

Not Just a Heritage Language: Shifting Linguistic Landscapes of Ukrainian Immigrant  
Families in English Canada

by

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## Abstract

The global interplay of political, economic, personal, and societal factors is causing growing numbers of people to search for better and safer places to raise their families, with the result that established values and linguistic beliefs in host countries will undergo inevitable revision and reconsideration. It has been well established that the priority for newcomers should be linguistic repertoire expansion by acquisition of an additional language rather than replacement of their native languages by the language of the mainstream society. With this in mind, the objectives of this project were to document and analyze participants' experiences regarding home language use and parenting in Canada, to discover successful strategies for the encouragement and maintenance of Ukrainian, and finally, to address the possible connections between ongoing events in Ukraine and immigrants' perception of their cultural and linguistic heritage. The project is informed by the theoretical frameworks of postcolonialism, language socialization, and symbolic power, while the data were analyzed by applying emergent themes and cross-case analysis. The participants represented cultural and linguistic differences among Ukrainian immigrants from different geographical regions of Ukraine. The results made it clear that heritage language maintenance is not a purely linguistic problem, and it is not divorced from political, social, and cultural circumstances in the host country, the immigrants' home country, or the imagined communities they are associated with. While geographic separation is fixed, recent immigrants bring with them their native language and culture, hoping to recreate a familiar lifestyle in the host country. The immigrants participating in this study were situated along a broad spectrum, ranging from those who felt happy, successful, and confident in their efforts of language maintenance to those who felt doubtful and uncertain but were, in all likelihood, more realistic in their expectations.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

According to the 2011 Census of Population, more than 200 mother languages, including the official languages of English and French, are used in Canadian households (Statistics Canada, 2012). In recognition of the cultural and linguistic diversity that is becoming a reality for many countries, the United Nations has proclaimed February 21 International Mother Language Day (United Nations, 2015). Recent trends in population mobility have caused a considerable increase in the worldwide number of immigrants, not only in the traditionally multicultural countries that have welcomed immigrants for centuries, but also in some predominantly homogeneous countries. In addition to the steady flow of immigrants for economic reasons, prolonged military conflicts in war-torn regions are constant sources of refugees and asylum-seekers forced to relocate to safer places. Guardado (2010) uses the term “popular cosmopolitanism” to refer to this phenomenon of mass migration that encompasses all groups of populations, noting that these cosmopolitan migrants may have complex cultural affiliations and identities as a result of interactions between their home and host cultures.

The interplay of political, economic, societal, and personal factors causes people to search for better and safer places to raise their families. While governments in host countries try to accommodate newcomers, issues of heritage language loss are often overlooked. In many cases, immigrant parents are left without any support or encouragement from the hosting countries: on the one hand, they struggle to acquire a mainstream language in order to survive and function in their new linguistic environment; on the other hand, they feel a great need to ensure that their children maintain their first language. Unfortunately, many immigrant parents, confronted with this yet another challenge amongst the overwhelming number of problems they

have to face in a new country, end up ignoring the problem of heritage language loss. While they are trying simply to survive and provide the necessities for their children, the gradual loss of their heritage language may negatively affect close family ties as well as their children's sense of ethnic identity.

Among many identity markers, heritage language is the only one that “carries extensive cultural content” (Dorian, 1999, p. 31). Languages also serve to build “particular solidarities” among members of imagined communities (Anderson, 1992). Nonetheless, history and modern linguistic realities present evidence of the possibility of transferring a collective sense of ethnic identity even without preserving a common heritage language. On the other hand, once a heritage language is lost, its deep and meaningful cultural content is also probably lost, even though some people believe their heritage identity can be maintained and transmitted by means of a language other than their heritage language. In the context of immigrant communities in Canada, we may observe, for example, how Ukrainian-Canadians have replaced their lost heritage language with alternative art forms like dancing, crafts, celebrations, and community festivals, where these arts may conceptualize a consolidating, collective memory as a life “otherwise” (Greene, 1995)—that is, without the heritage language, yet with traces of and connections to one's heritage culture.

Traditionally, new waves of immigration are considered one of the main sources of preserving heritage languages, working to increase the number of speakers and refresh the heritage communities in host countries. However, new immigration alone does not guarantee that the mother tongue will be maintained because the common pattern is for the first generation to remain most proficient in their native language, the second generation to become bilingual, with their greatest fluency in English, and for the third generation, unfortunately, to lose competence in the language of their grandparents (Campbell & Christian, 2003; Nesteruk, 2010). By the

second or third generation, a heritage language adopts a more symbolic than communicative function (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Gogonas, 2009). Although heritage language decline is common among immigrant communities, Edwards (2005) argues that heritage language loss or replacement by another language should not be “logically inevitable” (p. 25). Thus, we may ask, is language loss sudden and abrupt, or is it so subtle and undetectable that even parents do not notice it and end up in a state of denial? Chumak-Horbatsch (1999) reports that the parents in her study consider their children’s proficiency in a heritage language (Ukrainian) to be quite low in comparison to their peers in Ukraine. It is reasonable to expect that the version of Ukrainian spoken by immigrant children in Canada is not the same as the Ukrainian that children in Ukraine speak. It would seem that complete fluency and literacy in a heritage language is hardly possible for second and third generation immigrants.

Addressing the issues of heritage language maintenance, Nesteruk (2010) concludes that for immigrant parents from Eastern Europe, it is possible “to *transmit* heritage language to young children, but it is exceptionally difficult to *maintain* it during the adolescent years due to the developmental pressures of this age and a desire to preserve a strong parent-child connection” (p. 284). This conclusion—that parents switch to English and give up their home language to preserve close relationships with their children—is at odds with numerous other studies that point to the tremendous role of heritage languages in building strong and close family relationships. It is puzzling, in Nesteruk’s scenario, how immigrant parents could manage to keep close relationships with their children without the advantage of a common home language. If they really can communicate successfully with their children without a heritage language, can English actually replace and perform those functions traditionally assigned to heritage

languages? Or is Nesteruk's (2010) research finding limited only to her sample of highly educated professionals from Eastern Europe fluent in English?

Attention to different minority languages in research is naturally explained by the number of immigrants from a specific country or region, as well as other demographic factors. Even though the last wave of immigrants from Ukraine has been outnumbered by immigrants from other places, Ukrainians still constitute a significant percent of newcomers to Canada, and residents claiming Ukrainian heritage comprise a high percentage within heritage groups. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, there are 1,251,170 Ukrainian Canadians who constitute Canada's ninth-largest ethnic population group (as cited in Swyripa, 2015); however, according to the 2006 Census of Population, only 111,540 people identified Ukrainian as their mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2015). This dramatic discrepancy in numbers could be attributed to the fact that heritage language transmission decreases significantly across second and subsequent generations of immigrants; the majority of respondents who indicated Ukrainian as their first language were probably first-generation immigrants. Generally, heritage language maintenance may be defined as "a situation in which a speaker, a group of speakers, or a speech community continue to use their language in some or all spheres of life despite the pressure from the dominant or majority language" (Pauwels, 2004, p. 719 as cited in Hudyma, 2012, p. 3). Although extensive research has been carried out on issues of heritage language maintenance and loss, there are few research findings regarding the maintenance of Ukrainian: among those worth mentioning are the studies by Chumak-Horbatsch (1999) in Canada and Nesteruk (2010) in the USA (although the latter's focus is on East European immigrants in general, not Ukrainians in particular).

The most recent wave of immigration from Ukraine was provoked by open borders and instability after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. According to Swyripa (2015), Canada welcomed 23, 623 immigrants from Ukraine from 2004 to 2013; between 2006 and 2015, there were 23, 825 new permanent residents from Ukraine (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2016). It is worth pointing out that the ongoing military conflict and volatile political and economic landscape in Ukraine have likely spurred the number of Ukrainians willing to immigrate to Canada. Because the immigration process typically takes more than two years, we may continue to see ongoing (and even increasing) immigration of Ukrainians to Canada after 2017. However, I need to be cautious in my predictions, partially because the Canadian government has recently committed to granting residence to thousands of Syrian refugees, so that the immigration process for other categories may take even longer; consequently, at this point it is difficult to predict just when and how dramatically the numbers of Ukrainians in Canada might increase.

Historically, Ukrainian Canadians have resided mostly in the Prairie provinces, specifically in the cities of Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Saskatoon, where around 13–16% of the population have Ukrainian heritage (Swyripa, 2015). Despite such official statistics on the significant numbers of Ukrainian Canadians, enrolment in Ukrainian heritage programs is declining, according to Martin (2010), leaving the question as to whether this phenomenon is connected with an increased desire among new immigrants to assimilate into Canadian society, accompanied by a declining sense of ethnic identity and pride.

Issues of heritage language maintenance and loss are not unique in the Canadian context, but research addressing language transmission in specific cultural-linguistic communities is especially valuable because there seem to be significant differences across various ethnicities in

terms of intergenerational language transmission (Houle, 2013). Comparing success rates of heritage language transmission to Canadian-born children in 1981 and 2006, Houle (2013) notes a 14 % increase in terms of successful heritage language maintenance (when children speak the same language as their immigrant mothers) across most language groups, with the exception of some European languages.

Research on minority language maintenance contributes not only to the specific heritage language community under observation but generally benefits our understanding of the process of language acquisition, connectivity between one's ethnic identity and linguistic repertoire, the benefits and challenges of being bi/trilingual, and, most notably, the role of a heritage language in parent-child relationships. Findings are not restricted to the particular community being researched but may also be relevant for first generation immigrants from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Research on language maintenance can also contribute to the promise and enhancement of a bilingual atmosphere in mixed marriages, which, according to the 2011 National Household Survey, constitute 4.6% of all common-law and married couples (Statistics Canada, 2014 a). There is always a place for linguistic compromise in families where partners represent different cultures and languages; most likely the individual with the more prestigious or mainstream language dominates in terms of a common family language. In my family, for instance, we speak Russian, my husband's first language, not only because he has no proficiency in my first language, Ukrainian, but also partially because Russian is considered the dominant language of the two. In our friend's family, on the other hand, where Russian is also the husband's first language, they speak English because the wife was born in Canada and speaks English only, so that the mainstream language overrules Russian in this hierarchy. Ideally, there should be a

balance between spousal mother tongues, but in reality, this rarely happens. According to Statistics Canada, in 2011 around 17.5% of the population claimed to use at least two home languages, and 20% of Canadian residents acknowledged speaking non-official languages at home (Statistics Canada, 2012). What these numbers do not reflect are the everyday challenges confronting bilingual Canadians trying to protect their home environments from the linguistic pressures of the outside world.

Finally, research focused on minority language maintenance may also be useful in terms of immigration policy. Canadian society proclaims commitment to multiculturalism and multilingualism, but if certain immigrant languages are not maintained due to a decrease in numbers of newcomers, weakened language transmission among subsequent generations, and the aging population of first-generation immigrants (Houle, 2013), then there may be a need to revise quotas and the numbers of approved applications from the countries in question to increase the number of new immigrants.

### **The Significance of the Project**

The purpose of this project is to explore the strategies, challenges, and motivations for heritage language maintenance among immigrant families from Ukraine. I focused on new immigrants with children who were either born in Canada or arrived in Canada at a young enough age that their first language proficiency was potentially in danger of being replaced by the dominant language of the mainstream society. I deliberately selected participants who were not second- or third-generation Ukrainian-Canadians. I believe that the term *heritage language* is not quite accurate when referencing new immigrants and their children; rather, *home language* is more appropriate, evoking the intimate bonds that unite parents and children. In my opinion, the home language is more than just a language; it is a way of identifying and positioning oneself in

relation to one's child, an integral characteristic of the intimacy between parent and child, and central to the way in which a child perceives the parent. Such relationships in new immigrant families are very complicated, and they are different from those in established homes in both the host country and the one left behind. Immigration is a dramatic, transitional stage in a family's history, particularly when the first language is at risk: for children, the mother tongue is easily replaced by English, while for parents, the mother language is easily relegated to communication in the private sphere only.

This research project adds to the literature on heritage language maintenance among immigrant and minority communities. Having observed a range of family dynamics, the steady decline of enrolment in some bilingual programs, and the binary attitudes many new immigrant parents have toward their first languages, I believe that all immigrant parents should have the freedom to choose the language of communication with their children, without being obliged to switch to the dominant language of the host country.

From my own life experience as an immigrant in Canada, I know that immigrant parents seem to have a wide range of expectations of their children in terms of language proficiency, so the question stands: how much language is enough to still feel connected with the people you are close to? I am not focusing on the amount of language in terms of the number of vocabulary items or grammatical errors; rather, I am trying to understand the phenomenon of home language as experienced by parents. I prefer the term *home language* to *heritage language* because I am convinced this highlights its most important aspect; immigrants' children may not have the opportunity to attend a heritage school or speak their heritage language outside the home, so that the only domain left would be conversations with their parents and relatives who share the same language. I also believe that a common mother language may be the only tool that immigrant

parents and their children have in common; unfortunately, they may well lose their once-shared cultural experience over time.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This research project is guided by a broad overarching question: How do immigrant parents of Ukrainian background manage to maintain their heritage language in Canada? <sup>1</sup> In addition to outlining specific language maintenance strategies, this research will also attempt to discover the challenges and successes of parenting in the context of two or more cultures and languages because these realities are connected to immigrants' perception of their national, linguistic, and cultural heritage as well as the status of their mother tongue, especially in light of recent political and cultural changes in Ukraine. Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) believes that our ethnicity and mother tongues are somewhat prescribed by the fact of our birthplace in a specific community, but I think that the constructs of ethnicity and mother tongue tend to be shaped and influenced by the general socio-economic and political realities of our life context.

Besides my main, overarching question, a myriad of other questions, puzzles, and tensions shaped my interview prompts. Andrews (2007) asserts that our lived experiences are inseparable from the socio-political circumstances in the countries where we were born or reside; in her research on exploring individual lives "in highly politicized contexts" across different nations and countries, she witnesses how personal stories are interwoven with the stories of the nation, and how personal decisions and choices are influenced by the different socio-historical circumstances. How do the present-day realities in Ukraine influence language maintenance among Ukrainian-speaking immigrants and their imagined communities? What about persons

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<sup>1</sup> When formulating research questions, Josselson (2007) advises to think of more general and broad questions that will leave some possibility for future exploration of the themes and data not available at the onset of the interviews.

bilingual in Ukrainian and Russian—which language should they give their preference to? The issues of immigrant home languages and heritage language maintenance are not a purely linguistic problem, nor are they divorced from political, social, and cultural circumstances, both in the host country and in immigrants' home countries, along with the imagined communities they are associated with.

Parental strategies in heritage language maintenance across various age groups (elementary school kids versus teenagers, for example) also raise questions. If parents do sometimes need to use English in communication with their children, how do they feel and perceive themselves as a result? Do they think that their parental role or image has changed somehow? While parenting in a second language, do they fear inadequacy or the lack of emotional bonding, or do they suffer scruples of conscience (Kouritzin, 2000)? Do they feel that their mother tongue and the heritage language of their children is in stagnation or does not sound natural enough? Do parents simplify their heritage language input (besides obvious age-appropriate simplifications) while communicating with their children? What transformations do parents' identities/family dynamics undergo as a result of parenting in a heritage language and English? Kouritzin (2000) admits that parenting in a second language can be emotionally challenging and unnatural. How does parenting in two or more languages feel? How do parents feel about their children's changing linguistic choices? How do they think their parenting experience would be different in Ukraine?

