth environment or alternate energy... I am imagining that I will be participating in the research such as earth environment so that our next generation can live in a better and comfortable environment. I imagine that I would contribute to humankind by studying and researching until I die. The good thing is that there is no better place than Canada to study. (Charles, Email, Nov. 26, 2009)

To Lily and Charles, family or children issues appeared as the main factor which may constrain their investment in target communities. They negotiated the conflicting points between their target communities and family life through postponing their actual engagement in a peaceful way. Thus, their individual imagined communities were negotiated without conflictions. Meanwhile, Whitney's future imagined community was beyond her profession:

I actually want to help Korean immigrants as a representative, if I have attained more experiences and career in Canada. I am interested in being a politician as a result. To participate in the area, language is the most important. I should be proficient at English and I need to study more. That is the reason why I am taking a cyber university graduate course now. The idea was initiated when I saw many Korean immigrants here; why do they only run groceries or restaurants after migration? Even those who have capabilities live in the Korean immigrant community rather than the mainstream in Canada. The Korean community is big now, so I want to contribute to the community. (Whitney, Interview II, Jan 1, 2010)

Interestingly, they were all conceiving another imagined community at a current point, which they would eventually be participating in the future, whether it was within or beyond their professions.

In summary, along with attainment of competence and recognition, the participants felt a sense of belonging to their workplace community. Their actual engagement and the workplace's material benefits contributed to building their feeling of attachment to the workplace. The feeling confirmed their social identity, their self esteem, and satisfaction through their whole immigrant life. Regardless, they showed multiple and ambivalent memberships and identities. They all conceived a new imagined community where they desired to participate in the future, and some of them also invested for their new target community, in a similar way as seen in the mobility of their migration.

### ***Summary and Discussion***

In this chapter I have investigated the workplace experiences of the three participants, focusing on what challenges and successes they experienced, how they negotiated the challenges, their competence, and identity so that they attained full membership in their workplace community. I have also investigated their sense of belonging to the workplace as one important mode to building a community, and their

multiple and sometimes contesting imagined communities projected in their future plans. Through the three cases with different workplace communities of practices and a range of negotiations, this chapter has revealed a number of interesting points.

First of all, the most salient theme regarding the common challenges the Korean professional immigrants encountered in their workplace was language in general, and their limited oral communication skills, in particular. Although language was often intertwined with issues of culture, identity, and power relations in the workplace community simultaneously, the participants shared their perceived limited oral communication skills as a major concern in common. Their lack of exposure to practical workplace settings in Canada and their previous language learning experience focusing on written English or academic content in Korea accounted for the reasons. For instance, Lily and Charles's experiences tell us that practical workplace languages are different from classroom or academic languages, suggesting the limitations of institutional language learning for immigrant professionals whose target is practicing in the Canadian workplace. Differences in philosophies, cultures, mentalities, and thereafter workplace practices between Canada and Korea confronted the participants, combined with their limited language facility. For example, Lily's profession entailed much broader English competency and different practices due to the holistic approach to nursing in Canada and cultural political differences between Canada and Korea. Whitney and Charles showed difficulties in understanding culturally embedded expressions and jokes because of their lack of the Canadian cultures and mentalities. Their inability to participate in small talk limited their social parameters, and involved issues of their identity. Without actual engagements in the real workplace practices, however, it seems hard for new immigrant

professionals to attain the workplace language, culture, and specific practices, which ultimately feature the workplace community.

Second, this chapter revealed that their perceptions of their language facility and their struggles stemming from the linguistic challenge were shaped by multiple factors such as the nature of their profession, workplace tasks, their positions, personality or positionality, and most importantly, workplace contexts in dynamic ways. For example, Lily's limited oral communication skills and her struggles surfaced in her everyday practices due to the nature of her job as well as a difficult workplace environment where some coworkers would not understand Lily's situation as an L2 user and a newcomer. Thus, she significantly perceived her limited language facility as an obstacle which hindered her in gaining recognition as a competent member. In the data of Charles and Whitney, their challenges and struggles did not directly surface in the workplace due to the reasons such as their workplace tasks and privileged position for Charles, supportive environments or individual personalities. The significant effect of the workplace environmental features was shared by the participants. For example, Charles's workplace, where the majority consisted of white working people, created discomfort and anxiety, rendering his speaking skills more susceptible. Meanwhile, Whitney showed a secure and confident position because not only of her personality or an active positionality but also because of the positive workplace environment where other workers made efforts to understand her limited language facility as a new immigrant worker. It was obviously demonstrated that the participants' perceptions on their limited language facility and their struggles were shaped and affected by the multiple factors described above.

Third, language issues, although multi-dimensional and complex, were combined

with issues of the immigrant professionals' identities and power relations often simultaneously and sometimes in a contradictory way, aligning with poststructuralists' assumptions. To illustrate, Lily's experience showed the complicated interplay where language issues, identity, and power relations were mingled. We have seen the ironic situation where others' perception of her oral communication skills did not change and tended to essentialize Lily's identity as a low competent immigrant nurse without rendering her as equal, although she acquired competence in the workplace language and culture. Whitney's experience also demonstrated the subtle possibility of exclusion in the workplace or dissemination of an essentialized identity as partial membership due to her inability to participate in informal conversations, regardless of her competence in skills. There were language issues on the surface, but the realities were sometimes identities and power relations in the workplace communities.

In a similar vein, the participants' experiences also tell us of the different roles of language in a given workplace for immigrant professionals. We have witnessed how different professions and workplace tasks involved different roles of language. For example, in engineering areas such as in the cases of Charles and Whitney, language seemed to function more as the tool for the professional knowledge and tasks, while Lily's profession engaged continuous oral communication skills in everyday practices as the essence of her work. Charles and Whitney's experiences simply reinforced their idea that professional skills and knowledge come first over language in their workplace. The role of language, however, sometimes appeared as power so those who lack competency in English are marginalized and often positioned not as equal but as lower. As an example, Lily's low competence in language was taken advantage of as a means of

exclusion or discrimination by other members. As poststructuralists assume, language is a site of struggles involved in power relations, and language should be examined as situated utterances in which speakers struggle to create meanings in dialogue with interlocutors (Bakhtin, 1981; Foucault, 1980).

Fourth, the participants' experiences tell us that their recognition and full membership in their workplace were attained mainly through negotiations of their professional competence/skills, their multiple, flexible identities and active positionalities, and continuous efforts simultaneously. We have clearly seen that their limited language facility was successfully compensated by their professional skills, previous experiences, and knowledge, which all the participants acknowledged as the most significant contributor to their success in their workplace. As experienced professionals, all the participants' fundamental negotiation method was "*Don't tell, but show.*" Negotiation of multiple and flexible identities over contexts was an inevitable aspect for the immigrant professionals to attain competence in their workplace. Their identities were positioned variously and flexibly over time depending on the situation. To illustrate, Whitney showed a skillful negotiation of her multiple identities ranging from a professional expert, a young newcomer to an immigrant whose L1 is not English. Taking up her identity as a multicultural immigrant, she took advantage of the feature of the multicultural workplace community where diverse cultures should be respected. Lily also experienced diverse phases where her identities shifted from a mere ESL student, a top nurse in Korea, an experienced nurse to a newcomer using an L2. Sustaining an ethnic identity was a recurrent theme for Charles and Whitney to negotiate a multicultural environment as well as their limited language competence. We have also

seen that the immigrant professionals' positionalities were co-constructed by the individual person and a given context. Their negotiations of competence, identities, and positionalities were not always peaceful, but rather, often involved internal (in Charles) or external struggles (in Lily).