Having spent nine years in Canada, I can state that in immigration everyone has his or her own unique story; despite popular stereotypes regarding representatives from specific nations or countries, there is no typical story. Andrews (2007) notes:

I believe that the construction of a static “home” community, marked by shared values, is just that, a construction, albeit one of deep personal and social significance, which resides in the imagination of individuals. Many of us experience our home, and the meaning of home, in conflicting and sometimes even incoherent ways. The reality of who we are, and where we belong, is rarely as simple as the picture of static homogeneity would suggest. (p. 507-508)

To address the multifaceted roles and significance of languages in immigrant families, I decided to borrow Pennycook’s (2012) term *linguistic landscapes* for my title. These linguistic landscapes are not clearly defined—they are blurry, diverse, and shifting. My research, which began as a more linguistic inquiry into minority and immigrant language maintenance, eventually ended with a broad exploration of identity, origin, and legitimacy. The title of my thesis can ultimately apply to all minority languages in Canada because none of them is guaranteed survival in a foreign context.

Therefore, constituting strands within my big research question “How do immigrant parents of Ukrainian background manage to maintain their heritage language in Canada?” (cited above, p. 20), my three main **research questions** are:

1. What are the most significant problems/factors in maintaining Ukrainian among children in immigrant families?
2. What are the specific strategies of heritage language maintenance among immigrant families of Ukrainian origin?
3. What is the role of macro-social factors such as mainstream society, imagined communities, and ongoing realities in the immigrant’s home country in the issue of heritage language maintenance?

Besides these main questions, there are also several **subquestions**, that may contribute to a better understanding of the problem of heritage language maintenance and loss:

- 1) What is the role of heritage language in building close parent-child relationships?
- 2) How do immigrant parents negotiate and find balance between the language of the mainstream society and their first language in the context of their daily lives?
- 3) To what degree is it possible to achieve fluency for children whose parents are first-generation immigrants from Ukraine? What is the role of literacy in the process of heritage language transmission?

The **specific objectives** of this project are, therefore: (1) to document, analyze, and report participants' stories regarding their home language and parenting in Canada; to find out specific successful strategies in terms of positive encouragement and maintenance of a heritage language; (2) to address the possible connections between recent and ongoing events in Ukraine and immigrants' perception of their heritage; (3) to review research literature on heritage language maintenance and find out whether my research project has any new, conflicting, or contradictory findings relative to those documented by previous research in the field of heritage language maintenance and loss; and (4) to expand the scarce research data on recent immigrants from Ukraine.

This document is organized in the following order: 1) this introduction; 2) a literature review of the previous research findings on heritage language maintenance and loss, summarizing what is known on this subject and identifying possible questions or tensions not yet addressed; 3) the methodology and theoretical framework section, explaining the appropriateness of a decolonizing lens, language socialization, identity theories, and social capital theory in my research project; 4) the methods section, first addressing the benefits of interviews and then

presenting details of the study design, recruitment of participants, and data collection and interpretation, as well as discussing issues of validity, confidentiality, and trustworthiness; 5) the section describing my five case studies; 6) the findings section, providing findings to answer my main research questions as well as the subquestions; 7) the discussion section, where I attempt to address some emergent themes with regard to Ukrainian language maintenance in Canada; 8) conclusion and recommendations; 9) references; 10) appendix A (interview questions ); 11) appendix B (prompts for writing personal journals /stories); 12) appendix C (final interview questions in English); 13) appendix D (final interview questions translated in Ukrainian); 14) appendix E (participants' profile); 15) appendix F (volunteer recruitment letters); 16) appendix G (consent forms).

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

A literature review should be organized around the principle of “generativity” (Shulman, 1999, as cited in Boote & Beile, 2005), providing the possibility to ground our research on cumulative findings in the field. Consequently, the purpose of this section is to review recent findings in literature and scholarship regarding heritage languages; factors leading to language loss and maintenance; the role of family efforts in heritage language maintenance; possible gaps in literature addressing minority languages in Canada.

### Heritage Language Definitions

Before examining the benefits of heritage language maintenance, I think it necessary to clarify what is meant by the term *heritage language* and what other terms are used interchangeably in scholarly articles on language maintenance and loss. In addition, for the purpose of this paper, it is important to identify who may be considered a heritage language learner.

Many scholars agree that the increasing demand for foreign languages in a globalized world can be met not only by improving foreign language teaching but, more importantly, by mobilizing potential of the heritage language communities in host countries (Van Deusen-Scholl; 2003). Discussing the issues of heritage language loss and maintenance, language professionals use different terms interchangeably to refer to one’s home language: “native language”, “primary language”, “language of origin”, “immigrant minority language”, or “community language” (He, 2010; Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003). The most popular term seems to be *heritage language*, although it is not deprived of contentious arguments. While a language may be considered a heritage language for a second or third generation immigrants in one country, this very language

is usually a fully functional, and in some cases the official language, in another country. Consequently, the adjective *heritage* may have somewhat diminishing connotation, depriving a language of its practical functionality, and positioning English hierarchically higher than any other immigrant language, which adds to the unequal perceived status of societal languages (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003).

In the literature, heritage languages are often defined as home languages different from mainstream one and without formal institutional support (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009) or “nonsocietal or nonmajority languages spoken by groups often known as linguistic minorities” (Valdes, 2005). Peyton, Ranard and McGinnis (2001) argue that, taking into account the heterogeneous cultural composition of our society, almost everyone may be assigned to some kind of minority, making this term “virtually meaningless” (p. 6). Consequently, we may also come across alternative terms for *minority* students such as “linguistically diverse students” (Wiley, 2001) or “culturally and linguistically diverse” learners (Yan, 2003). On the other hand, the adjective *heritage* is also criticized by some researchers who believe it refers “more to the past and less to the future, to traditions rather than to the contemporary” (Baker & Jones, 1998 as cited in Wiley, 2001, p. 30), so it implies only the symbolic connections to one’s ancestors, and the communicative value of the language is underestimated.

Another interpretation was suggested by Fishman (2001), who applied the term *heritage language* to languages that have “a particular family relevance to the learner” (p. 81), in a broad sense comprising Indigenous, colonial and immigrant heritage languages; at the same time, some languages may belong to both historically colonial and immigrant languages. Consequently, the term heritage language comprises all first languages of immigrant minorities in different host

countries (Gkaintartzia, Kiliarib & Tsokalidoua, 2015), as well as Indigenous languages of the native population in a postcolonial context.

While Canadian 2011 census of population uses the term *mother tongue* referring to the languages people learnt in childhood and in which they still demonstrate some proficiency at the time of the census (Statistics Canada, 2012), a heritage language is not necessarily a “mother tongue” because it may be a heritage language of a father (Guardado, 2006; Kouritzin, 2000).

Usually the definitions of a heritage language are based on either function (the language a person uses most) or competence (the language a person knows best), but Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak (1995) view a mother tongue from the perspective of linguistic human rights as one or more languages that “one has learned first and identifies with” (p. 361), thus suggesting that an individual may have more than one mother language. Regarding mother tongue maintenance as a “linguistic human right”, Phillipson, Rannut, and Skutnabb-Kangas (1995) assign some hierarchical relations to language acquisition in terms of which language appears to be the most important. For those whose first language happens to be a global language (English for example), the linguistic hierarchy does not really exist since the person can be monolingual without any need to master additional languages (Phillipson et al., 1995). For linguistic minorities, any denial of being educated and socialized into the mother tongue reflects the violation of human rights since the mother tongue is the most important in the hierarchy, and its limited proficiency may further restrict the educational, economic and other possibilities for minorities (Phillipson et al., 1995).

Despite the broad scope of terminology, all terms mentioned above imply close connections to one’s home, parents and family (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015), indicating their important

role in first language acquisition and maintenance. In this paper, the terms *heritage language*, *mother tongue* and *first language* are frequently used interchangeably to refer to the language a person learns first and is exposed to in the context of his/her family.

### **Heritage Language Speakers**

The concept of *heritage language learner* is rather controversial since there are debates and disagreements in the field regarding the status of heritage language learners, and their levels of proficiency in a heritage language. While for some a heritage language is the language of interactions and ethnic identity, for others it may be just a symbolic tribute to old family traditions.

It is frustrating when immigrants who visit their home countries feel that they do not belong there anymore; first generation immigrants are somewhere in between two different countries, not fully belonging to any of them. Even though Rumbaut and Ima (1988) define as *generation 1.5* only those who arrive in a new country as children or teens and who, consequently, adopt characteristics of both first- and second-generation immigrants, generation 1.5 can also be applicable to other age groups and categories of immigrants who have spent considerable amount of time in a host country. Guardado (2010) states that heritage learners share characteristics with the “Third Culture Kids” (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004 as cited in Guardado, 2010) because they grow up exposed to more than one culture and language and, as a result, develop new identities incorporating elements from two or more ethno-linguistic groups.

According to Montrul (2010), the term *heritage speaker* in a broad sense refers to adults or children who grew up in a context of two languages (the dominant one and the home language). The term is also relatively new: it appeared in Canada around 1970s and in the United

States even later (Montrul, 2010). Wang and Green (2001) define heritage speakers in the United States as “those who are new arrivals or migrants; foreign-born students who arrived at a young age but have been in US schools for several years; and US-born students of immigrant or [I]ndigenous ancestry” (as cited in Lee, 2013, p. 1577).

In general, the term heritage language may imply different levels of proficiency or no proficiency at all, just some ethnic connections to one’s heritage (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003). According to Benmamoun, Montrul, and Polinsky (2013), some scholars use the term heritage learner/speaker to refer to anyone with cultural or personal connections to the language regardless of their lack of proficiency in a heritage language; other scholars cautiously restrict the term heritage speaker to only those who have some level of fluency in their heritage language (Benmamoun, Montrul, & Polinsky, 2013). Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) calls the latter group “heritage learners” i.e. those with strong personal and cultural attachments to the language who grew up having some competence, while the former group may be referred to as “learners with a heritage motivation” (p. 222) i.e. usually adult representatives of the second or third generation seeking the possibility to reunite with their cultural heritage through their lost heritage language, which in this case is learnt as a foreign language (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003).

### **Factors Leading to Language Loss**

Since one of my main research questions focuses on potential challenges in heritage language maintenance, this section will help in addressing some common problems in heritage language maintenance, and, consequently, the potential for language loss as a result of the combination of all those factors.

**Heritage language loss.** Although the research literature presents ample findings, it is hard to pinpoint the exact definition or criteria for partial or complete language loss. While some scholars mean by language loss a language that an individual used to have some proficiency in, other authors refer to language loss on individual and group levels as a complete failure of intergenerational language transmission. So, it is still debatable whether an individual who has never had any knowledge of his or her heritage language can claim that the language is lost. For example, Benmamoun, Montrul, and Polinsky (2013) assert that “language attrition is language loss at the individual level” (p. 28). “For a grammatical property to be lost,” they continue, “it must have been acquired, mastered, and retained as part of the speaker’s knowledge for a while” (p. 28). Some researchers attempt to trace the grammatical, phonological and morphological traces of early, partial or complete language loss (Benmamoun, Montrul & Polinsky, 2013; Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Dahl, Rice, Steffensen, & Amundsen, 2010), other scholars focus on language loss as a phenomenon affecting individuals with low or no proficiency in their heritage languages (Hasbun, 2005; Kouritzin, 1999; Kouritzin, 2000; Rodriguez, 1983).

Scholars also address the problem of a first language loss while acquiring the skills in a second language (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Gogonas, 2009; Guardado, 2006; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Research literature questions the popular belief that immigrant adults and their children should not be educated in their first language and acquire English language as soon as possible in order to assimilate and adjust to a new country (Wong Fillmore, 1991). Researchers are rather critical towards the assumption that the earlier children are exposed to the English language, the easier it will be for them in future education (Kouritzin, 2000; Wong Fillmore, 1991).

Even though some people who lost their heritage language mistakenly believe it is not lost, it is just somewhere sleeping in their memory, and they can reactivate it within a short

period of time (Kouritzin, 1999; Kouritzin, 2000), the process of language loss is a gradual one and may happen slowly over years: as one research participant admits “it’s amazing how easy it is to forget a language” (Kouritzin, 2000).

**External and internal factors in language loss.** In general, under favourable conditions individuals do not refuse to learn their mother tongues; heritage language loss happens only because of pressure from the outside factors such as “political suppression, social discrimination, or economic deprivation” (Dorian, 1999, p. 39). Heritage language loss may also occur as a result of intergroup interaction, that usually goes hand in hand with assimilation or marginalization. In some cases, the minority groups may find a compromise by means of “economic assimilation (in work), linguistic integration (by way of bilingualism), and marital separation (by endogamy). This implies that the minority can share some values with the majority without sacrificing their minority culture” (Liebkind, 1999, p. 142), but in many cases our complicated modernity leaves little choice for a compromise, forcing minority languages off the “market” (Bourdieu, 1991).

Wong Fillmore (2003) differentiates between external and internal reasons for language loss. She points out that historically external forces to acculturation and assimilation were main causes for Aboriginal languages to go out of use, while immigrant heritage languages were “more often *given up* rather than *taken away*” (p. 100), implying the desire of new immigrants to integrate successfully in a mainstream society. Moreover, unlike immigrant languages that always have a country of origin and may be maintained or revived, if not in Canada, then somewhere else, Aboriginal languages have no other motherland. Consequently, loss of immigrant languages affects individuals, families, and communities of immigrant minorities only, but not the language per se, while the loss of Aboriginal languages leads to language death.

However, over the last decades, official policies and attitudes towards differences and linguistic minorities may have contributed to the fact that so many children are deprived of their first language (Wong Fillmore, 2003). For example, in Arizona, minority children have no access to education in Spanish since there is no official support in terms of bilingual education (Cashman, 2009). The external forces also account for heritage language loss in many European countries where the cultural diversity and multilingualism are frowned upon by many educators, policy makers and general public. The insufficient heritage language skills of immigrant children can be justified by their lack of exposure to heritage languages in some European countries (Gogonas, 2009; Yazici, Ilter, & Glover, 2010). While official language policy and rules of the mainstream society play a crucial role in linguistic choices, Brown (2008) implies that in some cases the family tradition in language choices may be quite pronounced in promoting languages other than the official ones.

Heritage language acquisition and maintenance are closely related to other concepts: bilingualism, high and low status languages, dominant languages, languages of minority, immigration and adaptation, interpersonal relations and adaptation. According to Sridhar (1994), “language use in all domains (home, education, workplace, religion, etc.) ensures maintenance” (p. 628). It is obvious that for immigrant families, their first language may not be available in all domains mentioned above. While the exclusion of first languages from formal settings may be explained by different political or social factors, the avoidance of heritage language on a family level is more dramatic since the intergenerational home-family-neighbourhood transmission of the heritage language is the most important stage within Fishman’s theory of Reversing Language Shift (Fishman, 1991). In other words, to avoid a heritage language loss, the linguistic exchanges in the first language are indispensable in the family and close social networks.

**Desire to integrate into the mainstream society.** Research literature presents numerous reasons that cause both immigrant parents and their children to give up their heritage language. Immigrant parents' professional background, English proficiency, and detachment from ethnic communities are common reasons for a shift to a dominant language. For example, Nesteruk (2010) speculates that recent waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe are mostly professionals with sufficient knowledge of English, who do not reside in their ethnic communities and tend to use predominantly English not only at workplace but also at home, thus limiting the possibilities of exposure to a heritage language for their children.

A major cause of heritage language loss among immigrant communities is their desire to integrate into the mainstream society and succeed educationally and economically (Isurin, 2011; Kouritzin, 1999; Kouritzin, 2006; Nesteruk, 2010; Rodriguez, 1983; Wong Fillmore, 2003). Quite often parents have very pragmatic motivation while choosing the language for communication with their children; they believe that the mainstream language must be adopted even at the expense of the heritage language: "culturally driven maintenance patterns are giving way to the economically driven shift patterns" (Sridhar, 1994, p. 629). Parents often view the dominant language as a key to education and a successful future career of their children in a new country (Guardado, 2006; Hasbun, 2005; Kouritzin, 1999; Kouritzin, 2000; Lai, 2009; Lanza & Svendsen, 2007; Shibata, 2004). For instance, reporting on Russian heritage language maintenance among Jews in Israel, the USA and Germany, Isurin (2011) found that the desire to integrate into the mainstream society and not look different triggers "the parents' conviction that the eventual acculturation of their children in Germany should come at the price of rejecting the need for the Russian language" (p. 222).

Research literature presents substantial evidence that language-minority children are willing to achieve proficiency in the mainstream language in order to be accepted in the new society and not to be different in any way; consequently, when they face a choice of a dominant language versus a heritage language, they tend to favour the mainstream language (Cashman, 2009; Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Gogonas, 2009; Kouritzin, 1999; Kouritzin, 2000; Pease-Alvares & Winsler, 1994; Wong Fillmore, 1991). The desire to join the mainstream society is usually accompanied by diminishing proficiency in one's first language, so teachers and researchers should make immigrant children aware that their desire to join the mainstream society should not put at risk their first language and close family ties (Carroll, Motha, & Price, 2008).

**Ethnic identity and heritage languages.** Some factors contributing to language maintenance or loss could also be attributed to the *theory of core values*, that states that some ethnolinguistic groups may have stronger attachment to their mother tongue as the most important cultural value, while for other groups their ethnic language may be replaced by other important concepts, such as religion (Lanza & Svendsen, 2007; Smolicz, 1995). For some ethnic groups, their language is a strong indication of their cultural identity (Gogonas, 2012). For example, research found that language shift happens more frequently and faster among Asian Americans than among Latino Americans (Kim & Min, 2010; Oh & Fuligni, 2010).

Parental interest and involvement in the process of heritage language maintenance depends on their attitudes towards their culture, identity, religion as well as ethnic origin because different nationalities do not have the same commitment to the first language maintenance among their children (Houle, 2013; Yan, 2003). A strong sense of cultural identity may promote first language maintenance, while a sense of shame for the native culture may cause the opposite

result. One of the reasons for first language loss can be a feeling of inferiority towards the dominant culture (Kouritzin, 1999; Kouritzin, 2006). In fact, in one study, some research participants had bias and demonstrated “racism against their own race” (Kouritzin, 1999, p. 37), frequently indicating their lack of respect towards recent immigrants from their parents’ countries of origin.

**Mixed marriages and heritage languages.** The choice of home language in culturally mixed marriages depends on societal, political, and economic benefits of the mainstream language (Brown, 2008). Exogamous families where partners do not share the same first language comprise a significant reason, if not the main reason, for decrease in intergenerational language transmission among immigrant communities (Houle, 2013).

**Parental fears regarding their children’s language development.** In many cases parents view their heritage language merely as a tradition or symbolic connection to their past, while the dominant language is associated with success and achievements (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999). Shin (2003) notes that there is a lack of research findings about different misconceptions and myths that can potentially affect parents’ decisions regarding language choice. Some parents express fear that their children will not understand teachers’ instruction, so they want their children to have sufficient proficiency in English before they start formal schooling (Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014).

In their desire to help children prepare for formal schooling in English, some parents intentionally shift to English at home so that their children will not fall behind and will not be perceived as immigrants because of the accent (Nesteruk, 2010). The quality of parental English input is questionable since most likely they have an accent; consequently, they are not able to

provide a correct accent-free model for their children and may also demonstrate nonstandard English (Kouritzin, 1999).

**Erroneous perception of bilingualism.** Parents may also have misleading understanding of the concept of bilingualism, which can trigger their shift to English while communicating with their children. They often express concern that exposure to more than one language may be confusing for their children (Döpke; 1992). Tse (2001) defines bilingualism as “the ability to learn a second language without losing the first or heritage language” (as cited in Yearwood, 2008). The widely-spread attitude towards bilingualism as equal proficiency in two languages, labeled as *full bilingualism*, is inaccurate (Shin, 2003); moreover, Valdes (2001) believes that a narrow definition of bilinguals as a combination of two monolinguals equally proficient in both languages is virtually unrealistic (“mythical bilingual”), so a broader understanding is more valid (“the bilingual continuum”). In addition, bilingual abilities can vary at different stages (ages) of one’s life and over generations (Valdes, 2001). Martin-Jones and Romaine (1986) reiterate that the term *balanced bilingualism* is biased and one-sided because it refers to the competence of monolingual speakers in historically stable linguistic communities with standardized languages; consequently, the term is not relevant to linguistic development of bilinguals in communities with more than one language.

Moreover, Döpke (1992) claims that even if children acquire two languages simultaneously, they may not always be equally proficient in both since usually the language used more often and in a broader variety of contexts dominates over the language used only at home. Bilingual people may also fall either in the category of “passive/receptive” bilinguals in case they can only understand a heritage language, or “active/productive” bilinguals if they are fluent and literate in a minority language (Döpke, 1992).

Erroneous perceptions of bi-/multilingualism account for the fact that the same linguistic practice may be viewed either as a stigmatized minority bi-/multilingualism or elite multilingualism: “bilingual education is a cause of further impoverishment for the poor but a potential source of further enrichment for the rich” (Cummins, 2000, p. 26). Bilingualism, as one of the particular characteristics of minorities, is considered to be the problem in mainstream society (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999). In the same vein, Fuller (2009) claims that there are two different forms of bilingualism: “immigrant bilingualism (which is stigmatized), and elite bilingualism (which is prestigious)” (p. 340). Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) defines what she calls “nonmodels” or “weak models” for bi-/multilingual students where their mother languages and cultural backgrounds are not appreciated; as a result, these models cannot promote bilingualism.

Kubota (2005) criticizes the populist and declarative nature of multilingual diversity often mentioned within the educational context, while at the same time this is not something educators are compelled to put into practice. In a predominantly monolingual society, there is also an uncomfortable duality of opinions towards bilingualism or multilingualism for dominant majority groups and subordinated minorities (Kubota, 2005; Macedo & Bartlome, 2014). Multicultural education may stress acquiring knowledge of an elitist nature privileging majority monolingual groups with additional foreign languages viewed as assets, while further marginalizing linguistic minorities whose bi-/multilingualism is seen as a problem that needs to be solved by acquiring the dominant language (English); consequently, bilingualism for native speakers of English is additive, while for language minorities it is subtractive (Kubota, 2005). On the other hand, bilingualism may also have two forms: the first one is formal, acquired by means of official schooling and implied literacy; the second one is informal, typically associated with home languages of immigrant children who may not have substantial formal education in their

native language and limited or no literacy skills. Kubota (2005) labeled the first type of bilingualism with capital “B”, and the second one with small “b” to illustrate two different facets of the same phenomenon. Moreover, she asserts that the English-only ideology is implied in these two forms, depriving immigrant children of becoming “Bilingual” and leaving them no choice but become either “bilingual” or even monolingual English speakers (Kubota, 2005). Acknowledging difficulties in determining clear definitions and understanding of who may be called a bilingual speaker, Martin-Jones and Romaine (1986) point out that certain practices and power imbalance within schools and society in general may label some forms of bilingualism as illegitimate; however, they suggest viewing “the productive skills of bilingual children as strategic accomplishments in performance, rather than as deficits in competence” (p. 35).

Cummins (2000) observes that bilingual education may be viewed as a threat to national unity due to a high influx of immigrants with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. He thinks it is time to revisit the historically shameful tradition of subjugating linguistic minority children by punishing them for their L1 use, and assimilating and segregating them within the dominant society. By providing a fair bilingual education, the long-standing colonial legacies can be reversed (Cummins, 2000).

**Issues with heritage schools and programs.** To maintain their home languages, some parents send their children to community-based heritage schools and programs, but, unfortunately, research literature reports frequent parental dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching styles and resources (Babae, 2014; Chen, 2010; Li, 2006), overemphasis on religious ideology (Babae, 2014), and overall insufficient amount of time available for heritage language learning (usually once a week only) (Babae, 2014; Chen, 2010). On the other hand, children may also have negative attitudes towards heritage language programs because they are not

interesting (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Hasbun, 2005), so children view heritage language learning as a boring task imposed by their parents (Kopeliovich, 2011). From my personal life experience, I know that some parents complain about mixed-age groups in heritage schools where children are bored by the content and age inappropriate activities.

**Peer factor.** Furthermore, once children begin formal schooling in a mainstream language, they are also under the influence of peers who may devalue their heritage language (Kopeliovich, 2011), so language minority students may feel ashamed of their cultural background (Gogonas, 2009; Kouritzin, 1999; Kouritzin, 2000). In their efforts to promote heritage language maintenance, parents have to deal with another challenge— a tremendous influence from peers. According to Kopeliovich (2011, “when adults’ rules and values successfully pass the filter of the peer group norms, heritage language learning may arouse children’s genuine enthusiasm and support” (p. 121).

**Attitudes towards multilingualism in a dominant society.** Anti-immigrant ideology and hostile attitudes towards some ethnic groups in a host country may provoke feelings of shame and alienation among immigrant population as well as marginalization of heritage languages (Cashman, 2009; Gogonas, 2009; Gogonas, 2012). For instance, Albanian adolescents in Greece are well informed about their stigmatized position in society and try to distance themselves from their heritage, so in the future the second generation of Albanians may perceive their first language as merely symbolic indication of the past (Gogonas, 2009).

A language ideology that assigns different economic and symbolic powers to languages and their speakers (Bourdieu, 1991) may also influence immigrants’ commitments in terms of language maintenance and intergenerational language transmission (Lo Bianco, 2003). Language

ideology may be defined as “the set of beliefs and attitudes that link social differences and linguistic differences, and establishes the social import of speaking in different ways” (Pavlenko, 2008, p. 69). In other words, language ideology determines which languages (and speakers by default) may be considered legitimate, and which ones are marginal. There is also a functional differentiation between official languages (English, for example) used in a formal setting and considered to be a language of a high register, and minority languages performing informal everyday conversational functions and viewed as low register languages (Valdes, 2001).

Language ideology is usually overtly or covertly pronounced and supported by official language policy in host countries. Some adult research participants blame not so much their parents as lack of tolerance towards multiculturalism at the time of their childhood, so they consider that their heritage language was “not so much lost, but stolen” (Kouritzin, 1999, p. 39). Pandey (2014) emphasizes that by ignoring students’ home languages and promoting discriminatory language laws, educational system can actually “silence students and jeopardize the success of entire communities” (p. 62).

Lack of motivation to maintain the first language can also be related to the official policy in the host country. For example, the official recognition of English as the only language in Arizona discourages Spanish-speaking students from maintaining their first languages because they see no practical value in them (Cashman, 2009). Cummins (2000) provides further contemporary examples of double thinking regarding language policies; he illustrates how language minority Muslim students in Greece and Spanish-speaking children in the USA have their home background and languages devalued, and they are educated in a second or even third language while losing their home languages.

**Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards minority students and their languages.** One of the questions in this project focuses on the influence of micro and macro factors determining linguistic choices of immigrant parents and their children. Schools, peers and teachers may play equally significant roles in minority children's decision to quit speaking their home language. Teachers' negative attitudes towards multilingualism in the classroom may discourage children from maintaining their first language and lead to further discrimination and marginalisation. In the study of teachers' attitudes towards minority students in Greece, researchers found that teachers negatively perceived the presence of children who did not speak the mainstream language, and educators expressed their concern that they needed to spend extra time and put additional efforts to explain the material to immigrant (Albanian) children. These teachers also claimed that the academic progress of native born (Greek) children was slowed down (Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011). These findings indicate that teachers who do not have special training in second language acquisition may express negative attitudes towards minority language maintenance and think it is the prerogative of immigrant parents only (Lee & Oxelson, 2006 as cited in Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011). Erroneous perceptions of bilingualism, and heritage languages in particular, as an obstacle in acquisition of a dominant language account for teachers' misunderstanding of the real nature of academic problems among minority students (Gkaintartzia, Kiliarib & Tsokalidoua, 2015), so educators often advise parents to use English at home to facilitate their children's second language acquisition (Kouritzin, 1999; Rodriguez, 1983).

Relationships between teachers and students are influenced by power relations between communities in a broader society, which may also impact the patterns of academic success and failures of minority students (Cummins, 2000). The classroom power discourses are often

invisible and unpronounced, but they “permeate the fabric of classroom life” (Auerbach, 1995, p.9). Language choices within the classrooms contribute to the *we* and *they* concepts assigning either *ingroup* (those who are accepted because they follow the majority rules and speak the mainstream language) or *outgroup* (those who are marginalized because they speak a minority language or have poor skills in a dominant language) identities: “in classrooms, there is often one legitimate way of speaking, the acceptance of which devalues all other codes” (Fuller, 2009, p. 345). As a result, linguistic minorities may internalize feelings of shame, oppression (Cummins, 2000), or *fatalism* (Freire, 1970) — the belief of subjugated people that they are powerless, and it is their fate to be on the margins. Consequently, ESL and minority students who feel that their cultural and linguistic backgrounds are not valued by the educational system in the dominant society may choose to withdraw from active participation. On the other hand, peers and teachers who do not share the same language and culture with immigrant children but demonstrate positive attitudes towards culturally and linguistically diverse students, may contribute to children’s motivation to keep their language and have positive attitudes towards their cultural identities in general (Lee, 2013).

**Other causes of language loss.** Among other factors contributing to heritage language loss mentioned in research literature is a lack of continuous efforts in terms of language maintenance (Chen, 2010; Nesteruk, 2010), long-time residency in a host country (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Nesteruk, 2010), busy life schedule that leaves no time and energy for teaching children heritage languages (Chen, 2010; Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Kopeliovich, 2011; Nesteruk, 2010), parental overemphasis on the importance of English proficiency (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999), demographic profile and ethnic composition of immigrant communities (Chen, 2010; Lanza & Svendsen, 2007), high mobility of immigrant population and lack of

strong bonds with ethnic communities (Nesteruk, 2010). There is also an assumption that parents' educational background may influence their decision about heritage language maintenance, but there is no consistent research data to prove that parents with academic degrees are committed to language maintenance or vice versa. For instance, there is a general agreement that the majority of recent Russian-speaking immigrants to Canada are highly-educated professionals with high English level proficiency, but there is no solid evidence to claim the correlation between parents' education and heritage language loss (Kagan & Dillon, 2001; Nesteruk, 2010).

This section has summarized potential causes of heritage language loss mentioned in research literature. The above-mentioned factors are both of personal and societal nature and present common challenges in the process of heritage language maintenance. Even though they are not specific or typical to a certain ethno-linguistic community, the participating parents in my project also face the same or similar challenges. Overall, these findings are helpful in addressing my first research question regarding problems, obstacles and challenges for parents in maintaining a heritage language in their families.

### **Negative Effects of Language Loss**

The section that follows presents negative consequences of language loss on personal, familial, emotional and societal levels. These research findings may contribute to understanding of the significant role a common family language plays in terms of parent-child communication, and personal self-identification of minority children.

**Problems with self-identification.** The potential problems of self-identification and self-esteem are related to the devaluation of the heritage language in childhood (Wong Fillmore,

1991; Kouritzin, 1999). Contemplating their lost heritage languages, adult research participants voiced a sense of “sadness”, “disappointment”, “a sense of tragedy”, and “a certain death of self” (Kouritzin, 1999). Trying to express the value of Aboriginal heritage languages, one respondent emotionally articulated his loss of a heritage language: “it’s the loss of the essence of the soul, not to know the language, because you never know how beautiful you are until you know your language... because you can only be described in a foreign tongue” (Kouritzin, 1999, p. 71-72).

**Lack of emotional connections between generations.** Out of all functions of a language, the most important one for a heritage language is the emotional connection between generations. Feeling disconnected from her heritage, Au (1997) admits with regrets that “as an adult I realized that, because I could not speak, read, or understand Chinese, I was cut off from part of my past” (Au, 1997, p. 78).