Fifth, as experienced immigrant professionals, all the participants' experiences challenged the typical relationship between a novice and an expert which the COP theory, (Lave & Wenger, 1991) presumes; newcomers are regarded as novice workers and old timers as experienced experts in a linear fashion in a given community. They were not competent in the locally appropriate ways of speaking and functioning in a new socio-cultural workplace. However, they all demonstrated outstanding skills as an expert or an experienced professional. For example, Whitney's expertise in skills surpassed an old-timer's in the community, and thus learning took place for the old timer. Lily also had a similar situation in terms of her skills. Their experiences simply showed the complex, dynamic, and reciprocal relationship between a novice member and an expert in a COP. More interestingly, Charles's experience added another point to the dynamic and reciprocal relationship. His particular situation, where there was no expert, imposed two conflicting points. The context of not being able to interact with experts or experienced workers hindered Charles in getting related help, but, in the other sense, the situation assisted him in performing his job without stress or discomfort. Moreover, due to the particular situation, his struggles were unnoticeable to others and his recognition was attained in a seemingly peaceful way without power relations, which Charles considered beneficial. Overall, the data demonstrated that the relationship between a newcomer and an expert is neither static nor monolithic, but rather complex and co-constructed in a

dynamic way. Depending on the particular workplace situations and the professional immigrants' capabilities, the LPP showed a variety of configurations.

Last, this chapter has revealed that sustaining their social identity as professionals, more specifically as mainstream professionals, (which was their core desire with their migration) was the essence and motive of their participation in their workplace community as well as construction of their imagined workplace communities. Along with their attainment of competence and recognition in the given community, they began feeling a sense of belonging to the workplace, and, as Wenger (1998) claims, this feeling contributed significantly to confirming their social identities and positions both within and outside the workplace. I have elaborated their multiplicity of identities and ambivalent plural memberships in common. At the time of our interviews, the participants already identified their new imagined community where they desired to participate in the future, although there were vagueness, multiplicity, and contest of imagined communities for some participants. They projected and crafted their new identities to the future, and some of them actually invested in accessing their new target community. At this point, their future plans reinforced the idea that imagination is a socially, culturally, and historically situated social practice, and takes place as a continuum through one's whole life, showing the recurring process of "the notion of imagined community". Throughout all discussions thus far, I will provide theoretical, pedagogical, and practical implications and suggestions, and conclude this study in the next chapter.

	<b>Lily</b>	<b>Charles</b>	<b>Whitney</b>
<b>Workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-public sector (health)</li> <li>-high frequency of oral communication skills &amp; frequent interactions with diverse types of people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-private sector</li> <li>-only Ph. D holder</li> <li>-majority of white native speakers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-private sector</li> <li>-interaction with multicultural members</li> <li>-supportive environment</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-oral communication skills (listening)</li> <li>-workplace discourses</li> <li>-different philosophy of nursing, different cultures &amp; mentalities</li> <li>-different workplace practices and policies</li> <li>-power relations among coworkers and health aids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-spoken language &amp; high business language</li> <li>-small talk &amp; jokes</li> <li>-different workplace discourses</li> <li>-different workplace practices &amp; systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-oral communication skills (presentation)</li> <li>-informal conversation</li> <li>-dealing with multicultural coworkers</li> <li>-different workplace cultures</li> </ul>
<b>Negotiation (Strategies)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-asking competent members to model how to speak and act</li> <li>-demonstrating skills</li> <li>-positioning herself as competent nurse</li> <li><i>'revealing the inner character'</i></li> <li>-upgrading professional qualifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-making work done professionally</li> <li>-utilizing writing skills (visuals and power points) to compensate perceived limited oral skills</li> <li>-continuous investment in professional development</li> <li>-incorporating his belief and old habits into the new workplace</li> <li>-sustaining ethnic identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-demonstrating skills <i>'don't tell, but show'</i></li> <li>-embracing new practices</li> <li>-positioning multiple identities over contexts</li> <li>-exerting ethnic identity</li> <li>-investment in language learning</li> <li>-sustaining personal networks</li> </ul>

**Table 7.1: Participation in Workplaces: Challenges and Negotiation**

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusions**

In this study, I have explored how three highly skilled transnational migrants construct their imagined workplace communities in Canada by examining their past experiences, and their perceptions and thoughts analyzed through the lenses of the notion of imagined communities and COP. This exploration revealed the core aspects of what expectations these highly skilled Korean immigrants brought with their migration, how they integrated into the Canadian workforce, how language learning aligned with their construction of their imagined workplace communities, what challenges and successes they encountered, and how they negotiated their competence and identity to attain full membership in their workplace community. With the focal lens of language learning, identity, and workplace communities, I have provided an in- depth examination of their voices.

In this concluding chapter, I present implications this study offers, highlighting the key themes of this study. I first provide theoretical implications by discussing some of the issues surrounding the notion of imagined communities, language learning and identity, and the community of practice. As I indicated at the outset of this study, the goals of this study were twofold: 1) understanding how highly skilled Korean immigrants constructed their imagined workplace communities in Canada; 2) developing the notion of imagined community into a process model to help understand learners, their learning, and identity construction. Through out the discussion, I would like to suggest a process model of the notion of imagined community, combined with COP theory. Then I present pedagogical and practical implications, and directions for future research with concluding

comments.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

#### ***The Notion of Imagined Community: Imagination, Investment, and Identity Construction***

As discussed earlier, I have suggested that the notion of imagined communities involves one's extended identities, opportunities of learning, and actual engagements in social activities, based on the power of imagination. Clearly, the participants' narratives indicate that the notion of imagined communities extends their identities to future worlds over territories. Once their attachment to imagined communities is built, the immigrant professionals "engage in active attempts to reshape the surrounding contexts" (Pavlenko, 2003, p.266), and invest in learning to reach their target communities, supporting the findings of other recent qualitative research studies (Dagenais, 2003; Kanno, 2003; Norton, 2001; Pavlenko, 2003). Although the notion of imagined communities is often applied to understanding and explaining L2 learners within classrooms or academic settings, this study suggests that the notion can usefully inform transnational migrants' migratory stories, their human agency, their investment in learning and identity construction, and their professional integration.

Imagination, this study asserts, plays an important role at the core of the notion of imagined communities. As Appadurai (1997) argues, the modern world is characterized by a role for the imagination in social life, and thus, imagination is a social practice. The study participants positioned their imaginations in the practice of their everyday lives and connected with communities beyond their immediate and prevailing realities. Aligning with scholarly work that claims the educational and identitary functions of imagination (Greene 1995; Norton 1997, 2000, 2001; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko, 2003,

Wenger, 1998), this study depicts the power of imagination opening alternative realities and one's future images, and projecting individuals to actual engagements in social activities, which create opportunities to learn. For example, Lily's future images extended her identity to include being an RN in Canada. Once an imagined workplace community (a hospital in Manitoba) was noted, she began taking actions to reshape her surrounding contexts in order to reach the imagined community; she quit her job in Korea, flew to Canada, began studying, and passed the RN examination. Thus, imagination works as "a way to appropriate meanings and create new identities" (Pavlenko & Norton, 2005, p.590), and noting imagined communities is a way to capture "a real live phenomenon rather than an abstract framework" (Pavlenko, 2003, p.263).

At the same time, the participants' voices suggest that imagination is socially, culturally, and historically situated, and so are their imagined communities and their identities (Wenger, 1998). Although the participants migrated for diverse reasons, they shared common imagination as a main pull force of their migration to Canada. Canada was imagined as an alternative space: a better place for women workers who pursue careers, and a better country for their children's education, their future, and quality of life. Lily's case showed how her surrounding constraints influenced her as a married woman worker in Korea, driving her to imagine an alternative reality, where she could expect to balance her family life and her career. The constraints were tightly intertwined with her personal pursuits and life style, family structures, and the macro socio-economic context of the IMF crisis. Whitney dreamt of being "*freer*" from her reality, feeling the oppressing social, cultural, and political restraints in her workplace as well as her future life. All their imagination was constructed in the web of their personal, familial, social,

cultural, economic and political situations. Charles's case also showed the situatedness of imagination. His imagination was negotiated for the sake of the whole family's imagined community, Canada. Regardless of their differing desires or constraints, their imagination, their imagined communities, and their extended identities were created reflecting their multifaceted micro and macro contexts, implying *the situatedness* of the notion of imagined communities.

On the other hand, this study has revealed the limitations of imagination, pinpointing that imagination is not actual, but still virtual. For example, the participants' shared images of working in Canada were relatively vague, uncertain, negotiable, romanticized to some (e.g. Lily), and optimistic, mainly due to their lack of work experience in Canada. Most participants imagined they would integrate into their professions without difficulties, and their language would improve naturally simply by living in Canada, without creating challenges. Their optimistic perceptions of English generated lots of adversities in result after their migration. Although Whitney showed some accurate perceptions regarding her images of working in Canada, her lived experiences did not initially include workplace experiences. These aspects suggest that it is not easy for highly skilled immigrants, in a rigorous way, to draw concrete future images or practical future plans without actual work experiences in Canada or enough information. As Rosetto's (2006) study claims, imagined communities are truly meaningful in actualized practices, and these, as feedback, reinforce their future worlds and their future images.

This study offers that the notion of imagined communities serves as a useful frame to understand the relationship between language learning, learners' investment, and

learners' identity formation as some previous research in SLA reveals (Norton 1997, 2000, 2001; Kanno, 2000; Kanno & Norton, 2003). First, this study reinforces a view of investment in second language learning. Investment represents a learner's commitments or motivation to learning with an expectation of getting material or symbolic rewards as a result (Norton, 1995). This study evidently suggests that the immigrants' language learning is an investment as well as a tangible participation in a learning community, with the aim of reaching their target workplace communities. As L2 users, the participants felt their limited language facility, and thus, they all invested in learning English as the means by which they could get into their chosen professions in Canada. Their desires to participate in their imagined workplace communities largely shaped their learning trajectories, and they believed their investment would reward them, although the periods of investment were tedious and challenging. Their strong goals and the integrity to their target workplace communities stimulated the participants to be dedicated to learning English and endure adversities.

Second, supporting the close relationship between L2 learning and learners' identity (Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003), the study shows that the participants' identities were fundamentally challenged and negotiated, and thus, language learning involves crafting, negotiating, and reconstructing of learners' identities. As Duff and Uchida (1997) describe, identities are co-constructed, negotiated, and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language. Identities are not deterministic constructs, but multiple, locally negotiated, and constantly in flux (McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000, Toohey, 2000). For Lily, her multiple identities as an L2 learner, a prospective RN in Canada, and a Korean head nurse interacted across contexts.

In addition, as a wife and a mother of three children, who was thoroughly responsible for the family's migration, her multiple identities were reinforced and exercised. Charles also experienced status inconsistency which challenged his identity during his language learning. He struggled to maintain his identity as a capable professional engineer, and his integrity to his target community refused to craft his social identity as a laborer or convenience store owner. Whitney also consistently negotiated her multiple, shifting, and conflicting identities.

To answer the central question of this study, I have elaborated on the process of how the immigrant professionals have constructed their imagined workplace communities, through examining their language learning experiences and their particular approaches to re-enter their chosen professions in Canada. The findings of this study offer two important implications.

First, construction of immigrants' imagined workplace communities mainly relies on their investment, in particular, their language learning. For the participants in this study, their differing paths of integration mirrored their differing approaches to learning (investments), suggesting the core role of language learning for highly skilled immigrants. The three participants comprised three modes of investments (Chapter Six): the institutionally structured process approach by Lily, the education approach by Charles, and the networking and immigrant service program approach by Whitney. Their differing approaches were influenced by multiple factors such as the nature of their target professions, their desires, personalities, and varying familial, socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts. Thus, the construction of an imagined workplace community is a multifaceted dynamic process, which is characterized by investment and language

learning.

Second, constructing imagined workplace communities for highly skilled immigrants is by all means constructing their social identities in Canada. One salient theme in this study is identity construction. Identity is fluid, shifting, multiple, and thus a site of struggle. However, this study revealed that the essence of the highly skilled migrants' expectations was sustaining their previously attained social identities as professionals in a linguistically, socially and economically different country. Many research studies on Korean immigrants assert barriers such as language, lack of Canadian work experience, race, or gender for women immigrants block many Korean immigrants' mobility into the Canadian workforce (Chee, 2003; Hong, 2008; Hurh et al., 1979; Nah, 1993; Kim, 2001). Indeed the participants' narratives in this study prove that although they experienced multiple, fluctuating, shifting identities across contexts in the process of integrating into or participating in their chosen professions, the perpetual target is constructing their social identities as professionals, more particularly in the mainstream of Canada. Simply, constructing imagined workplace communities for highly skilled immigrants represent constructing their social identities as professionals. This study, furthermore, evidences that social identities they have attained, largely shape and exert various influences on their sense of selves, self esteem, self fulfillment, sense of belonging, and subjectivities, supporting the findings of Kim (2008) and Chee (2003).

As seen, the notion of imagined community explains a learner's learning trajectories, but this study also shows that a learner's living trajectories can be explained within the frame. This implies a close relationship between L2 learning and contexts where L2 learners are situated, supporting sociocultural perspectives in SLA. As seen in

this study, for an immigrant L2 learner, learning experiences are inseparable from living experiences, pulling and pushing each other. The learners are caught in the web of diverse contexts while living in Canada as second language users, and the social, cultural, and economic factors surrounding them affect their use and practice of the target language, thus influencing the process of their SLA. We have seen the contrasting contexts between those who lived with family members (Lily and Charles) and Whitney who lived with homestay family members. This supports that understanding SLA involves understanding contextual factors which influence learners rather than insisting on only a cognitivists' understanding of SLA.

Finally, this study shows that multiple imagined communities which are constructed by individuals or groups are coexisting and contested, and that social constraints limit individuals' imagination. As shown in Lily's case, the CRNM's policy change did not allow the Korean nurses to take the RN examination. The institution's imagined community was that of Canadian educated nurses, excluding internationally educated nurses. The CRNM's imagined community simply conflicted with Lily's imagined community. However, the policy was soon retracted by the demonstration of the Korean nurses. This contention implies that multiple imagined communities, whether in one's mind or within the relationships between personal levels and larger societal levels, are struggling sites involving conflicting fluctuating desires. All social identities, as Schmidt (2002) identifies, are innately contestable in that they involve imagined communities that might be imagined differently, so they inevitably involve power relations. Therefore, imagination itself should be understood as conflicting, multifaceted, and changing over time and space, and so should imagined communities.

***A COP, the Struggle-filled, Negotiated, and Constructed Space: Language, Power Relations, and Positionalities***

I have combined the notion of imagined community with the communities of practice to elucidate how highly skilled immigrants constructed their target workplace communities. At the juncture of their integration into their professions, the participants' imagined workplace communities were transformed from virtual to actual. Through their actual participation, their construction of imagined workplace communities continued to attain recognition and full membership in the communities. Most research on the notion of imagined communities and the COP model has been conducted in classroom or academic communities (Morita, 2004; Pavlenko, 2003; Toohey, 2000). However, this study has demonstrated that the notion of imagined communities and the COP have a wide range of applicability to practical settings, diverse workplace communities, especially when they are combined.

In terms of the COP, evidently, the participants' workplace experiences support its general principle: newcomers in a given COP become increasingly competent in practicing the locally appropriate ways of doing and speaking, through a learning process (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Most participants to some extent accepted their positions as newcomers in terms of language, different workplace cultures, and new policies. These also represented the major challenges the participants encountered in their workplaces. As newcomers, the process of learning involved linguistic areas as well as locally appropriate ways of performing as a recognized member of the community. They learnt how to react to each scenario and perform work tasks appropriately employing a variety of strategies. Lily asked a proficient member to model how to speak and act in each scenario, and wrote down what she heard in notes for her next interaction. Charles

also tried to acquire what he was required to perform, for example, highly advanced business language and spoken language. They needed to appropriate their practices in a consistent manner with other members in the COP. Their process of attaining recognition in the community went along with their attainment of competence in their linguistic and cultural practices.