Loss of a common family language may lead to the loss of parental authority when parents are not able to communicate effectively traditional moral principles and values to their children (Kouritzin, 1999; Lai, 2009; Rodriguez, 1983; Wong Fillmore, 1991; Wong Fillmore, 2000). As a result of a heritage language loss, children are not able to keep in touch with their extended family living in the parents’ country of origin (Kouritzin, 1999). Sometimes parents may choose to switch to a dominant language while communicating with their children in case children misunderstand their message in a native language (Kopeliovich, 2011; Nesteruk, 2010; Schwartz, 2008; Wong Fillmore, 1991). In extreme cases when words fail to promote the communication between parents and younger generation, some forms of physical punishment may become the last option to resolve the conflict (Wong Fillmore, 1991).

Contemplating his deteriorating relationships with the parents, Rodriguez (1983) acknowledged that he was “a comic victim of two cultures” (p. 5) and did not believe in bilingualism proclaimed in a dominant society. After his teachers strongly advised his parents to switch to English as a family language, the life and dynamics in their family changed forever:

We remained a loving family, but one greatly changed. No longer so close; no longer bound tight by the pleasing and troubling knowledge of our public separateness. Neither my older brother nor sister rushed home after school anymore. Nor did I. (Rodriguez, 1983, p. 23)

It seems that sometimes both parents and children are not aware that they have lost more than a language, but it turns out to be too late to reverse the situation.

**Semilingualism.** Besides destroying the family bonds, the loss of a heritage language may influence negatively the acquisition of an additional language. Wong Fillmore (1991) supports the idea that insufficient first language skills have a negative impact on the process of learning a second language. Young children may stop using their mother tongue prior to being proficient in a foreign language; as a result, they may not be proficient enough in both languages (Kopeliovich, 2011; Wong Fillmore, 1991). On the other hand, *subtractive bilingualism* or *semilingualism* defined as deficiency in both L1 and L2 (Lambert, 1981 as cited in Wong Fillmore, 1991) may be viewed by some researchers as a transitional stage in language acquisition among bilingual children (Guardado, 2006). So, some experts advise that young children should be exposed to the mainstream language (for example, English) only when they achieve a certain proficiency in their first language (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Kouritzin, 2000; Wong Fillmore, 1991). While many scholars refer to semilingualism as a concept describing

inadequate language proficiency, Martin-Jones and Romaine (1986) caution that this generalized application is derogative and inaccurate. In this case, the standard for language fluency is an attempt to measure some visible linguistic competencies only (vocabulary or pronunciation for example). They claim that semilingualism as well as balanced bilingualism are rather contested labels because these terms imply “that there is such a thing as an ideal, fully competent monolingual or bilingual speaker who has a full or complete version of a language” (Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986, p. 32).

In cases where heritage languages are used only at home as the *low register languages* (Valdes, 2001), they are at risk of being in stagnation and later are replaced by inadequate skills in another language, undermining the idea of sequential bilingualism. Addressing linguistic mix in African postcolonial reality, Baker (2005) points out that children educated by means of a former colonial language (English) and communicating in their local native languages outside of school context end up not being proficient enough in either language, so they do not possess enough literacy skills to seek well-paid jobs in the future (Baker, 2005). This division in low and high register languages may also be the cause of differentiating between Cummins’ BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency), when a heritage language may be acquired at the level of BICS only; however, Martin-Jones and Romaine (1986) consider Cummins’ differentiation between these two linguistic competencies yet another masked term for semilingualism.

Insufficient knowledge of one’s heritage language is one of the causes of semilingualism, illiteracy and lack of competence in any language. Wagner (1991) analyzing illiteracy among subordinate groups, distinguished between “illiteracy of oppression” and “illiteracy of resistance”, both resulting from limited interactions between minority and majority languages

and limited access to schooling. “Illiteracy of resistance” means that minority groups reject the mainstream education and would rather be illiterate than sacrifice their identity and language; on the other hand, “illiteracy of oppression” is a result of assimilation when linguistic minorities lose their languages while being integrated into the mainstream system; both lead to poor academic achievements or failures (Wagner, 1991 as cited in Cummins, 2000). While “illiteracy” may carry a rather strong negative connotation, it is possible to claim that immigrant children are quite often illiterate in their heritage language even though they have enough communicative skills. In terms of all four language skills acquisition, immigrant children are usually more fluent in speaking, but they have very limited skills in reading and writing (Choi & Yi, 2012; Sridhar, 1985). A similar tendency was observed among Japanese-American college students whose writing proficiency was far behind their skills in communication; the researcher explained this fact by a significant difficulty of Japanese writing system for English speakers (Shibata, 2004). On the other hand, even though some Indigenous languages have no alphabet and written form, people managed to pass them to subsequent generations through oral traditions. So, what is the role of literacy? Does it have only formal scholastic function or a cultural one as well? What may be some possible substitutes/alternatives to literacy in the context of immigrant families? Consequently, one of my research subquestions is about the role of literacy in language transmission; my intention is not to claim the “illiteracy of oppression” as an inevitable part of successful integration into a new society, but rather speculate about possible benefits of literacy in one’s heritage language, so I would rather view it as an additional asset rather than a necessary condition in the process of language transmission.

Having mentioned the potential negative effects of heritage language loss, I move on to discuss the benefits of maintaining a heritage language in a host country.

### **Benefits of Heritage Language Maintenance**

This section presents some benefits of heritage language maintenance in terms of ethnic identification and academic achievements.

**Heritage languages and ethno-cultural identity.** In general, formal education cannot provide some important knowledge and skills for life that can only be acquired in a family context by means of a home language (Wong Fillmore, 2000). Besides the obvious benefit of a heritage language as a means of communication between family members, one of the most often cited benefits of heritage language maintenance is its role in formation of a solid cultural and ethnic identity when there is a dual connection between a heritage language and one's ethnic identification (Cho, 2000; Guardado, 2010). Heritage languages may instill a strong sense of cultural and ethnic identity; for example, in one study the children identified themselves as Korean because they were able to speak the language of their parents, immigrants of Korean background (Lee, 2013). In addition to ethnic and cultural identity, heritage languages may also help in building religious identification (Babae, 2014; Gogonas, 2012; Yan, 2003).

**Heritage languages and academic achievements.** Research literature presents findings that illustrate positive effects of heritage languages on academic achievements. For example, Pandey (2014) believes that one's mother tongue provides the "comfort zone" necessary for successful early childhood education. Other researchers suggest that competence in one's mother tongue promotes second language acquisition by providing the possibility of transferring literacy skills from the primary language to a second language (Cummins, 2000; Pandey, 2014; Yazici, Iltter & Glover, 2010); moreover, there is evidence to conclude that concepts from L1 can be successfully transferred when learning the same concepts in a second language (Li, 1999). Cummins (2000) advocates that maintaining and developing L1 literacy should be viewed as an

asset that provides the possibilities of transferring literacy skills. Both languages, LI and L2, can complement and enrich each other rather than cause confusion and delays (Cummins, 2000).

Although several studies concluded that proficiency in a heritage language may positively influence the overall academic achievements among bilingual students (Li, 1999; Pandey, 2014; Yazici, Iltter & Glover, 2010; Yearwood, 2008), the research conducted by Shibata (2004) does not refute this belief but presents a different conclusion. There was no significant correlation between proficiency in a heritage language (Japanese) and academic success of the participants; on the other hand, heritage language competence does not influence negatively English language proficiency and academic achievements in general. Shibata (2004) admits that these unexpected results may be explained by the fact that all participants were already college students at the time of the study, so they were already academically successful, and it was difficult to prove any significant correlation between their first language skills and academic achievements (Shibata, 2004).

In general, the old myth regarding slow linguistic development and lower academic achievements of bilingual students is no longer valid (Döpke, 1992). Although there is a wide range of variables affecting language development of children from different ethno-cultural groups, research evidence indicates that bilingual children normally compare well with monolingual children; however, their knowledge of a home language may be less varied grammatically, idiomatically and semantically comparing with monolingual peers in the country where this minority language is spoken (Döpke, 1992).

### **Factors and Strategies Contributing to Language Maintenance**

The section that follows presents research findings regarding successful strategies in heritage language maintenance and helps to answer one of my main research questions regarding methods that parents of Ukrainian background find effective in the process of language transmission.

The successful outcome of heritage language maintenance in immigrant families is predetermined by various political, societal, cultural and linguistic factors (Montrul, 2010). The focus of this literature review is mainly parental and familial efforts in terms of intergenerational language transmission, so while brief relevant information on societal and educational factors is interspersed throughout the review, there is only a detailed analysis of research literature devoted to the role of family in the maintenance of immigrant languages in host countries.

**Individual and societal factors in heritage language maintenance.** Kipp, Clyne and Pauwels (1995) differentiate between factors influencing the language attrition or maintenance on individual level (age, place of birth, gender, marital status etc.) and factors affecting language practice in the whole ethnolinguistic community (number and distribution of the speakers, official language policies, and the status of a language) (as cited in Schüpbach, 2009). While theoretically it is possible to distinguish between those two groups of factors, in research literature on language maintenance a variety of factors are usually mixed and are in interplay because every individual language speaker obviously has personal reasons for language maintenance, but at the same time this very individual is not isolated from his or her milieu and the society in general. Consequently, individual motivation and interest in maintaining a language may be overshadowed by societal influences.

In general, researchers claim that the home environment and parents are crucial in heritage language maintenance (Ariagada, 2005; Chen, 2010; Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Guardado & Becker, 2014; Iqbal, 2005; Kouritzin, 2000; Lee, 2013; Li, 1999; Li, 2006; Melo-Pfeifer, 2015; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002), but family efforts alone are not sufficient for heritage language development (He, 2010; Hinton, 1999; Kouritzin, 1999; Zhang, 2004). Because language socialization happens within specific linguistic community, family alone will not be able to replace the important functions of communities (Guardado & Becker, 2014). Parents who are committed to their home language maintenance may be quite successful in their efforts; however, even the most educated and eloquent parent is not capable of replacing the vast myriad of linguistic experiences a child is usually exposed to in a country where this home language is used as the mainstream one. Döpke (1992) warns that limited exposure to a heritage language and lack of communication with a variety of interlocutors may prevent children from becoming proficient productive bilinguals. Reflecting on my personal experience of simultaneous acquisition of two languages, I think it is very important to have a regular exposure and contact with people from different age groups, with different educational backgrounds, gender and social positions since all these factors find reflection in people's speech. For example, I had learned folk wisdom, proverbs, songs, and poems before I could even read from my grandmother only, and I do not think my parents or anyone else would have compensated this huge pool of knowledge if I had not spent my childhood with my grandmother. Unfortunately, immigrant children are often deprived of the luxury of having extended family members and friends who can communicate with them in a heritage language. I am not trying to diminish anyone's role or claim that only highly educated people may set a good example; my

point is that it is necessary to communicate with different people and read different genres in order to become equally proficient in two languages.

### **Reasons for Parents to Maintain Their Home Language**

To invest time, money, and consistent efforts in maintaining their heritage language, immigrant parents should have good reasons that motivate and sustain their desire to communicate with their children via languages other than those popular in the mainstream society.

**Heritage languages as means of communication with family members.** Among the most obvious reasons for parental willingness for intergenerational language maintenance is the possibility to share with their children cultural traditions and to sustain communication with relatives who stay in the home country (Babae, 2013; Chen, 2010; Lee, 2013; Nesteruk, 2010; Park & Sarkar, 2007). Kouritzin (2000) states that one's mother tongue is not merely a language; it is a unique means of communication between parents and children. In addition, parents who try to maintain their heritage language are aware of the potential benefits of bilingualism, the positive role of a heritage language in learning other languages, and in general, they view multilingualism as a possibility to adopt multiple perspectives and expand one's knowledge (Guardado, 2010; Li, 1999; Nesteruk, 2010).

In some cases, children have to negotiate in public institutions on behalf of their parents who do not speak the dominant language (Delgado-Gaitan, 1997; Kouritzin, 1999). On the surface, immigrant parents relying on their children in everyday situations may look helpless and irresponsible. On the other hand, in these families the chances of children losing their first language are minimal. These children have their first language; it serves as a buffer against the

hostility and challenges of a new country. Delgado-Gaitan (1997) recalls how she performed the functions of an interpreter for her own father at his workplace when he was underpaid. As a young child, she felt deeply for him and wished those employers could evaluate his talent as a bricklayer, not his lack of English proficiency (Delgado-Gaitan, 1997). Immigrant parents may be dependable in terms of English, but it is their first language that connects parents and children in a totally new world and reality of immigration. If they keep it, they will manage to preserve the same emotional connections and mutual respect in their families; if they switch to a new foreign language, children may become strangers to their own parents (Rodriguez, 1983).

**Participation in imagined communities.** Immigrant parents encourage their children to maintain a home language so that they can fully participate in the *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1992); the heritage language is viewed as facilitating inclusion into communities of parents' country of origin because "the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*" (Anderson, 1992, p. 133). Heritage languages facilitate creation of extended imagined communities beyond geographical boundaries of countries, nations and states. Heritage languages may be the only link connecting deterritorialized (Appadurai, 1997) generations of immigrants and their children. Appadurai (1997) illustrates the emergence of modern imagined communities as a result of combination of globalized mass media and mass migration, which he calls "a theory of rupture". Due to mass media, images transcend national borders and "meet deterritorialized viewers", those people who choose to immigrate and participate in different real communities, but who still want to be in touch with their home countries (Appadurai, 1997). Imagined communities of immigrant populations may be referred to as "transnational imagined communities" (Song, 2012). Unlike monolinguals, bi/multilinguals have the potential to join multiple imagined

communities besides their real communities of practice (Song, 2012). Norton (2000) proposes that both past and future linguistic communities can be crucial in learners' investment in language learning. The "liberating imagined communities" (Carroll, Motha & Price, 2008, p. 189), transnational past, present and future communities of immigrants, may facilitate multilingualism and influence peoples' decision to maintain their first languages. In general, imagined communities may play a positive role in heritage language maintenance if immigrants are willing to keep their membership in transnational communities of practice; on the other hand, imagined and real communities may also cause language loss if new immigrants and their children seek full integration and assimilation in a host country.

**Pragmatic reasons for language maintenance.** In addition, parents from rapidly-developing countries also view their heritage language as providing potential future economic benefits and better prospects of employment (Lee, 2013); however, immigrants from not so well-off countries do not associate their heritage language with potential economic benefits (Nesteruk, 2010). Furthermore, parents often associate heritage languages with integration in the international community and increasing job opportunities (Babae, 2014; Chen, 2010; Cho, 2000; Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014; Yearwood, 2008).

### **Parental Strategies in Language Maintenance**

Since my second research question is about successful parental strategies in heritage language maintenances, it is necessary to summarize effective methods of language transmission documented in the literature. All researchers are unanimous in their conclusion that heritage language maintenance must be accompanied by the support from parents, community, educators and social network in general. In their efforts to maintain home languages, parents employ numerous strategies investing their time, energy, and money on a regular basis.

**Intentional and consistent use of a heritage language** at home seems to be the most commonly cited strategy (Arriagada, 2005; Babae, 2013; Baker, 2000; DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009; Guardado, 2010; Kouritzin, 2000; Nesteruk, 2010) as well as parental efforts to provide exposure to a heritage language via media and technology (Choi & Yi, 2012; DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009). In mixed-marriages, a “one parent — one language” approach seems to be effective, provided there is support and mutual agreement of both parents (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009; Döpke, 1992). Frequent visits to parents’ home countries, communication with extended family members, contact with L1 community members and friends, singing and story-telling in a heritage language and creating “intimate spaces” contribute to the success of home language maintenance (Babae, 2014; Guardado, 2006; Guardado & Becker, 2014; Nesteruk, 2010).