The process of attaining competence in the workplace, however, involves a range of struggles, constant negotiation of identities, and power relations for immigrant professionals, suggesting the complex, dynamic, dialectic, and conflicting nature of COPs. The participants' narratives reveal that they suffered from inner or outer struggles in the process of adapting themselves to the new workplace communities. However, the struggles, negotiations, and power relations varied depending on the individuals and the contexts; their struggles overtly surfaced in everyday practices for Lily, while they remained unnoticeable for others. On the other hand, this study shows that the process of the COP forces immigrant professionals (newcomers) to exercise their human agency and positionality, and thus, a variety of subject positions are locally constructed in the particular workplace communities. A peaceful cooperation of a newcomer and an old timer is not necessary in a COP, but rather the co-construction of learners' (newcomers') agency and positionalities is sometimes a struggle, involving "a web of power relations and competing agendas" (Morita, 2004, p. 597). In particular, Lily was caught with the vigorous web of power relations, language, and identity in the workplace, but the situations persuaded her to practice her active positionality through human agency. Simply, by *revealing the inner character*, she could attain full membership. Charles and Whitney also practiced their human agencies in creative ways in dealing with challenges

in their workplaces. They disseminated their ethnic identities in multicultural workplace environments, in terms of negotiation of identity (Charles) or power relations (Whitney).

In addition, Charles attempted to incorporate his old habits or practices, which he believed efficient and beneficial, in the new workplaces practices. The participants' experiences confirmed that the immigrants were not passive actors but active organizers with agency (Chapter Seven). All their workplace experiences offer important implications since immigrants may be easily essentialized and labeled as linguistically or culturally incompetent by many given workplace communities. Their human agency and creative and active positionalities help us to treat L2 immigrants as active human agents who attempt to position themselves in a new community in order to attain full membership and construct their solid social identities. Finally their vivid voices suggest that a COP is not a static and unitary space, but a struggle-filled, negotiated, and dialectically constructed space.

Contrary to the typical assumption the COP theory takes, the participants' workplace experiences also challenged the monolithic relationship between an expert and a novice, which is explained by the LPP model (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The relationship between a newcomer and an old-timer is neither static nor monolithic, but rather complex and co-constructed in a dynamic way, as Morita (2004) found. The participants were not competent in the locally appropriate ways of speaking and functioning in a new socio-cultural workplace. However, they functioned as experts in terms of their professional skills. For example, Whitney's expertise in skills surpassed an old-timer's in the community. They exhibited expertise in one sense and noviceness in the other sense simultaneously, suggesting the complex, dynamic, and sometimes ambivalent nature of

the relationship between a novice member and an expert. Charles's experience also added another point to the dynamic relationship. The context of not being able to interact with experts eventually assisted him in performing his job without stress or discomfort, which Charles considered beneficial and motivational. Depending on the particular workplace situations and the immigrants' capabilities, the LPP showed a variety of configurations. This study reinforces the view of a COP as a struggle-filled, negotiated, and constructed space.

This study suggests that creating a positive atmosphere in a given community is important to newcomers: their adaptations into new communities, L2 learning, and perceptions of their capabilities. Lave and Wenger's (1991) concern lies in the relationship between learning and the social situation in which it occurs, in other words, the conditions for learning and for the appropriation of practices in any given community. Particular social arrangements in any community may restrain or assist newcomers' progress toward fuller participation (Norton, 2000). Whitney's case showed that the positive environment in the workplace alleviated anxiety and assisted her in accessing membership with recognition. Simply, although she spoke in Konglish, others understood her in English. In such a situation, her opportunities to practice and use English were more supported and secure, affecting her perception of her capabilities and affective needs. The aspect of mutual efforts from old-timers and newcomers is significant because Lily's experience was very different.<sup>32</sup> Their experiences also suggest that as far as a workplace community meets the expectations of a newcomer, an immigrant professional whose L1 is not English, positive social arrangements, simply put, mutual efforts in a

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<sup>32</sup> Some of Lily's coworkers did not make any effort to understand her, but rather, some of them took advantage of her limited speaking skills.

given community are critical for his/her security and second language acquisition,<sup>33</sup> as Norton argues (2001).

This study has shown that the major challenges immigrant professionals encounter in their workplaces are language issues, more specifically, their limited oral communication skills and lack of culturally embedded expressions or jokes. This implies that to attain recognition in the workplaces for immigrant professionals largely means to acquire workplace language and the appropriate ways of operating in the given communities. In Lily's case, her lack of workplace language and different practices stemming from the differences of mentalities, philosophies, and cultures between Korea and Canada challenged her everyday practices, positioning her identity as a less competent member in the workplace. Acquiring the workplace discourses and locally appropriate practices finally presented her with full membership. Despite differing strategies and negotiations to overcome the emerging challenges, the participants' experiences showed the importance of language in the COP.

Language issues, however, were often intertwined with the issues of identity, cultures, and power relations, supporting the poststructuralists' view of language. A contextual analysis of the participants' narratives suggests that language may play a role as a hidden expression of discrimination or exclusion, which old timers or a certain group of people utilize in order to protect their given benefits, and to exclude newcomers using an L2. Lily's case showed this aspect clearly. Despite the fact that her competence in workplace language improved, people's perceptions of Lily did not tend to change. Her

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<sup>33</sup> Norton (1995, 2001) claims that if old timers/experts or gatekeepers appear as threatening, an L2 user or a learner of a target language, here immigrant professionals, may withdraw motivation as well as opportunities to practice and use the target language.

low command of English was taken advantage of by some colleagues whenever any trouble was involved. Her identity seemed essentialized as a low competent immigrant nurse who used the L2 with an accent. Her realization of the role of language as a means of exclusion or discrimination, however, forced her to *reveal her inner character* and claim her identity as a competent member in the workplace. Whitney also experienced the subtle and dormant exclusion from linguistically proficient members in her workplace. Through active positionalities and negotiation of her identities (e.g., by revealing her ethnic identity and writing in Korean on colleagues' birthday cards), she claimed her membership in a multicultural community where diversity should be respected and L2 users should be included. Their experiences clearly showed the interlocked web of language, identity, subjectivities, and positionalities. Their experiences thus support the poststructuralists' view of language; language is social, and a site of struggle, is the place where forms of social organizations are contested, and "the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (Weedon, 1997, p.21).

### ***A Process Model for the Notion of Imagined Communities***

The participants' voices offer that the notion of "imagined communities" is understood as a dynamic, ongoing process, providing understanding of their historical, contextual and multiple identities, their investments, construction of their target communities, and their human agencies or subjectivities. The participants' imagined communities were created by their situated imagination. However, when their imagined workplace communities were constructed through their actual participation and attainment of recognition in the communities, their imagination began noting another imagined community. This suggests that the notion of imagined communities encircles an

individual's whole life as a recurring process. As imagination is the central phenomenon of the notion of imagined communities, the notion of imagined communities reflects an endless exertion of one's desires. At this point, I would like to suggest a process model for the notion of imagined communities, which may help understand language learners, learning, their identity construction, and participation. I first describe each stage of the process, and then present a visual (Figure 8.1).

*A Process for the Notion of "Imagined Communities".*

Human ability to imagine: Premise

1. Notion of imagined communities which are different from immediate realities: Future images of oneself & extended identities
2. Attempt to arrange surrounding contexts: Investment in learning & actual engagement in social activities
3. Negotiating and reconstructing identities involved in learning
4. Participating in imagined communities/ Communities of practice:  
Transformation from virtual to actual
5. Interactions among multiple contesting imagined communities:  
Negotiating and reconstructing meanings and boundaries of images of oneself
6. Future images of oneself & extended identities



**Figure 8.1 A Process Model for the Notion of Imagined Communities**

### ***Practical Implications***

This multiple case study has revealed that there are variability, dynamics and complexity in the processes of constructing of imagined workplace communities, depending on participants' differing histories, personalities, the nature of their target professions, and their contexts, although they shared the common procedural flow of the notion of imagined communities. Each participant's particular experiences brought out some pedagogical implications or suggestions for educators, and practical implications.

### ***Pedagogical Implications***

This study suggests that it is essential for EAL instructors to recognize learners' particular imagined communities at the outset of any language program. When the learners are adult new immigrant professionals, their imagined communities represent their past histories, their desires and target goals, and their social identities which they expect to construct. Instructors' awareness of learners' imagined communities can give

the crux of how to understand and approach learners, and this consequently entails how to teach and what to teach. Recognizing learners' imagined communities offers understanding their needs, their expectations, and their investment in language learning. Instructors' methods, therefore, should engage learners' historically, socially constructed identities, reflections of themselves and extensions of their images to the future (Norton, 2001). When learners are recognized as what they are and what they desire, they feel security in their place whether inside or outside classrooms. Lily's case demonstrated how helpful the institution was and her EAL instructors satisfied her needs to access her imagined workplace community. On the other hand, to motivate language learners, instructors are encouraged to utilize the power of imagination through employing a variety of activities. Visualizing learners' futures and connecting their past and current identities to the future identities can be incorporated in their teaching methods. However, it should be noted that there are limitations of imagination. The educational function of imagination clearly draws a line between imaginations which are accompanied by proactive actions and fantasies which are mere wishes or escape (Appadurai 1997; Simon, 1992).

This study also offers the importance of creating a positive and secure atmosphere in a learning community, whose responsibility generally falls on instructors as the gatekeepers of the community. This is important because adult L2 learners seem to have more affective needs and more vulnerability to their surroundings although there are individual differences. I have taken up the sociocultural perspectives in SLA, where multiple factors affect learners' SLA. In a classroom, Lily's case proved that the English Only policy oppressed her and created tension, limiting her willingness to use and

practice English. Charles's case succinctly illustrated learners' psychological aspects where surrounding environmental factors affect learners' use and practice of a target language. Different from the academic community comprising non native speaking members, the workplace environment where the majority were white Canadian born native speakers created anxiety and nervousness for Charles, which made him doubt his language facility and hindered opportunities to practice English. Interacting with native speakers, especially white native speakers, has been a proven factor which generates language anxiety (Von Worde, 1998; Woodrow, 2006). I suggest there is a need to create buffer zones for immigrant adult language learners, where they get opportunities to interact with diverse interlocutors rather than the classroom members of immigrants, so that their nervousness can be alleviated. Diverse activities and scenarios which involve exposure to native speakers can be designed and practiced within or outside classrooms.

The study participants considered their limited oral communication skills as a major difficulty, while their reading and writing skills were not concerns. This finding implies different language groups may have different areas of weaknesses out of the general four language skills, depending on their home country's English education systems among other factors. Analyzing learners' weaknesses and focusing on improving the limited areas is necessary, rather than equally emphasizing all language skills with all learners. Taking into account aspects of Korean traditional culture such as politeness and Confucianism, for the Korean adult learners in this study, their speaking skills appeared as the most vulnerable. Some instructors may monolithically essentialize learners as linguistically incompetent due to such issues as learners' reticent attitudes. In addition to providing a comfort and secure atmosphere, I suggest, instructors can encourage learners

to utilize their strengths to compensate their weaknesses. This study showed in the cases of Lily and Charles that writing skills can be transferred to oral communication skills.

A recurrent theme in the participants' language learning experiences is a gap between classroom or academic language and practical workplace language, which significantly challenges highly skilled immigrants, especially when they integrate into real workplaces. This suggests that immigrant professionals, whose goals are integrating into their chosen professions, need to be equipped with more practical language which suits each professional's particular workplace setting. Lily passed successfully the RN examination through the institutional program, but she encountered difficulties right after she came out of the institution due to her lack of workplace language and general communication skills. Charles also encountered difficulties in performing oral spoken language, and new workplace discourses, which feature his particular workplace community. Given that workplace discourses are different from one another, language institutions and instructors should provide immigrant learners with opportunities to expose them to more practical workplace discourses, for example, adopting joint programs with real workplaces. Without engagements in actual workplace settings, it is not easy for immigrant professionals to gain particular workplace discourses.

This study also raises implications for designing language programs and conducting classroom activities. Whitney's experience in a full time language program was perceived as a waste of time due to its looseness and inefficiency. In particular, she pointed out the inefficiency of small group discussion activities which EAL instructors frequently assign students. She felt she did not gain any opportunities to learn advanced vocabulary, expressions or accurate pronunciations because the learners were in the same

level as her. Part time courses, however, were more satisfactory to her because of time efficiency, their usefulness for her workplace practice, their focus on the target areas such as writing or pronunciation, and a more intensive classroom atmosphere which encouraged her to work harder. I suggest intensive part time EAL courses which target specific areas such as business writing, can be useful for some immigrant professionals.

### ***Practical Implications***

This study suggests some important practical implications for governments, immigrant language/service agencies, policy makers, private sectors which are prospective employers of immigrant professionals, and immigrant professionals. This study shows that the meanings of language learning for immigrant learners differ over time, depending on their temporal needs. To illustrate, for Lily, to be an RN, institutional language learning was essential at the beginning. After passing the exam, however, the institutional language learning showed its limitations. On one hand, this suggests that highly skilled immigrants should be offered diverse opportunities to participate in actual practices in real workplaces, rather than limiting their learning to institutions. Language programs should extend their curricula to actual participation in workplaces, so that internationally trained immigrant learners can have opportunities to learn workplace language. Volunteering programs should be more actively implemented to expose new immigrant learners to the authentic shared practices of their professions. All these suggestions, however, entail structural help from corporations and governmental policies.

On the other hand, language training programs or support should be ongoing over time to meet the needs immigrants face in different stages. This requires employers' investment and active help for immigrant professionals. Hiring a language helper in a workplace would be a good way to fill the gap between classroom language and

workplace language for immigrant newcomers. Lily's case showed the effectiveness of learning workplace language at the workplace through the help of linguistically competent members. Also, promoting the cooperative relationship between newcomers and old timers such as a mentorship policy is one way to bridge the gap. Through member training workshops, old timers can be involved in understanding internationally trained workers and their needs. In addition, building the atmosphere of mutual efforts from old timers and newcomers seems necessary. Whitney's case supported the impact of a positive workplace environment where others make efforts to understand immigrant newcomers, alleviating anxiety over their limited language skills and cultural or political awareness; "*Although I spoke in Konglish, others tried to understand me in English.*"

This study depicts that different professions necessitate different workplace discourses and particular practices which feature each profession. Immigrant service/language programs should try to develop programs to satisfy immigrant professionals' diverse needs depending on their particular areas. As Charles mentioned, however, without developing programs which *simulate* various workplace experiences in a certain profession, which actually take place in real settings, the immigrant programs can not fully satisfy immigrant professionals' needs. Volunteering programs are one useful option, but considering the difficulty in appropriating volunteer positions, an alternative can be considered. I suggest that a range of virtual reality computer programs designed for various professions, for example, "a day as a nurse or a mechanical engineer", should be developed so that immigrant professionals can virtually experience possible scenarios they would encounter in their future workplaces through the technology. Stimulating learners' imagination and motivation, as this study argues, those

virtual reality programs may immensely help immigrant professionals to be involved in actual workplace linguistic, cultural, and professional practices. Once the programs are developed, all the three parts, immigrant service programs (governments), employers, and immigrant professionals can be beneficial in terms of integrating skilled immigrants into the Canadian economy.