**Media and technology in language maintenance.** Choi and Yi (2012) found that media from a heritage culture may help in the development of literacy, reading and writing skills, and “provide a *bridge* between informal activities outside school and formal literacy practices in the classroom” (p. 120). According to Szecsi and Szilagyi (2012), media technologies, including communication via Skype, chat rooms and interactive games, proved to be efficient in improving all four language skills but only under condition of parental supervision and active involvement. Parents should recognize their children’s interests and try to create relevant and interesting activities involving media technologies, but still these strategies are viewed only as additional to regular parental efforts in language maintenance. Furthermore, media technology can also help in maintaining close emotional ties with members of extended family living back in the heritage country; for example, if there is regular communication via Skype, grandparents and relatives may be involved in children’s everyday activities (Szecsi & Szilagyi, 2012). Although modern

technologies facilitate contacts with friends and relatives, nothing can adequately replace face-to-face communication; moreover, there are additional challenges as well (different time zones, other commitments and daily routines).

**Reading in heritage language.** Many parents who are committed to their children's heritage language development read books to their children on a regular basis, and even practice content-based language acquisition by teaching their school age children grammar, mathematics and other subjects from the textbook used in their home countries, so that children will not only learn the language, but also improve their knowledge of the material they study in mainstream classrooms (Babae, 2013; Park & Sarkar, 2007). Watching cartoons and reading books in a heritage language, as well as involving grandparents in child care, were reported as very successful strategies among immigrants from Eastern Europe (Nesteruk, 2010; Szecsi & Szilagyi, 2012). However, Melo-Pfeifer (2015) observed that children pictured their parents more often than other relatives when they were describing their heritage language learning. Consequently, members of extended families may play an important role by enlarging the domain of heritage language use (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015).

**Visiting parents' country of origin.** If parents can afford regular visits to their home countries, children can maintain relations with relatives, and improve their language proficiency. Döpke (1992) reports that in some cases children who are passive bilinguals may activate their receptive knowledge of a heritage language and become fluent speakers after prolonged visits to heritage countries. Analyzing reasons for strong attachment to one's heritage language and culture, Guardado and Becker (2014) concluded that frequent visits to Peru (a heritage country) and the fact that children were born and even spent some time in their childhood there can explain their close ties not only with the extended family, but also with the heritage culture and

country. Moreover, parents try to combine two languages and two cultures by involving their children in interesting home activities and celebrations, thus reinforcing the idea of peaceful coexistence of the dominant and heritage languages (Guardado & Becker, 2014). Furthermore, the additional benefit of frequent and prolonged visits to a heritage country is acquisition of friends who may help in heritage language development (Szecsi & Szilagyi, 2012).

**Making heritage language learning an enjoyable experience.** Learning and maintaining a heritage language will be more effective if children enjoy it (Guardado & Becker, 2014). Many parents report not forcing their children into heritage language learning but rather using opportunities for learning when children themselves initiate discussions or ask questions related to their heritage language and culture (Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014). Some parents can give their children freedom to choose the language for communication, even if it is sometimes English or code-switching (Lee, 2013). These findings contradict other studies reporting consistent parental efforts of using heritage languages only and not allowing their children to use the mainstream language at home. Consequently, the question remains which attitude is more efficient and is more facilitative of heritage language acquisition. The question may be also related to children's age and their proficiency in a heritage language. Probably younger children should be consistently reminded of using their home language, while older children with more proficient skills in a heritage language may be allowed to code-switch from time to time. In this case, code-switching should not be viewed as deficiency, but rather as "a highly differentiated interactional tool" (Döpke, 1992), that is used to achieve communicative purposes between bilingual speakers.

**Heritage language schools.** If parents are not constrained financially, they may choose to send their children to community-based heritage language programs, hire tutors (Kopeliovich,

2011), or attend language classes and activities organized through churches (Nesteruk, 2010; Park & Sarkar, 2007). Heritage language programs not only help children to find peers speaking the same language (Chen, 2010; Lee, 2013) but may also connect parents with other members of the same linguistic community (Chen, 2010; Iqbal, 2005).

Some parents, who choose to send their children to church-based language classes and activities, are rather sceptical as to the potential progress of their children because they have doubts that church activities alone are sufficient to promote high heritage language proficiency (Park & Sarkar, 2007). Parents from Romania and Ukraine report that they do not consider sending their children to church cultural activities because they do not go to church regularly and are not close with the rest of the community (Nesteruk, 2010). This finding is partially relevant regarding parents who participated in my project. Unlike Ukrainian immigrants of previous waves, new immigrants from Ukraine usually are not affiliated with any particular church, partially because they do not feel connected with Canadians of Ukrainian heritage. Therefore, church-based language programs may not be very popular among recent immigrants from Ukraine.

In general, there seems to be a controversy in the research findings regarding the benefits of heritage language programs: while some claim they are effective, others present rather sceptical and cautious conclusions. Kanno (2003) believes that only separate schools run by a specific linguistic and ethnic community may be efficient because they encourage children to believe that their mother tongue is valued and validated. Moreover, the academic component adds significance to language maintenance, so the functions of a heritage language are not limited to basic conversational skills (Kanno, 2003).

Although Wong Fillmore (1991) finds that language shift from the first language to English happens more often in the families who send their children to English only pre-school programs than in the families whose children attend programs in their first language, “bilingual education does not appear to offer children enough protection from language shift” (Wong Fillmore, 1991, p. 333). In another study among Ukrainian-Canadian children, mothers seem to be satisfied with their children’s proficiency in Ukrainian, but simultaneously point out their dissatisfaction with the curriculum at Ukrainian programs and lack of community support in maintenance of their first language (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999).

Some other research projects point out the benefits of heritage language community-based programs. For example, in Israel, there are numerous private Russian schools that are complementary to the official public schools. These additional schools are very successful in promoting the Russian language and culture among young immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Kopeliovich, 2011; Schwartz, 2008). Similar findings are presented in a study of Japanese –American college students who attend Japanese language schools (Shibata, 2004). Other research reports that a Spanish cultural centre is effective in terms of promoting communication among Spanish-speaking families and reinforcing children’s cultural and linguistic identity by valuing and validating their heritage within a community (Guardado & Becker, 2014).

However, if parents rely on heritage language schools exclusively, they are often disappointed with their children’s progress (Chen, 2010; Kopeliovich, 2011). Bilingual programs and tutors may be only additional resources in maintaining the first language, but they cannot completely compensate lack of communication in the heritage language at home (Kopeliovich, 2011). Moreover, a successful bilingual program is impossible without “sparks of genuine

interest” (Kopeliovich, 2011). In addition, Schwartz (2008) emphasizes the importance of “community-based supplementary educational system in the survival of the minority language among second generation immigrants” (p. 416). Even though parents have priority in deciding on a home language and enrolling their children in heritage or bilingual programs, without their children’s desire and motivation for language maintenance parental efforts will be in vain (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009).

This section has reviewed some common parental strategies in terms of their home language maintenance that may assist me with answering my second research question. The section that follows presents a summary of the main findings, issues and suggestions regarding familial factor in heritage language maintenance, in particular, the role of home language in building close family bonds, as well as different parental expectations regarding their children’s fluency and literacy in a heritage language.

### **Research Findings on Familial Factors in Heritage Language Maintenance**

Having addressed the main parental strategies in heritage language maintenance commonly cited in literature, this section elaborates on the research findings regarding familial factors in language maintenance; specifically, it relates to my subquestions regarding the possible correlations between heritage languages and close parent-child relationships, as well as the parental expectations in terms of their children’s proficiency and literacy skills in a heritage language.

**Heritage languages and family cohesion.** According to Sabogal et al. (1987), “familialism” is characterized by strong attachment, emotional bonding and support between members of both nuclear and extended families (as cited in Guardado & Becker, 2014).

Tannenbaum and Howie (2002) connect the success of heritage language maintenance with the concepts of “family cohesion” (strong attachments and bonding between family members) and “power distribution” (i.e. to what extent parents exercise their authority, and whether children have autonomy in the family). Not surprisingly, the research findings indicate that children who grow up in egalitarian families with close family ties are more likely to maintain heritage languages and express positive attitudes towards the mother tongue of their parents (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002). While there may be a correlation between the family dynamics and heritage language maintenance or loss, researchers caution that language loss or shift does not necessarily indicate problematic family relations. Ideally children acquire a mainstream language while at the same time maintain their parents’ mother tongue, so there is a dual dependency in terms of heritage languages and family closeness: high proficiency in parents’ mother tongue promotes close family bonds, while at the same time, close ties between parents and children encourage the latter to maintain their heritage languages (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002). However, Döpke (1992) argues that:

Family cohesion may or may not be affected by the use of different languages by different people of the same family, depending on the degree of bilinguality of the adults, their personal temperament and their level of knowledge on the subject. (p. 13)

Consequently, there is no consensus regarding the degree of proficiency in a heritage language, and how it may influence parent-child relations and family dynamics in general. One of my subquestions attempts to trace this connection, if there is any, by asking the participating parents to reflect on their feelings and experiences when their children speak Ukrainian and English, and speculate whether their relations would have been different without the Ukrainian language in their family life.

**Heritage language decrease in teenage years.** While heritage language transmission and maintenance come naturally at early childhood, especially when children stay at home with an L1 speaking caregiver and are not exposed to a dominant language, it is very difficult for parents to find some good reasons and motivation to encourage their teenage children to maintain heritage languages (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Pauwels, 2005). Research participants from Eastern Europe report that they managed successfully to maintain their home languages when their children were young but had to switch to English once their children became teenagers because English seemed to be a more effective means of communication (Nesteruk, 2010). On the other hand, parents may not be prepared for this stage in children's development and their unwillingness to speak a heritage language; as a result, parents may prematurely stop putting their effort into their children's bilingual development (Döpke, 1992). The decreased amount of heritage language use may also be linked to the fact that teenagers mostly live in the environment dominated by a mainstream language (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009); consequently, childhood is the time for heritage language maintenance, whereas teenage years is the period of a heritage language decline, so parental influence is especially crucial in childhood. Furthermore, Tannenbaum and Howie (2002) admit that immigrant children face additional challenges on top of other generational conflicts that are common when children become teenagers. They view their parents as foreigners in a dominant society, and teenagers may struggle with fulfilling their parents' dualistic expectations when parents want them to become successful in a new culture and language, but at the same time maintain their parents' mother tongue and ethnic identity (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002).

Unfortunately, as growing children develop intellectually in the context of formal schooling in a mainstream language, their heritage language tends to become more and more

basic and is assigned only for everyday home communication (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009). Many adult research participants blame their parents for lack of commitment to maintain a heritage language (Kopeliovich, 2011; Kouritzin, 2000). It turns out that “identity and language “decisions” made by children in the face of an assimilation-oriented dominant culture, are decisions later regretted” (Kouritzin, 2006, p. 20). On the other hand, parents may also send conflicting messages to their children by encouraging them to use English in childhood and later reprimanding them for their inability to communicate in a heritage language (Kouritzin, 1999).

**Parental expectations regarding children’s fluency and literacy in a heritage language.** An additional area that needs further research is the level of fluency in the heritage language necessary for effective communication between children and parents. Oh and Fuligni (2010) assert that basic skills in a heritage language may not be sufficient to sustain intimate and close family ties; the level of proficiency may influence the quality of parent-child relationships. In many cases, it is difficult to pinpoint direct causative relations between high heritage language competence and close family ties; maybe intimate relationships with parents facilitate the heritage language maintenance or, vice versa, advanced skills in a heritage language promote close family relationships (Oh & Fuligni, 2010).

Immigrant parents may have totally different agendas in terms of their children’s first language maintenance. While some parents are satisfied if their children attend heritage schools once a week, others believe their first language is still an indispensable part of their family life and the only language of communication at home. Nesteruk (2010) reports that parents from Eastern Europe express quite low expectations regarding their children’s proficiency in heritage languages: they seem to be satisfied if their children can master basic communication skills, and they do not have high expectations in terms of literacy. In addition, some parents consider their

heritage languages (Bulgarian and Ukrainian in particular) of low prestige and do not see any practical value of trying to maintain them (Nesteruk, 2010). However, Döpke (1992) notes that international prestige of a heritage language is more relevant for immigrant parents and does not influence children's decisions regarding language maintenance. Unlike parents of East European background, Korean parents have very high expectations regarding their children's performance in heritage language and view Korean as the language of cultural identity, communication with extended family members, and possibility for better employment opportunities in future (Park & Sarkar, 2007). On the other hand, Chinese parents are rather satisfied with their preschoolers' oral communication skills in a heritage language and do not have high expectations regarding literacy (Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014). In another study, parents of Chinese descent also demonstrate low expectations of their children's academic progress in a Saturday heritage language school (Chen, 2010). However, due to economic growth of their home country, immigrant parents from China rank English-Mandarin bilingualism higher than English-French (Chen, 2010), so this research finding again illustrates the concept of economic and symbolic value of languages (Bourdieu, 1991).

**The role of religion in language maintenance.** There are no consistent research findings regarding the role of religion in heritage language maintenance. While Park and Sarkar (2007) report that the Korean church in Montreal plays a significant role in consolidating community and maintaining a heritage language, Babae (2014), on the contrary, notes that some Iranian parents withdraw their children from community-based heritage language schools because they dislike the heavy emphasis on religious aspects in the textbooks. However, religious identity can be crucial in the maintenance of a heritage language (Fishman, 1987 as cited in Lanza & Svendsen, 2007). In the study on heritage language maintenance among children of Egyptian

immigrants, Gogonas (2012) finds evidence of contradictory parental attitudes toward first language maintenance. The strong attachment to their native language among Muslim parents is explained by a significant value of their religion; they send their children to Arab classes on a regular basis to maintain their language since it is “the only language of the Koran”. On the contrary, Coptic Egyptians demonstrate more assimilation with the host (Greek) society also on the religious basis since they believe their religion is close to Orthodox Christianity (Gogonas; 2012). While in some communities religion can be an important factor contributing to language maintenance, in others religion does not have this power. In the case study of Kannada maintenance among immigrant families in New York area, religion played a marginal role (Sridhar, 1985). Consequently, the role of religion seems to vary among ethnic groups in general, and individual immigrants in particular; as a result, claims about strong influence of religion in language maintenance are not unanimous and may not be relevant to all ethnicities.

**Language differences between siblings.** Children are very selective in terms of their language for communication. With monolingual relatives, they tend to use their heritage language, while with bilinguals they may code-switch; on the other hand, with representatives of the dominant culture they use the mainstream language, so their language is very context dependent (Dahl, Rice, Steffensen & Amundsen, 2010; Gogonas, 2009; Gogonas, 2012; Lanza & Svendsen, 2007; Pease-Alvarez & Winsler, 1994; Schwartz, 2008; Sridhar, 1985).

In addition, younger children tend to be more vulnerable to language loss, so they usually switch to English sooner than their elder siblings; as a result, even within one family and seemingly the same linguistic conditions, children may have different linguistic competence (Nesteruk, 2010; Sridhar, 1985; Wong Fillmore, 1991). The higher proficiency in the first language among elder children can be explained by two factors: on the one hand, parents may

focus their linguistic efforts more on the first-born child, on the other hand, younger children are influenced by their elder siblings whose language is affected by the mainstream language, thus younger children have less control over their first language (Sridhar, 1985). In general, there is lack of research findings regarding differences in language acquisition between elder and later-born children (Döpke, 1992).

**Gender and language maintenance.** Research literature usually presumes that language maintenance has connections to gender roles, and mothers seem to be more involved in language transmission (Kondo, 1997) since they are expected to spend more time taking care of and socializing with their children. Iqbal (2005) reports on Francophone women who had partially lost their first languages but felt a strong stimulus to regain it after they became mothers, so parenting and motherhood gave them a stimulus to transfer their first language to their children. Moreover, they were also seeking involvement in Francophone community in order to connect with other French-speaking mothers, even though previously they would avoid socializing with Francophones because their English-speaking spouses felt excluded (Iqbal, 2005). However, the traditional assumption that mothers are usually the ones who share their heritage language with children from the moment they are born is questioned by the results of the study conducted by Gogonas (2009) who found that in Albanian families in Greece fathers were more concerned with the first language maintenance and used their heritage language with their children more frequently than mothers. Analyzing the findings of the study about “one parent—one language approach”, Döpke (1992) also observed that fathers were more successful than mothers in transmitting their heritage language because “fathers interacted with their children in a more child centered way and provided linguistic input which was more conducive to language acquisition than did mothers” (p. 192). The author explains this finding by the fact that women

usually are primary caregivers and have housework, leaving them less time for interactive playful activities, whereas fathers can be involved in more playful time with their children.