The participants' narratives also suggest that their limited language facility in the workplaces can be compensated for with their professional skills. I have highlighted that their competence in skills function as a valuable asset and contributor to their attainment of recognition in their workplaces. In particular, Charles and Whitney fundamentally employed the strategy of "*Don't tell, but show!*", and experienced successes. Although there was variability depending on the nature of each profession and workplace tasks (for Lily, her job involved frequent interactions which require oral communication skills), all the participants attributed their successful participation and negotiation in their workplaces to their skills and previous experiences. Indeed all the participants demonstrated capabilities in their professional skills, by which they claimed their positions as recognized members in the given communities. This issue naturally raises questions about the relationship between language and professional expertise. With a comparison of Lily (RN, in public sector), and Charles and Whitney (Engineering, in private sector), I have suggested that the nature of each profession be a significant factor to decide the priority for workplace preparation. The focus should be determined according to whether it is within a public sector or private sector, and whether the work involves frequent and high proficiency of communication skills or not. The compensating transferable relationship between limited language facility and high skills, however,

offers another implication for immigrant professionals. If a highly skilled immigrant fails to show outstanding skills, more challenges may be presumed with the absence of this important tool for negotiation. Immigrant professionals, therefore, should be aware of the nature of their target profession and the requirements for their employment.

This study also provides useful information for highly skilled immigrants. The participants' differing integration stories offer that there is no absolute rule to apply to all immigrants. Multiple factors such as their past histories, personalities, micro and macro contexts reflecting socio-economic or political factors, and personal beliefs all created variability and complexity in their integration routes. The prevailing belief, "no education in Canada, no job guaranteed" shared among the Korean immigrant community, was simply broken by Whitney's story, while Charles's persistent investment in education rewarded him, supporting the conventional belief. One clear aspect is that their particular investments in learning tend to shape or define their integration stories. Similarly, negotiation strategies immigrant professionals employ in their workplaces are multiple depending on the individuals, their capabilities, and their situated contexts. Whitney embraced and began practicing new workplace practices while discarding her old habits. However, Charles tended to incorporate his old practices and beliefs into the new workplace.

More importantly, this study offers that rather than assigning private sectors the role of integrating highly skilled immigrants into the Canadian workforce, structural organizations in each profession should play an active role. The Canadian workforce with its current and urgent need for internationally trained immigrants strongly assists them in getting into their professions (as seen in Lily). The incident of the CRNM's policy

change also proves that regulatory structures have power to constrain and reshape the influx of internationally trained immigrants. Including the issue of structural regulations, organizational supports seem to be a significant contributor to the construction of highly skilled immigrants' imagined workplace communities, which ultimately provides the immigrants with legitimate membership in and a sense of belonging to Canadian society. More efforts and involvement of governmental departments toward professional organizations is necessary.

### ***Directions for Future Research***

This study suggests that the notion of imagined communities is one useful frame to understand highly skilled immigrants' transnational migratory stories and their language learning, integration into their chosen professions, and attainment of competence in their workplace communities. Combined with the COP theory, I also suggest, the notion of the imagined communities can be more functional, through the transformation from virtual to actual. As discussed in Chapter Three, most research studies limit the application of the notion of imagined communities and the COP to classrooms or academic settings in order to explain learners' motivation, participation/nonparticipation, negotiations, and their SLA process (Morita, 2004; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton & Kamel, 2003; Rossetto, 2006; Pavlenko, 2003; Toohey, 2000). However, the inquiry of this study involves the longitudinal processes of how highly skilled immigrants have constructed their target workplace communities, in a holistic and chronological way. This study connects the above theories to practical workplace settings, especially for adult immigrants.

Giving voice to highly skilled immigrants' learning and workplace experiences,

and their perspectives and thoughts, this study also adds adult language learners' vivid voices to the existing body of qualitative research in SLA. It points to the limitations of research which focuses on observable classroom behaviours or quantitative surveys, and interprets them monolithically from an etic perspective. Exploring narratives through an in-depth interview method of data collection, this study reveals participants' interpretations of themselves and the impacts of macro societal structures, and the intersections of the micro and macro levels. In addition, in-depth investigation of three participants allowed a full description of their longitudinal experiences, and thereafter their multiple, fluid, and contradictory identities over time and space.

For future studies, needless to say, more evidence should be provided to support how the notion of imagined communities benefits understandings of language learning, learners, their participation in social activities, identity formation, and immigrants' integration into their target communities. One clear direction of future research is to continue to examine individual experiences of immigrants. Emic perspectives and contextualized interpretations of individual narratives can help scholars and practitioners better understand the function of imagination, the multifaceted process of participation in communities, and the process of SLA.

This study described only successful cases of some highly skilled Korean immigrants' professional integration in Canada. However, there are many unrevealed voices which may illustrate unsuccessful stories or extreme downward mobility cases of immigrant professionals: for example, those whose profession is not within high demand occupations. Exploring their own interpretations of their experiences or analyzing the factors which affect their unsuccessful stories may boost understanding of complicatedly

intersected realms of micro and macro structures more clearly. Labelling or essentializing their stories as unsuccessful may be challenged through further studies.

While this study explored a particular ethnic group of highly skilled immigrants, future research can investigate different groups of immigrants, for example, other ethnic groups, or a variety of ethnic groups of highly skilled immigrants together, or skilled immigrants whose language proficiency and educational background may be lower than the participants in this study. This study also examined participants of different genders. However, exploring only one particular gender group, female or male, and comparing two gender groups of highly skilled immigrants may render important theoretical and practical implications in immigrants' professional integration stories and their SLA. Exploring particular professions separately and comparing cross professions can be suggested as one direction. Similarly, comparing public sectors and private sectors, in other words, professions where regulatory bodies control the influx of immigrants' integration, and professions where liberal market theories of needs and supplies are applied, is a possibility. In addition, incorporating multiple perspectives from instructors, workplace colleagues or employers, can add to this study interpretations that are more diverse. In terms of triangulation of data sources, employing the method of observation could also help to illustrate immigrants' participation, interactions, and negotiation in a real workplace community and their SLA process.

### ***Concluding Comments***

I began my study mainly concerned with how highly skilled Korean immigrants realize their desires as professionals with their transnational migration. The underlying presumption of this study was my appreciation of their forceful motives for transnational

migration and their human agencies. I tried to describe what helped sustain them as what they were, what they are, and what they desire to be, in a linguistically, socially, culturally, economically different country. Although this study entailed to some extent sociological and geographical interests, my focus was the interplay of highly skilled transnational migrants' language learning, identity, and workplace communities.

The main data sources of this study are the participants' introspective and retrospective narratives through oral interviews, as shown. Telling experiences is somehow a selective, subjective, and thus insufficient action, as experience of the individual always requires an examination of the relationship between language, reality, and the situatedness of subjects to the knowledge they produce. Thus, experience is temporarily an interpretation (Scott, 1992). One important aspect I have realized through this interview study was that the participants constructed their interpretations of their experiences with their own perspectives or positions, as I took up my particular positions and assumptions as a researcher. Through the interview process, it was important for me to be aware of how the participants perceived and interpreted their personal, familial, and social experiences as active agents while situated in their social environments (McKay & Wong, 1996; Weedon, 1987). I realized that their experiences were interpreted by them with the particular time and space in which they positioned themselves, and more importantly, they were crafting their identities through their particular interpretations and perceptions. I have found that interviews with each participant were also experiences by which they exerted their subjectivities and positionalities within multiple competing narratives.

Language, which I presumed as a main challenge, actually appeared as the most

perceived concern as well as a significant theme for highly skilled immigrants, although language issues are often mingled with issues of identity, culture, and power relations. Acquiring language, more precisely acquiring workplace discourses, generally goes along with attaining competence and recognition in a given workplace community. Similarly, identity formation is an essential, ongoing process mirrored along with construction of their target workplace community. Thus, language learning, identity construction, and workplace communities are mutually constituted, influencing each other. One important aspect confirmed through this study was that language learning is more likely to take place through participation in social activities in forms of communities, especially for highly skilled immigrants whose target is practicing their professions in the Canadian labour market. The participants' successful stories contained their particular language learning stories, and more specifically, language learning for highly skilled immigrants meant acquisition of discourses in their workplace communities. The way we acquire any language or discourse is through access to and membership in workplace discourse groups, as Gee (1990) argues. A workplace membership involves everyday social interactions, and participation in activities, which are vital conditions for language acquisition. The attainment of workplace language also provided them with recognition from others, a solid social identity and a sense of belonging to the given community progressively. Their narratives confirmed the tightly intertwined relationships among the attainment of workplace language, constructing social identities as professionals, and a sense of belonging to the communities.