There seems to be no correlation between the **family type and heritage language** maintenance; there is no research evidence to prove that single-parent families are less successful in language transmission and maintenance (Guardado, 2006; Schüpbach, 2009). There is a slight possibility that language choice could be gender specific; there was an observation when girls used their first language more with mothers, while boys followed their fathers' example and used a dominant language more<sup>2</sup> (Pease-Alvarez & Winsler, 1994).

**Finding the balance between a home language and English.** Many immigrant parents try to reach some compromise by encouraging their children's positive attitude towards both the mainstream language and the heritage one. For example, Guardado (2010) reports about Spanish parents who are respectful not only of their heritage language, but also value the language of a host country. They encourage their children to develop both languages because Canadian identity presupposes a combination of more than just one's heritage culture; in a way, this practice facilitates acquisition of "hybrid identities as Canadians" (Guardado, 2010, p. 340). Parents in this study not only tried to keep their language as a symbolic connection to the past but also raised their children "as cosmopolitan people with the ability to establish social relations and to bridge gaps between local and global ways of thinking" (Guardado, 2010, p. 341). According to *enrichment hypothesis*, children can draw from both cultures and commit more to heritage language maintenance if they feel comfortable and acknowledged in the mainstream society (Szecsi & Szilagyi, 2012). In the process of integration into the mainstream society, some ethnic,

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<sup>2</sup> Recent research in the social sciences has critiqued earlier research for working with binary notions of gender. The research I review here was done within the dominant male-female gender distinction.

cultural and identity markers may be preserved, while others can be altered or lost. If an individual manages to maintain a mother tongue, she or he will turn into “a bilingual person with a bicultural identity” (Liebkind, 1999, p. 142).

**Parents’ language policy.** There may also be a mismatch between parents’ desirable language policy and the real-life communication. In some cases, researchers reveal discrepancies between parents’ self-reports and their actual practices at home while being observed by a researcher; moreover, parents should not focus only on technical features of language such as grammar or writing, as they may overlook the cultural value of the heritage language (Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014). Although I did not observe my participants at home to verify the accuracy of their self-reports, the potential problem mentioned above regarding the consistency of parental strategies is not significant in my project because my main objective is to report what strategies parents find effective over time while they are bringing up their children in Canada (they are encouraged to share their past strategies as well as potential future plans).

Parents’ choice of the home language depends on such factors as their proficiency in the mainstream language, the possibility to gain middle class roles soon after immigration, and the linguistic diversity within their own ethnic groups (Nesteruk, 2010; Sridhar, 1985). The possibility of code-switching is higher if the parents are proficient in the mainstream language (Li, 2006; Sridhar, 1985). While parents may maintain their first language within their social network, they can switch to other languages while communicating with their children, so “multilingualism provides a much more complicated reality for identity” (Lanza & Svendsen, 2007). Frequent visits to their home country, friends and relatives sharing the same language, a possibility to attend cultural centres, ethnic pride, and the probability of a future return to a home country may contribute to the first language maintenance in the immigrant families (Guardado &

Becker, 2014; Kopeliovich, 2011; Sridhar, 1985; Szecsi & Szilagyi, 2011). Parents' language policy as well as a positive children's attitude towards their heritage language contribute a lot to the first language maintenance among immigrant children (Schwartz, 2008).

**Suggestions from research.** Parents are advised to follow their language policy consistently in order not to confuse children (Chen, 2010). For instance, one research participant reported observing her rule "heritage language (German) only" in communication with her children in any situation. When it was not possible or acceptable (among speakers of other languages, for example), she tried to avoid looking at her kids because she felt that even one deviation from the norm could cause potential risk of language loss (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009).

Another advice from research literature is for parents not to impose their cultural identity and not to force their children to learn a heritage language because this may provoke reverse effect and rebellion (Chen, 2010). Children should feel that they have some autonomy in choosing the language for communication, so punishment is not an effective measure, rather they should be reminded to speak their mother tongue (Guardado & Becker, 2014). Furthermore, some researchers highlight the importance of learning a heritage language before children start formal schooling in a mainstream language (Chen, 2010; Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Pauwels, 2005; Wong Fillmore, 1991). In general, without the institutional support and professional guidance, maintaining the family language is "like swimming against the tide" (Kopeliovich (2011, p. 111) or "fighting a lonely battle" (Guardado, 2006, p. 67).

### **Possible Areas for Future Research**

Reviewing the research literature on heritage language maintenance from 1998 to 2002, Garcia (2003) notes the astonishing amount of research trends worldwide exploring language

maintenance within families, communities, and broader society. Despite the abundant research findings, the issue of heritage language maintenance is far from being exhausted. Hornberger (2003) poses an overreaching research agenda of finding answers to a broad question: “What global, societal, and local factors encourage and promote intergenerational transfer, maintenance, revitalization and development of HLs?” (Hornberger, 2003, p. 121). Consequently, one of my main research questions focuses on exploring the role of macro-social factors in terms of heritage language maintenance among immigrant families from Ukraine. The purpose was to find out to what extent changing political, cultural and linguistic realities in a home country may influence immigrants’ decisions in terms of language transmission, and whether a heritage language has deeper functions besides its primary role in keeping close family ties. My research findings do not demonstrate explicit connections between realities in Ukraine and linguistic preferences of first generation immigrants but point to some other intangible identity-related issues.

Additionally, Shin (2003) states that the major research questions and directions are related to finding the best strategies and approaches to educate parents about myths and facts related to bilingualism and heritage language maintenance in order to reduce their fear that children will not develop substantial proficiency in English. Moreover, there are no definite criteria to judge or measure variations and changes in parents’ attitudes regarding heritage languages (Shin, 2003).

In addition, Lo Bianco (2003) notes that issues related to measurement of heritage language proficiency and literacy practices within different communities deserve research attention. Among present studies there is no clear differentiation between language proficiency and language use in general (Oh & Fuligni, 2010). Martin-Jones and Romaine (1986) believe that “language assessment procedures need to be grounded in community-based norms” (p. 36);

that is why the purpose of my research project is to analyze the understanding of heritage language fluency among the community of immigrant parents in Canada (that is a multilingual context, not an idealized monolingual language community traditionally used as a standard). Furthermore, Montrul (2010) believes that to identify the specific roles of community and family in heritage language formation, there should be attempts to evaluate the quality of language input on a long-term basis. Döpke (1992) also claims that “the quality of input is more important in the acquisition of a minority language than is the quantity of input” (p. 193). Consequently, one of my subquestions explores parents’ understanding of heritage language proficiency: do immigrant parents expect that their children will become fluent in speaking and will develop literacy skills in their heritage language? At the same time, this issue is related to one of my main questions regarding parental strategies because naturally parental expectations and understanding of heritage language proficiency will find reflection in their strategies and linguistic input they provide for their children. While many parents in my study voiced their concerns regarding children’s fluency, proficiency, and accuracy in Ukrainian, they also admitted that their everyday communication rarely transpired exclusively in one language. The traditional understanding of language as a refined, standardized, and pure entity is often challenged in the context of increasing mobility and “superdiversity” (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). My objective in this study was to document my participants’ experiences and perspectives, but not to persuade them to change their opinions regarding potential benefits of “translanguaging” (Hornberger, & Link, 2012; Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012; Li, 2014, 2018; Makalela, 2015; Velasco & García, 2014).

The potential question for future research is to explore the role of literacy in language maintenance across different ethnicities, and parental expectations regarding their children’s heritage language performance. The role of literacy in heritage language maintenance is also

controversial; while some researchers view it as a necessary condition for bilingualism (Li, 1999), others seem to overlook its importance and focus more on oral proficiency. Another question is why parental expectations are not consistent across ethnicities, and whether the differences can be explained by the status of a heritage language or more so by belonging to a specific ethno-cultural group. Consequently, the value of my project is a specific focus on Ukrainian immigrant community; my research findings add to the general understanding of the role of one's ethno-cultural background in heritage language maintenance.

There is also a need to research individual differences of specific ethnolinguistic groups in general (Schwartz, 2008), as well as differences between individual learners of the same heritage language in the same host country. In particular, there is lack of research findings regarding language maintenance among recent immigrants from Eastern Europe probably because they do not constitute the largest immigrant group (Nesteruk, 2010). In one study 29 out of 50 participants shared common languages (Russian or Ukrainian) with the researcher, yet preferred to be interviewed in English (Nesteruk, 2010), so the obvious question is why the first-generation immigrants choose a second language and not their first one in communication with someone sharing the same linguistic background.

While most research findings indicate that parents prefer following the rule of heritage language only at home, others reportedly are successful in heritage language maintenance by combining both the dominant and heritage languages and cultures at home (Guardado, 2010; Li, 1999). Consequently, further research is necessary to find out which strategy is more efficient. My research participants were asked to reflect on how they balance two or more languages in their everyday life, and which strategies are more helpful in terms of negotiating linguistic dilemmas.

Immigrant parents in previous research projects were predominantly highly educated and represented high or middle socioeconomic status, but there is lack of data regarding language maintenance in underprivileged families (Lee, 2013; Nesteruk, 2010).

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### Theoretical Framework

**Theoretical mix.** This research project adopts the main theoretical framework of postcolonialism, particularly with respect to linguistic and cultural dominance, unequal power distribution, and stigmatized attitudes toward language minorities causing their inferior status and the loss of heritage languages. Because language issues are inextricably connected to many aspects of human life and identity, other theories may be helpful in understanding and analyzing the data in this research project. In particular, Bourdieu's (1991) concepts of social capital and the symbolic power of languages may be relevant in explaining both the long-lasting struggle of the Ukrainian language to be formally proclaimed as an official language of the nation-state and its subjugated rank in the linguistic hierarchy in Ukraine, a phenomenon inevitably reflected in people's attitudes and language choices. Phillipson's (2008) ideas of linguistic imperialism, comparing the dominance and power of colonial languages (Russian and English), are also valid in the historic as well as modern contexts of Ukraine.

The above-mentioned theories of postcolonialism, symbolic power, and linguistic imperialism are the pertinent means to interpreting my research findings through a global lens (this refers to my research question regarding the influence of macro-social factors on immigrants' language choices). Identity theories (Cho, 2000; Dagenais & Lamarre, 2005; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Makarova & Hudyma, 2015; Norton, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2015) and language socialization theory (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) are more applicable in interpreting my interview data: in particular, participants' struggles in language maintenance and their feelings related to parenting in more than one language and how this may affect their sense of identity—the examination of parental input and role in the process

of “socialization through the use of language and socialization to use language” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 163). A. W. He (2010) emphasizes that in the process of heritage language learning, there are potential changes not only to the persons acquiring the language, but also to the people in their milieu (family and community members) who socialize the learners into heritage languages; thus, it is a bilateral process with evolving competencies and linguistic choices.

**Postcolonialism.** Graue and Karabon (2013) define a theoretical framework as “a lens or way of looking at something” (p. 13), and the aim of this research project is to adopt a decolonizing lens in order to promote the linguistic rights of all members of society. Analyzing the discourse of power, hegemony, and subjugation, the postcolonial scholars Said (1994), Spivak (1999), Pennycook (1998), Smith (1999), and Andreotti (2011) agree that the legacies of colonialism have continued to last until the present time.

According to the timeframe proposed by Spivak (1999), “postcoloniality” remains a lingering feature of our present globalized modernity even though the claims of homogeneous nations and superior origins are no longer valid (Bhabha, 1994). This research project does not attempt to speak ambitiously on behalf of Indigenous populations (Smith, 1999) or of subjugated nations misrepresented by a dominant power (Said, 1994), nor does it claim to benevolently shake the steady pace of globalization that is actually a modern, disguised version of colonialism (Spivak, 1999). This project aims to unearth the perspectives and voiced concerns of a white population that is seemingly privileged, but that has overtly or covertly been assigned a minority status due to its cultural and linguistic background. In the case of new immigrants with an accent and limited English proficiency, the English language serves as a marker to create the

postcolonial legacy of opposition between *Self* and *Other* (Pennycook, 1998) within a society of proclaimed equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities.

The colonial discourse of *Other* versus *We* (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 2008) finds its modern application in the imposition of dominance in a contemporary society when the inequality is justified by perceived threat from *Other* to the well-being of the dominant group (Van Dijk, 1993). In our society, we encounter this discourse every day in political and public discussions regarding the appropriateness of wearing hijabs in a Canadian citizenship ceremony, the racial profiling of criminal suspects, violent rioting incited by alleged racially-motivated police misconduct, and heated debates in the European Union as to who should take the burden of thousands of refugees fleeing from war-torn regions. With the increasing deterritorialization of people all over the world, it becomes obvious that the established values and linguistic beliefs in host countries will undergo inevitable reconsideration and revision, especially if the newcomers are granted citizenship status. Under these circumstances, the priority for newcomers should be the expansion of their linguistic repertoire by acquiring an additional language, rather than the replacement of their native languages by the language of the mainstream society (Edwards, 2005).

English may be viewed as the language of integration for new immigrants and, at the same time, as the language that dominates their lives, “colonizes” their minds, and intangibly alienates them from their native language and culture. The current status of English as a global language or lingua franca is typically associated with increased opportunities for global cooperation, international travelling, career opportunities, educational prospects, and international trade. Postcolonial scholars, however, emphasize the other side of this international language of communication, specifically its long-term alliance with colonialism and oppression:

“the power and the fixity of the discourses of colonialism as they adhere to English are very great” (Pennycook, 1998, p. 214). Phillipson (2008) reiterates that English as a global language may be viewed “as the capitalist neoimperial language that serves the interests of the corporate world and the governments that it influences so as to consolidate state and empire worldwide” (p. 33). Mutua and Swadener (2004) conclude “as more students prefer to learn in English, in part due to the power of corporate globalization, the persistence of language as a tool of colonization is obvious” (p. 16).

Changes in linguistic landscapes are accompanied by other significant cultural, linguistic, and societal transformations. Bhabha (1991) addresses changes in the modern concept of nation; he proposes a notion of *hybridity* as a feature of heterogeneous cultures and nations from within. Blackledge (2003) notes that there is no fixed or unique definition of a nation since this notion is in constant flux, together with the changing identities of the minorities and majorities who comprise the concept of nation. These theories of heterogeneous cultures and nations may explain both the recently shifting dynamics in Ukraine as a nation and how these geographically distant changes may be echoed in the linguistic preferences of immigrants of Ukrainian background in Canada.

Unlike political changes that may happen almost overnight (in extreme cases, by means of revolutions or political riots), changes in mentality, cultures, and linguistic preferences are not that fast; people do not simply stop speaking an imperial language when socio-political situation changes. Despite the claim that “many developing countries, especially those with a colonial past, have worked hard to liberate themselves from curricula, books, texts and ideals of their former colonial masters” (Brock-Utne, 2012, p. 784), the dominant status of English is still present in the postcolonial context. Ramanathan (2007) points to the British colonial practices in

present-day India, where representatives of a middle class with access to Indian-English education occupy a higher and more privileged position in the social hierarchy than other local students who are educated in vernacular languages. The dominant status of English in former colonies can be compared to the long-lasting popularity of Russian in Ukraine decades after the collapse of the former Soviet empire.