Similarly, I have realized that the meanings of having a job in Canada are multiple for highly skilled transnational migrants, affecting immensely their whole life as

well as their families'. In addition to the financial and material aspects, attaining membership in their target workplace creates their social identities, high self esteem, and emotional satisfaction. The implication is that immigration policy makers should consider the integration of highly skilled immigrants into the Canadian workforce in terms of not only *immigration and labour* issues but also construction of national identity or citizenship education, especially for the next generation of the highly skilled (as seen, children's education and their future largely accounted for the participants' motives for migration).

True, this study has highlighted the apparent ambivalence in transnational migrants' identities, and the multiplicity of their memberships and imagined communities. Nonetheless, practicing their skills in an appropriate workplace community renders them social identities as professionals, who participate in and contribute to the Canadian economy, and imposes them a sense of belonging to *one community in Canada*. Evidenced in this study, the notion of imagined communities provides not only individual but also societal visions and powerful motivational forces for change. What imagined communities the governments, regulatory organizations, and private companies are envisioning as a collective ideology is strongly impacting the whole realms of current and future highly skilled transnational migrants.

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## Appendix A

### INFORMATION AND INVITATION LETTER FOR HIGHLY SKILLED KOREAN IMMIGRANTS

Dear Potential Participant:

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Hyekyung (Kay) Song, and I am a master student in Education at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting a qualitative research study involving recent highly skilled Korean immigrants in Canada. This study is entitled, “Imagined Communities, Language Learning, and Identity in Highly Skilled Transnational Migrants: A Case Study of Korean Immigrants in Canada”. Since you are a suitable candidate, who has experienced successes and challenges in Canada, I am requesting your voluntary participation in this study.

#### **Purpose of the Study:**

A huge influx of Korean immigrants to Canada in the past decade has been impacting Canadian economy and society. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2006), between 1999 and 2001, Korea was the fifth largest immigration source country for Canada, supplying an annual number of more than 7,000 new arrivals. One outstanding feature is the unprecedented influx of highly skilled Korean immigrants, reflecting the global trend of the transnational migration of the highly skilled and Canadian immigration policy. To illustrate, in 2001, the number of Korean skilled workers accounted for 5% of the total independent class migration in Canada. Despite the prospective contributions to Canadian economy and society, language appears as an apparent barrier to highly skilled Korean immigrants, limiting their social parameters and opportunities to integrate into their professions, thus impeding the practice of their dreams and their human capital.

To shed light on the immigrants who have migrated with the credential for work, this study aims to explore and report on highly skilled Korean immigrants’ language learning and workplace experiences, with an effort to figure out how they construct their visions and their sense of belonging to Canada in terms of their imagined workplace communities. “Imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983; Kanno & Norton, 2003) represent the target communities where people desire to belong and participate through the power of imagination, so imagined workplace communities refer to the target workplace communities. This study also aims to illuminate highly skilled immigrants’ natural language learning in practical settings, and their negotiation of competence and identity in workplace communities. Through the report, this study also aims to give a voice for immigration policies and language/ job training program and practice development.

This study is guided by the following research questions: 1. What expectations and images of working in Canada did highly skilled Korean immigrants have when they migrated to Canada? To what extent, were these expectations met or not met? ; 2. How do they perceive language learning in relation to their target workplace communities? What role, if any, has language played in their workplace experiences? ; 3. What other

successes and challenges, if any, have the highly skilled immigrants experienced in the workplace? ; 4. How do they negotiate their membership and identity in their workplace communities?

The collected data in this study will be primarily used for my Master's thesis.

### **Participation Procedure:**

I am requesting you to participate in this study involving three 1 to 1.5 hour audio-taped interviews. I ask for your commitment for a total of 4.5 hours' involvement. The interviews will be conducted between October to November 2009, and you and I will decide the mutually convenient time and location to carry out the interviews. The first interview focuses on your background, your expectations and overall experiences in Canada. The second and third interviews focus on your language learning experiences, your perceptions on language learning in relation to target workplaces, and overall negotiation and evaluation. I will conduct all the interviews and transcribe the tapes. You will be asked to choose the language of the interview, either Korean or English, to ensure that the language is one you are proficient at and comfortable with. To avoid misunderstanding and confusion, I may get back to you for some clarification of the information I get from you if necessary. You may invite another person, for example, your spouse, friend, or other family member, during the interview sessions, if you feel comfortable and supported.

If you are agreeable, I would also like to collect documentation such as language/job training program descriptions, evaluation forms, letters, diaries, or emails and any artifacts relating to your immigrant experiences, which you are willing to share with me. The artifacts include pictures, drawings, membership cards, certifications, or video tapes. The documentation or artifacts will fortify the accuracy of the information. You may choose later whether you are agreeable to share the documentation and artifacts.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality:**

I am obliged to follow the rules and regulations set forth by the Research Ethics Board. I respect all your privacy and confidentiality. All data collected during this study will remain confidential and to protect your anonymity, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym, and the pseudonym will be used to refer to your case. I will ask you not to divulge your pseudonym to others. Your real name will not appear on any of my notes, audio recordings, transcripts or my final reports. You will also be given the opportunity to remove or edit out any information you feel is too sensitive or identifiable. You can let me know the information you want to remove either by phone or by email. You will be informed if direct quotations from the data are used, and you will be given the opportunity to read, revise, and edit out all written materials generated by this study. If you want the written reports to be translated into Korean, I will provide the translation service, either orally or in written forms, as you prefer.

All data collected will be stored in a locked drawer in the basement in my home. Only my advisor, Dr. Clea Schmidt and I will have access to the data, and confidentiality will be maintained as allowed by law. I may present the findings of this study in places beyond my thesis; the places include conference presentations and journal publications. Within five years of the completion of the study, all data will be destroyed.

**Risks and Benefits:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions and to stop the interview any time, and withdraw without penalty from the study any time. There are no risks and discomforts expected from participating in this study, although recounting some experiences may be emotionally draining for you. Again, you are not obliged to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable. Participation in this study may or may not have direct benefits to you. Your input may contribute to considering Korean immigrants' needs and implementing program developments for highly skilled immigrants and language programs and practice.

**Compensation:**

There will be no compensation for the participation. Instead, refreshments and drinks will be provided at each interview. You will be provided with a summary of the study findings at the conclusion of this research, through e-mail or in hard copy, as you prefer. I can also provide you with the Korean version of the summary if necessary.

If you decide to participate in this study, please read through and sign the attached consent form.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me at 254-XXXX or XXXX@hotmail.com., if you have any concerns.

Sincerely,

Hyekyung (Kay) Song  
Graduate Student in Education  
University of Manitoba

## Appendix B

### CONSENT FORM FOR KOREAN IMMIGRANT PARTICIPANTS

**Research Project Title:** Imagined Communities, Language Learning, and Identity in Highly Skilled Transnational Migrants: A Case Study of Korean Immigrants in Canada  
**Researcher:** Hyekyung (Kay) Song

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

I understand the research is being conducted for the completion of the researcher's thesis. This study aims to explore and report on highly skilled Korean immigrants' language learning and workplace experiences, with an effort to figure out how they construct their imagined workplace communities in Canada as a dynamic continuum. The focus of the study is to investigate the interplay of highly skilled Korean immigrants' language learning, identity construction and workplace communities. This study also aims to give a voice for immigration policies and language/job training program development.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to take part in the research study on Imagined Communities, Language Learning, and Identity in Highly Skilled Transnational Migrants: A Case Study of Korean Immigrants in Canada.