While the applicability of the adjective *postcolonial* in the context of post-Soviet republics is contested by some scholars (Pavlenko, 2008), I strongly believe that it is valid for the purpose of this research project. Postcolonialism helps to explain the persistent inferior status of the Ukrainian language as compared to Russian based on a historical dominance and subjugation which, although formally ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, continue to linger in peoples' minds and the modern landscape of Ukraine. Pavlenko (2008) notes that, for decades, ethnicities other than Russian in the former Soviet Union witnessed "their native languages tak[ing] second seat to Russian" (p. 2), thus engendering stereotyping attitudes toward Ukrainian as "a backward peasant language" (p. 67). Although this may continue to be true in today's Ukraine, I believe this tendency may finally be changing: firstly, there is already a new, younger generation that was born and raised in an independent Ukraine with no memory of the past Soviet epoch; secondly, the recent political changes and military conflicts between "pro-Russian" eastern Ukraine and "pro-European" central and western Ukraine may well have affected people's language preferences. Formally, this decolonized attitude is glimpsed in the name of the country—Ukraine, the independent nation-state, rather than *the* Ukraine, the nickname used in the past, connoting Ukraine as a borderland of Russia.

The emerging tendency both in Ukraine and its diaspora is to maintain the mother tongue, Ukrainian, instead of the Russian language, a phenomenon that may also be observed as a

decolonized and decolonizing pattern. I recall a Ukrainian-Canadian of third- or fourth-generation descent speculating that the decreasing level of activity among Ukrainian community members in Winnipeg could be explained by the fact that, in the past, they had viewed their mission as helping to protect and nourish the Ukrainian language and culture that was threatened by Russian, the dominant language of the former Soviet Union, but that when Ukraine gained independence, the mission of the diaspora seemed to lose significance: the Ukrainian language and culture now had legal protection and support from a new government in Ukraine.

**Decolonizing research on heritage language maintenance.** Addressing Spivak's (1999) question of whether the subaltern can speak, Tolman (2006) believes that the possibility exists if we do not try to represent them or their absent stories, but rather engage in intense listening "in silence" (p. 196). Research on language maintenance and loss that is positioned in a postcolonial perspective aims at providing the opportunity to speak to those linguistic minorities who were deprived of this chance due to their limited proficiency in the dominant language or to the low symbolic power of their first languages. In general, much decolonizing research is preoccupied with giving voice to—or at least seeking to listen to the voiced concerns of—those who were formerly oppressed, subjugated, or marginalized due to their economic status, race, language, gender, culture, or disability. However, empowerment cannot simply be granted or conferred; it is not something that researchers can provide to participants in order to improve their status; rather, empowerment is a process, an action, so that "every time we unite with others to deal with a common issue, it is an opportunity to empower ourselves. We are empowered when we feel in control of our lives" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1997, p. 46).

The aim of educational postcolonial research is "to enable individuals to reflect critically on the legacies and processes of their cultures and contexts, to imagine and negotiate

“otherwise”, and to take ethical responsibility for their decisions and actions” (Andreotti, 2011). Brown and Strega (2005) emphasize that in the context of research, marginalization is not limited to discrimination and the lack of access to resources for some groups of the population; more broadly, marginalization refers to the inability to participate in knowledge construction and the necessity of being the objects of research rather than the authors or co-creators of knowledge. By providing the opportunity for expressing one’s voice, decolonizing research that focuses on the margins so as to demarginalize is not conducted *on* the subjugated, but “by, for, and with them”, taking into account the discourses of domination and oppression within specific political contexts and legitimizing ways of talking about people’s life experiences for the purpose of making changes (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 7). Decolonizing research on language maintenance and loss views participants as co-constructors, not merely as data providers.

Although the theoretical framework of postcolonialism might seem to be more appropriate for research conducted in the context of countries with a former colonial history, I feel strongly that it finds a new application in my research on heritage language maintenance amongst immigrant families of Ukrainian background. Recent events in Ukraine cannot leave first-generation immigrants indifferent because personal life narratives are interwoven with the narratives of our nations and cultures (Andrews, 2007); therefore, my expectation was to find whether recent events have prompted additional fervour for heritage language maintenance, likely even more for Ukrainian than for a bilingual mix of Russian and Ukrainian. The role of the Russian language may be compared to the dual status of English, serving as both a global and a colonial language at the same time (Pennycook, 1998; 2007). On the one hand, the Russian language, as the official language of the former Soviet empire, unites immigrants and people from the former fifteen republics, facilitating their communication; on the other hand, the status

of Russian as a common language that unites people is changing, especially in light of recent events in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

I believe it is reasonable to perceive a new kind of neocolonialism in present-day Ukraine, where many people are willing to be “colonized”—accepting occupation in exchange for “protection” from an influential, wealthy, and almighty neighbouring country. In this context, postcolonial discussions regarding the changing facets of globalized modernity, concepts of nation and state, and the origin of cultures (Bhabha, 1994) are validated and increasingly relevant. First-generation immigrants belong to so-called “transnational communities” (Song, 2012) and usually have strong bonds with their countries of origin, so the “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1992) of their home countries may exert a powerful influence on their actual communities in the host country. All in all, the theoretical framework of postcolonialism may function in a dual role of linguistic decolonization in my research project, challenging the traditional dominance of English over minority languages in postcolonial Canada, and, at the same time, observing the decolonizing trends of maintaining Ukrainian, and not Russian, among first-generation immigrants.

**Social capital and symbolic power.** Parents’ commitment to heritage language maintenance is shaped by the ideology, norms, and values of the dominant society because “individual agency and decision-making reflect a range of societal forces” (Phillipson, 2008, p. 34). Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of different forms of capital—economic, cultural, and symbolic—with the possibility of converting one form into another, helps explain the problems of dominant and heritage languages being ranked in a hierarchy. Previous research findings on heritage language loss indicate that the most common reason for parents to shift to a dominant

language, beyond the appeal of its cultural or symbolic power, is the promise of better employment prospects in future, which corresponds to the concept of economic capital.

Different languages and their speakers who demonstrate linguistic competence in specific contexts (or “markets”) are endowed with different levels of “legitimacy” and “symbolic power” as words serve not merely to convey a message but also to operate as “signs of wealth” and “signs of authority” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 66). Because decolonizing research challenges the legitimacy of authority, dominance, and power imposition, Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of complicity and internalized subjugation could be applicable in the context of my research regarding immigrant parents who might take for granted the inferior status of their heritage languages and the consequent imperative they feel to switch to a dominant language. Bourdieu (1991) states that “the language of authority never governs without the collaborations of those it governs, without the help of the social mechanisms capable of producing this complicity, based on misrecognition, which is the basis of all authority” (p. 113). According to Bourdieu (1991), the influence of this symbolic power is strong and insidious:

What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief. (p. 170)

Consequently, questions of agency, authority, and official policy regarding the status of languages are expected to permeate research on immigrant languages in host countries. Bourdieu (1991) reiterates the notion that the functions of languages go beyond mere communication and are intimately connected with the status, dominance, and legitimacy of their speakers. In the case of immigrant parents striving to transfer their mother tongue to their children, heritage languages are commonly associated with communicative functions between family members only and are

deprived of further claims to legitimacy and symbolic power. Bourdieu's (1991) concept of "dispositions" may be comparable to the main idea of language socialization theory, which views language acquisition as "part of acquiring social competence" (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 167). In the context of my research project, this concept may be applicable in exploring possible discrepancies between "dispositions"—differences between the social behaviours children learn by means of a heritage language in the context of their family versus the behaviours required of them in schools and mainstream society. Stagg-Peterson and Heywood (2007) assert that parents maintaining a heritage language view it as a form of social capital, which is defined as "the types of interactions and support that parents provide their children" (p. 521). Even though immigrant parents may be well-educated and fluent in a dominant language (English), they are nonetheless considered illegitimate speakers of this language; consequently, they are not well equipped with social and cultural capital, and they do not possess the "delegated power" of authoritative speakers (Bourdieu, 1991). This issue emerged in my project as I answered my research questions and interpreted findings about parental efforts in finding the balance between two or more languages in the process of bringing up their children.

**Identity and heritage languages.** Finally, my theoretical framework would be incomplete without acknowledging that every language we speak (or, in the case of a lost heritage language, do not speak), every social experience we have (for example, moving permanently to another country), and every personal life event (for instance, becoming a parent in a foreign country) leaves a trace on our fluid and complex identities. Since the purpose of this project is not directly related to identity issues, I choose to focus only on connections between heritage languages and ethnic identities. Although my research questions do not explicitly

address identity issues, this concept still emerged indirectly in the process of analyzing interview data.

Heritage languages are indispensable identity markers and connectors to one's ancestry, so once the language is lost, "the cultural content that the ethnic language carried is never fully recoverable" (Dorrian, 1999, p. 34). Mistakenly, many second- or third-generation descendants of immigrants believe they can regain their heritage languages more easily than those who have no family connections to them (Dorrian, 1999); unfortunately, our heritage languages cannot be automatically transferred via genes or some ancestral blood memory.

Having explored the connections between his native Tokunoshima language, culture, and identity, Nakagawa (2013) concludes that his research participants reported having a strong sense of Shiman-chu identity because they were born and grew up on their native island, so "identity has become separated from language and culture" (p. 356). Similarly, Nicholas (2009) claims that Hopi youth possess their Hopi identity despite lack of language proficiency. In their society of oral traditions, use of the Hopi language is perceived as "cultural practice": as long as the people are practicing the traditional and religious ways of life, they have retained their Hopi identity (Nicholas, 2009).

Analyzing the phenomenon of ethnic minorities in post-Soviet Russia, Khilkhanova and Khilkhanov (2004) conclude that the Buryats (an ethnic minority which was very much assimilated and Russified in the Soviet era) have managed to preserve their ethnic identity even though they speak only Russian and no longer know the Buryat language. They have "an original cultural base and conception of unity with their ancestors" (p. 97). The Shiman-chu participants in Nakagawa's (2013) research identified themselves with their island first and foremost, hence

their cultural identity is geographically bound. However, this is not the case with immigrants who have been displaced, maybe for several generations, thereby perhaps having lost the intangible connection with their language and cultural traditions. Unlike Indigenous peoples, immigrants are not bonded to a specific locality; second or third generations can possibly maintain the heritage language, although not necessarily the culture and identity as well. Doubtless that explains the feeling I usually have when speaking to second- or third-generation Ukrainians in Canada: it is very heartwarming to hear my language in a foreign environment, but these people usually sound like Canadians speaking the Ukrainian language. As Edwards (2009) points out, knowledge of a language does not automatically confer the many intangible nuances of culture that only those who grew up in that culture may be aware of.

While the ethnic identity of my research participants is unchallenged because they are first-generation immigrants, it is possible that their children are in one of the four stages of ethnic identity development proposed by Tse (1999). It is my belief that, depending on their age, children can either be in “ethnic unawareness” or “ethnic ambivalence” (Tse, 1999); some of my participants, however, challenged those assumptions.

### **Researcher’s Positionality**

In this section, my intent is to address issues regarding my own positionality in the research project as well as peculiarities related to my cultural, linguistic, and professional background. Neumann (1997) asserts that researchers intangibly express their life stories, identities, and passions through their scholarship. I agree that our research interests and our lives are intertwined, since one’s research work is a part of one’s life story; on the other hand, one’s life story may be the stimulus to start one’s research: “research is as much a part of a researcher’s life history as it is a part of her curriculum vitae” (Neumann & Peterson, 1997, p. 1).

Not only does herising (2005) doubt that one can be wholly, objectively aware of his or her political and cultural biases and make them fully visible to others, but herising (2005) also fears that the attempt to do so may serve to distract the researcher from the much more important work of discerning "the complex interrelationships and socio-political conditions of and in research" (p. 131). In contrast, Andreotti (2011) views "self-reflexivity" as the possibility for researchers to become aware of their biases and try to avoid them instead of manifesting them. Smith (1999) asserts that reflexivity is of paramount importance for researchers claiming insider status: they need to practice this skill at all stages of their research project, from initial design to the final data analysis and conclusions. Reflexivity is the process of critical analysis of the researcher's biases, attitudes, and place in the context of his/her research inquiry (Schwandt, 1997 as cited in Kleinsasser, 2000).

Said (1994) claims that no knowledge can be considered "pure" or free from political influences because every scholar acts from his own position, and his historical and cultural circumstances will impact his knowledge construction despite his will or awareness. Consequently, Said (1994) emphasizes the importance of "the methodological question" of defining the starting point, which is the author's "strategic location" in relation to what he is writing about.

I am an immigrant from Ukraine, and, as can many other post-Soviet Ukrainians, I can claim that I have two mother tongues—Ukrainian and Russian; at least, it is hard for me to tell which one I know better. This constitutes heterogeneity from within (Bhabha, 1994)—when individuals in the same communities are communicating equally in more than one mother tongue, depending on the context (school, neighbourhood, family, or official organizations); as a result, these individuals can be identified with more than one mother tongue (Canagarajah,

2005). On different occasions and at different times throughout my life, I have switched between these two languages without a second thought about linguistic hegemony. I had no interior understanding of my home language alongside the language of the outside world until I moved to Canada and realized that my linguistic choices outside my own home and family were limited to English only. When one lives in another culture, the opportunities to use one's first language beyond the familial circle are very rare, so this is the time when immigrants first become aware of the value and significance of their first languages and cultures.

The English language appeared in my linguistic repertoire only after elementary school, and because it was taught as a foreign language, my proficiency was very limited until high school, when I finally made my future career choices. I was very privileged to graduate from a linguistic university with what was considered at that time in Ukraine a highly prestigious degree in foreign languages. As a student and later as a young professional, I was never introduced to the idea of English as a dominant language; in Ukraine, it was considered a language of opportunity, and nearly everyone was willing to learn English. In Canada, my professional duties of teaching English for academic purposes are similarly viewed as contributing to my students' success, helping them to achieve competence and confidence. Consequently, in the context of my research, as I apply decolonizing methodology, I make myself vulnerable to criticism, for at the same time as I advocate for linguistic minorities, I am also teaching the former colonial language.

The changing context of my research intentions was shaped by recent events in my country of origin: "The Revolution of Dignity", the annexation of Crimea, civil war and bloodshed in eastern Ukraine that resulted in a partial loss of the territory, and subsequent

changes in the reality of diglossia<sup>3</sup> of Ukrainian linguistic landscapes. I was compelled to modify my initial intentions of comparing heritage language maintenance in both Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking immigrant families, choosing instead to focus on the Ukrainian language only.

On the other hand, I have experienced wonderful changes in my private life since I became a first-time mom, which has also influenced my positionality in my research project. I am no longer just a curious researcher of immigrant background trying to sustain my linguistic and cultural heritage. I am also the parent of a child who was born into a mixed culture marriage, so that now I occupy a position alongside my research participants, facing many linguistic and cultural dilemmas while raising my daughter in three languages and cultures. At this point in my life, I have discovered that I do not know any children's rhymes, songs, or lullabies in English, and that I have no personal attachment to children's books in English because they were not part of my childhood. In future, I know I will be challenged by school curricula, norms, and expectations, but this irreducible gap will prove difficult, if not virtually impossible, to bridge with my daughter. I hoped that my research project would not only contribute to the scholarship and research findings regarding linguistic minorities, but would also provide new and insightful perspectives to help me with my role as a mother. I think that while it is possible, with great effort and persistence, to maintain one's heritage language in the family context, it is still unrealistic to expect that children of first-generation immigrants will share their parents' cultural values and norms.

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<sup>3</sup> A term expanded by Fishman (1967), who stated that "bilingualism is essentially a characterization of individual linguistic behavior whereas diglossia is a characterization of linguistic organization at the socio-cultural level" (p. 34)

**Insider status.** Potts and Brown (2005) argue that “those people who have experienced an issue are perhaps the best people to research that issue” (p. 259), while Montero-Sieburth (1997) points out the necessity to negotiate and renegotiate one’s entry into the community. My cultural and linguistic background positions me as an insider, while my researcher status may place me as an outsider; my mother tongue facilitated participant recruitment and an initial starting point in the research because there was likely “an assumption of shared distinctiveness” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) view the dichotomy of insider/outsider status as too simplistic and state that researchers occupy space in between these two positions. Andrews (2007) states:

Maybe those of us who live and work between cultural boundaries are forever destined to be “out of it” or, perhaps more accurately, simultaneously occupy the contradictory positions of insider and outsider. (p. 509)

The positionality of the researcher becomes an ambiguous matter, whether he or she is viewed as an insider or an outsider, because the researcher is vested with power from the outset. It is possible for a researcher to have two statuses at the same time (Parker Webster & John, 2010); however, it seems like the community has the privilege to assign the researcher either the status of an insider or an outsider.