I've read and understood the information about the study on the above mentioned topic. I understand that my participation will involve three audio –taped interview sessions, with each session lasting for 1.5 hours. The first interview focuses on my background, expectations and overall experiences in Canada. The second and third interviews focus on my language learning and workplace experiences, perceptions on language learning in relation to target workplaces, and negotiation strategies and overall evaluation. I will choose the language of the interview either Korean or English, which I feel is most proficient at and comfortable with. I will be provided with a detailed explanation and invitation for the study, a consent form and interview questions. I can ask questions and I will be explained the places where I am unclear. I also understand this study involves documents and artifacts from me. I understand that contributing documents and artifacts is optional, so I can choose whether or not to share some documentation or artifacts relating to my immigrant experiences later.

I understand that the interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed afterwards. I know that the researcher will also take some notes during the interview to help her remember the thoughts and feelings concerning the interview. And I realize that the researcher might get back to me for some clarification of the information to avoid confusion and misunderstanding if necessary.

I understand that to help protect my confidentiality and anonymity, I will be asked to choose a pseudonym, and the pseudonym will be used to refer to my case. My real name will not appear on any of the researcher's notes, audio recordings, transcripts or her final reports. I will be asked to read and revise my interview scripts and I can edit out any information or specific statements that I feel are too sensitive and identifiable. I can notify the researcher either by phone or by email. I will be informed if direct quotations from the data are used, and I will be given the opportunity to read and revise all written materials generated by this study. I understand that I can ask the researcher to provide translation services regarding the written materials either orally or in written forms, as I prefer.

Any information about me obtained as a result of this research will remain confidential, and be stored in a locked drawer in the basement in the researcher's home. I understand that only the researcher and her advisor will have access to the data collected during the study. I understand that the findings of this study may be presented at conferences and journal publications. I understand that direct quotes from the data I provide may be used, and that there is no direct anticipated benefit or compensation for participation. I understand all data from this study will be destroyed within 5 years of the completion of the research.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my consent to participate in this study at any time. If I want to withdraw from this study after I have given initial consent, I can notify the researcher either by phone or by e-mail. I know that the researcher is not in any way in a position of authority over me. I understand that although there are no known risks and discomforts expected from participating in this study, I may be involved in the potential of stress during discussions. I understand I can seek assistance with this issue from health service agencies for immigrants such as MFL Occupational Health Centre and Multicultural Wellness Program. I can be provided with the information from the researcher.

I understand that there will be no compensation for the participation. Instead, refreshments and drinks will be provided at each interview. I understand that my interview script and a summary of the findings of the study will be sent to me, via e-mail or in hard copy as I prefer. I understand that the Korean version of the summary will be provided if I ask.

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does his waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering and any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudices or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial**

**consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_ I prefer to receive my interview transcript via e-mail: address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_ I prefer to receive my interview transcript in hard copy: address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_ I prefer to receive a summary of the findings via e-mail: address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_ I prefer to receive a summary of the findings in hard copy: address \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the researcher, Hyekyung (Kay) Song at 254-XXXX or via email at [XXXX@hotmail.com](mailto:XXXX@hotmail.com). Her thesis advisor, Dr. Clea Schmidt can be reached at 474-9314 or via email at [schmidtc@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:schmidtc@cc.umanitoba.ca) respectively.

**This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail [margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

## Appendix C

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR KOREAN IMMIGRANT PARTICIPANTS

#### *Section1. Background, Dreams, & Expectations*

1. When did you arrive in Canada? How long have you stayed in Canada?
2. What was your status when you first arrived in Canada? (E.g. immigrant, work permit, international student, etc.)
3. When and how did you attain your status of immigration?
4. What is your age or age range, for example, in your mid-thirties?
5. Who are your family members?
6. What were your main reasons to come to Canada?
  - Why did you choose Canada as your destination land?
7. Tell me about your educational background.
8. What work experiences and credentials did you have in Korea?
9. What future images of working did you conceive when you migrated into Canada?
  - How and through what sources were the images constructed?
10. What expectations did you bring to Canada?
  - How are they being fulfilled?
11. To what extent, were your future images and expectations of working met in Canada?

#### *Section2. Language Learning & Imagined workplace communities*

##### **Language**

1. How would you rate your ability to speak (read, understand, write) English when you first came to Canada?
2. What was your Canadian Language Bench Mark?
3. How would you say about your current English-speaking (reading/understanding/writing) skills?
4. Tell me about your language learning experiences.
  - Describe your first language learning experience in Canada.
  - What future images did you envisage while learning EAL? (Describe them.)
  - How did your future images influence or stimulate your EAL learning?
  - Where and how did you receive language training?
  - What expectations did you seek from EAL programs?
  - Were the expectations fulfilled?
  - What challenges/successes did you experience?
  - How did the challenges/successes influence you?
5. Currently, are you enrolled in a language training program? What type of program is it? How is it helpful in relation to your target/current workplaces?
6. What is the main purpose for learning English?
7. What does language learning mean to you? (E.g. Investment, self realization...)
8. Did your level of proficiency in English affect your experience as an immigrant (worker) to Canada? How?
9. How has language learning changed you over time?

10. What aspects of you and your situations impeded or assisted you in learning EAL? (E.g. personalities, motivation, economic or family situations etc)
11. What (strategies/ practice/ methods) do you think was the most helpful to improve your English skills? How did you improve your English skills?

### **Employment /Workplaces**

1. Tell me about your job search experiences.
  - How did you try to find a job?
  - How soon after your arrival, were you able to get a job?
2. What is your current employment status?
3. In your view, are you working in an appropriate job for someone with your skills and education? If no, what's the main reason why you are not in the right kind of job?
4. How satisfied are you with the present job?
5. What employment services did you use for your job?
6. What are the big differences in job searching and workplaces in Canada, compared to Korean cultures?
7. What are the obstacles for you when you get into your workplace communities, if any? (E.g. language facility, structural obstacle, discrimination ...)
8. How helpful were your language leaning experiences for your job opportunities and your practice of work?
9. What do you think are the necessities for you to get a job or workplace?
10. What issues or problems came up when you were looking for a job or practicing in your workplace?
11. When you practice in your workplace community, what factors help/hinder you?
12. What does it mean for you to have a job in Canada?
13. What roles do you think language plays in your workplace community?
14. Tell me about your successful experiences in relation to your workplaces.
15. What do you think about the relationships between the imagined workplace community and your reality? Do you feel that you are participating in your imagined workplace community? What makes you feel attached to the workplace community? What makes you feel the opposite?
16. What imagined workplace community, if any, are you conceiving?
17. To reach the community, what kind of efforts are you making?

### ***Section3. Other Living Experiences***

1. What have been your big concerns while living in Canada? (E.g. family, job, children, security...)
2. What challenges/successes have you experienced?
3. What immigration services were do you think most helpful?
4. What has changed in your social relations?
5. What communities or social groups are you involved in? (E.g. professional affiliations, church...) How and why did you get in the community? Did they make a difference in your learning of EAL, practicing in your workplace or life?
6. Tell me about your visit to Korea. What does Korea mean to you?

7. What are the most valuable things in your life? (E.g. children, your work...)
8. How have your immigration experiences changed your personality or sense of self?
9. What conflicts have you experienced living in Canada? (E.g. family, social, cultural, political...)

#### ***Section 4. Negotiation & Overall Evaluation***

1. How did you negotiate all the challenges or conflicts in your workplace communities? What strategies did you use?
2. Do you feel that you have changed through the negotiation? How have you changed?
3. What do you think is the most important contributor/hindrance to the success of your immigrant life?
4. What changes would you suggest for the immigrant /language programs in relation to your workplace experiences?
5. Do you feel that you are participating in Canadian society?
6. If not, what makes you feel you are not participating in Canadian society?  
What will make you feel that you are a member of this society?
7. Where do you think you belong? (E.g. Canada, Korea...) Please identify yourself.
8. Overall, how was your immigration experience in Canada?
9. What would you have needed to make your immigration experience better?
10. What do you imagine for your future life? Tell me about your future plans.
11. Tell me anything else that was not asked or discussed but you believe is an important aspect of your immigrant experiences.