There is no clear dichotomy of insider/outsider or of emic and etic positionality because the researcher’s status is changing and shifting; for instance, we should not assume that Indigenous researchers doing research in their own communities are always viewed as insiders (Mutua & Swadener, 2004). For example, Kaomea (2004) admits struggling with uneasiness and disconnection due to her partial insider and outsider positions within the academy and her native Hawaiian community. Smith (1999) realized she was perceived as an outsider by women from

her community due to her family situation, financial status, and privileged role as an academic, while her advisor viewed her as an insider in her research due to her membership within the community.

The most common (but not exclusive) criterion for claiming insider status is the fact of belonging to the same ethnic, cultural, or linguistic community as the participants. While this may be a way of validating their life experiences, researchers should not be dismissive of potential biases and erroneous assumptions linked to their status. For example, in sharing the same linguistic and cultural background as her participants, Kanno (2003) realized that the similarities might provoke a different set of challenges, attitudes, and successes and perhaps even construct different identities among representatives of the same culture and language. Consequently, no cultural, linguistic, minority or immigrant group is homogeneous.

Jankie (2004) concludes that an emic perspective does not guarantee complete insider status, but it does provide researchers with the opportunity to relearn and revisit what they know, so it is important for them not to make assumptions or to take shared knowledge or experiences for granted (Jankie, 2004; Smith, 1999). Insider status and familiarity with the research setting may also cause “role confusion” (Asselin, 2003, as cited in Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) when, in the process of data interpretation, the researcher may adopt new roles. One potential disadvantage of insider status is the possibility of the researcher confusing his or her own experiences with those of the participants, leading to overemphasis on their commonalities and overlooking conflicting differences; moreover, a researcher’s positionality as an insider may result in incomplete data if participants do not provide full explanations of their experiences (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Another disadvantage of insider status is caused by the possible inability of a researcher to distance him/herself from the participants; thus, he or she may overlook some things while

taking personal assumptions for granted (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996 as cited in Parker Webster & John, 2010).

Speaking the same first language definitely facilitates the process of participant recruitment and getting to know the community (Montero-Sieburth, 1997), but simply sharing a common language is insufficient to legitimately claim a position of insider. In general, the insider position is volatile and prone to challenges due to unequal power relations between a researcher and participants and due to the multiplicity of identities and experiences within one linguistic or immigrant community.

Insider status may be granted not only on the basis of belonging to the same linguistic or cultural community; in many cases, the factor that unites researchers and participants is their shared or similar life experience. For example, the experience of living with severe disability helped Scott (2013) to justify her choice of the research topic and to recruit participants, but in the process of her interactions with disabled participants, she realized that her perceived insider status was questionable because of differences between her life experience and her participants' narratives; moreover, her interviewees did not view her as a complete insider. Consequently, what appears to be a similar life experience among many may rather turn out to be a number of different life stories.

All in all, insider status guarantees neither a privileged position nor more accurate data; in fact, an insider position is often vested with additional challenges and assumptions. In terms of heritage language research, it would matter whether the researcher had lived in the host country so long as to become almost an outsider in his or her own linguistic and cultural community; on the other hand, the participants' length of residence in a host country is also critical. Even though they may share the same language, researchers and participants may be separated by their

different immigrant experiences in a new country. The border between insider and outsider status is blurred; in heritage language research, one does not necessarily have to belong to the same linguistic or ethnic community or speak the same language—the researcher and participants may share the same or similar concerns while belonging to starkly different groups.

## **Chapter Four: Research Methods**

The choice of qualitative methods in research on heritage language maintenance and loss is justified by the fact that we focus on human life, identity, sense of belonging or alienation, pain, loss, and disconnectedness. We are not measuring our participants' heritage language proficiency; rather we look at how they live with the language or without it. Our purpose is not the same as that of the English language proficiency tests evaluating competence in L2 in order for newcomers to gain access in the educational system or the host society in general. Heritage languages should not be viewed as indicator of a full participation in L1 community, but rather as some crucial connections and relationships in human life.

In order to answer my research questions regarding language maintenance among Ukrainian immigrant families, I was initially planning to use qualitative methods – interviews and journal writing. Based on my preview of research methods mentioned in the literature on language maintenance, I thought these qualitative methods would be beneficial for the data collection process because the nature of my research is interpretive and explanatory. However, it turned out quite challenging to collect journal stories from my participants, so I ended up using interviews as my research method to gather information about my participants, and story writing as a method to reflect on my own “case”. In particular, my research journal and my personal stories were helpful in illustrating my experience maintaining Ukrainian in the context of my own family.

### **Selection Criteria and Recruitment of Participants**

Prior to finding potential participants, ethical approval from the ENREB at the University of Manitoba was obtained. Consent was obtained in writing (see Appendix G) from all the participants. The nature of the study and the objectives of the research were explained in these

forms. All participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

I intended to recruit only parents who were committed to heritage language maintenance because I believe this sample was more applicable to my research interest. As planned, I recruited ten adults representing ten different families with children of different ages. Initially I was planning to find my potential participants through six English-Ukrainian Bilingual Programs and one Ukrainian nursery school in a major city in central Canada. However, I had to adjust my recruitment process and eventually found my participants through my daughter's daycare, snowball method and by word of mouth.

As specified in the recruitment letter, the participating parents were all first-generation immigrants from Ukraine who had lived in Canada for at least three years and had at least one child in the age group 3-16. The participants were from culturally/linguistically mixed marriages (with one of the partners speaking Russian) as well as from monocultural marriages (both parents speak Ukrainian). I did not have any specific requirements regarding educational or professional background of my participants, but the majority of them had a university degree from Ukraine. The participants were asked to be available to spend between two and three hours being interviewed and engaging in follow-up member checks. As a way of appreciating my participants' time in helping me with data collection and interpretation, I gave each participating parent a gift card valued at \$35.

I posted my recruitment letter on the bulletin board in my daughter's home daycare; the daycare provider was a woman from Ukraine, and all children attending the daycare were from families of immigrants from Ukraine. I also posted volunteer recruitment letters in two local grocery stores selling products from Ukraine. I was hoping the number of future participants

would be sufficient to reach “theoretical saturation” when no new themes would emerge from data collection and analysis (Trainor, 2013).

### **Data Collection: Research Instruments (Interviews and Journal/Story Writing)**

I began the process of data collection by having initial interviews (see tentative questions in Appendix A) with each participant in order to establish some personal contact, explain the purpose of my research, and provide tentative prompts (see Appendix B) for their personal stories. After our first meeting, the participating parents had about two months to write their personal stories, observations, comments, reflections or blogs using prompts they had received at our initial interviews. I did not request that they follow any specific format, nor did I have particular expectations regarding length, style or language. They were free to choose whatever they were most comfortable with. I was going to collect this material via email or, if they preferred, personal contact. Since I did not receive any comprehensive stories or journal writing, I had to initiate additional interviews and meetings to collect more information about my participants. Consequently, our second interviews revolved around the data from the first interview and the questions and prompts I initially included in their journal/story writing guidelines (Appendix B). I created some questions for the final interviews later when I almost completed writing all the stories. I felt it was necessary to have some form of closure; moreover, winter holidays were another good excuse to get in touch with my participants. These additional interview questions were approved by ENREB (Appendix C). In addition to the methods mentioned above, I kept a personal researcher journal documenting my observations and comments about the research process as well as writing my reflections about the current situation in my home country —Ukraine. Because one of my questions is about the influence of societal

factors on decisions regarding heritage language maintenance, I had to compare my understanding of the situation in Ukraine with the data from my participants.

Neumann and Peterson (1997) view research as a general learning opportunity through communication between researchers and their participants and subsequent contemplation on the part of a researcher. With regard to my research project, my participants from the same ethnolinguistic group were not homogeneous, so that is why in order to understand and fully appreciate their individual experiences and values, semi-structured interviews were more appropriate than any other method of data collection.

Initially, I was planning to have at least two interviews with each participating parent in addition to written stories they would send me via email. To assist them in writing their stories, during our first meeting they were given a hard copy of possible prompts for writing their journal that focuses on understanding the role of a heritage language (Ukrainian) in parent-child relationships (see Appendix B). As I mentioned above, I had to adjust my initial intention regarding journal writing because my participants were not open to this method of data collection. While many of my participants told me they were unable to complete additional tasks of journal/story writing because of their busy life schedules, some of them kept promising to email me their journals every time we met, which eventually was uncomfortable and even awkward for me. I did not want to act like a teacher blaming a student for not doing his/her homework. Taking into consideration the bigger picture though, I have to admit there must have been more than just lack of time involved in this situation. Even though they were given a choice of writing either in English or Ukrainian (or both), it could be possible they were not comfortable writing in either language. Newer immigrants were not confident enough to use English as the language of their journals; on the other hand, Ukrainian was probably not an ideal choice as well.

They could also be vulnerable in terms of their own self-esteem and were feeling some sort of inadequacy thinking I would judge their knowledge of the Ukrainian grammar. In our interviews, they all emphasized the importance of literacy skills in Ukrainian, but definitely they did not want to be evaluated by someone they considered more or less an authority. This was a very delicate situation when I had no ethical right to insist on doing the task or blame anyone for being irresponsible. In fact, I had more empathy with my participants when I began transcribing the interviews. Because I had not been typing in Ukrainian for about eight years (short emails and messages do not count as writing for me), it was an ordeal to search for letters on the keyboard, pausing and thinking about the punctuation or the correct spelling. In Ukraine writing in my first language was easy and natural for me. Overall, I learned my lesson that in a multilingual territory, researchers should have reasonable expectations. I also realized that journal writing can be viewed as intimate engagement that is not intended for others. Moreover, at the stage when I was writing my proposal, I thought my future participants would not mind taking notes of the events in their everyday life; after all, this is what everybody seems to be doing on social media nowadays. Obviously, I was wrong, and while some of my participants invited me to join their forums and blogs where they were sharing problems and challenges of parenting in Canada, this was not translated to their willingness to write journals for the purpose of my study. In fact, one woman, in particular, was very anxious and kept asking me who had read or would read her transcripts, and where and how much of her interviews would be published etc. On the other hand, because of all political events and confrontation, there is another issue related to Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism: many of my participants were bilinguals like me, but perhaps they were not willing to admit that because their children were attending English-Ukrainian bilingual schools. I had people who were originally from different parts of

Ukraine, and some of those who speak Ukrainian only (not Ukrainian and Russian) expressed their negative feelings towards Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism. I think they may have been concerned that their writing would make some of these tensions and issues more visible.

The questions for our first meeting (see Appendix A) assisted me in creating their personal and linguistic stories that were supposed to shed some light on the issues of heritage language maintenance in immigrant families. Based on the first interview, follow-up questions were added on an individual basis for subsequent interviews. The purpose of the second interview was to clarify themes from the first meeting and search for additional information regarding their parenting experience between two or three cultures and languages in Canada. The final interview was intended to provide some formal closure to the project and an opportunity to express my best wishes for the upcoming New Year and winter holidays. The participants were interviewed in one-on-one interviews lasting no longer than an hour. All data were compared and analyzed in order to find some possible patterns regarding heritage language maintenance in the Ukrainian community in Canada. I also had some informal meetings and gatherings with some of my participants. Each parent received interview transcripts either in Ukrainian or Russian, personal stories to member check and a summary report of my research findings in English. Finally, for cross-analysis purposes, interviews were examined across all participants to identify any opposing views related to the identified themes.

The interviews were conducted in Ukrainian (with the exception of those participants who spoke Russian as their first language), which made the process of communication more natural and comfortable for the participants. The participants could also choose which language to use for their written responses (some of their emails were in English). The interviews were conducted in homes of participating parents as well as in my own house. Excerpts from the

interviews were translated into English for the purpose of the final research report. The information pertaining to this project and all the results will be disseminated for the purpose of the PhD thesis.

### **Advantages and Limitations of Chosen Research Methods**

**Interviews.** Even though “no single method can grasp the variations in ongoing human experience” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 12), interviewing immigrant parents of Ukrainian background was selected as a method in this research project in order to interpret the parents’ perspectives regarding their children’s experiences of learning and maintaining their heritage language.

Interviewing is one of the most common methods of data collection in qualitative research (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Doody & Noonan, 2013). The popularity of this method in qualitative research can be explained by our, often simplistic, understanding of interviews as mere conversations as popularized by mass media and talk shows in our “interview society” (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). Therefore, this method seems too easy and accessible to everyone willing to engage in interactions with others when all that is necessary is “good intentions (that is, to give voice to the voiceless) and the ability to listen and then to transform into a reduced verbal text what one has heard” (Sandelowski, 2002, p. 105).

Researchers usually have to choose from or even combine three possible models of interviewing: structured, unstructured or open-ended, and semi-structured (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Doody & Noonan, 2013). In research on language maintenance, structured interviews are the least appropriate since they focus on a very narrow way of representing participants’ answers and do not provide a space for openness. Scheibelhofer (2008) emphasizes the benefits of “problem-centered interviews” in qualitative research involving some autobiographical aspects

because this type of interviews opens with a broad introduction offering a participant to start with a narrative beginning, which is later elaborated on with the help of semi-structured part.

The most obvious advantages of employing interviewing as a method of data collection are the opportunities for participants to choose and share the information they consider important; to accumulate direct quotes and words of the participants which may become part of the final research text; the opportunity for clarification and elaboration on the issues that seem to be crucial for understanding the interviewees' experiences; finally, with some groups interviews are helpful if people are illiterate in the language chosen for the interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

**Limitations of interviews as a research method.** Interviews are quite time-consuming and sometimes may seem like intrusions (Vickers, 2002), especially if the focus of the interview is a very sensitive issue; in addition, participants may be willing to provide socially acceptable or expected answers disguising aspects of their realities, thus influencing the nature of the final interpretation and research text (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Moreover, researchers run the risk of "taking what people say in interviews at face value" forgetting that interviewees may have their own hidden agendas and motivations to justify their actions and behaviours or simply to present themselves in a positive light (Sandelowski, 2002, p. 106). Atkinson (2007) also warns us that all interviews are subject to doubts because they may not unearth the real participants' intentions or the truth; as researchers, we may just get "the story they [participants] want to tell us" (p.240). To address the issue of possible participants' desire to provide only positive and expected answers, I informed them about the purposes of my project but admitted that there were no particular theories, correct strategies or specific results I was trying to achieve or prove at the conclusion of my study. I also shared with them my belief that every immigrant family has a

unique story to tell, which may or may not resonate with my personal experience or research findings. I did not position myself as an experienced researcher searching for answers or theory validation, rather I emphasized my personal interest as a new mother of a multilingual child. Intuitively, I could also sense some differences between my participants in terms of their engagement: while some of them strongly believed they were doing right things for their children by insisting on home language policies, others were hesitant and doubtful as to whether their efforts would be successful in the long run. I cannot think of any possible reasons for my participants to give me some pre-formulated answers in order to please me or to meet any particular expectations.

It may be difficult to establish trust with the participants and easy to lose the gained trust (Fontana & Frey, 1994); on the other hand, if a researcher has very close or friendly relationships with the participants, it may be difficult to conduct interviews because frequently they transform into informal conversations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Haahr, Norlyk & Hall, 2014; Fontana & Frey, 1994), so it could be challenging to sustain professional and ethical behaviour on part of the researcher. I have to admit that with some of my participants I managed to establish friendly and more long-term relationships, while with others I communicated exclusively for the purpose of my project. Because the initial contact with our research participants is prescribed by some protocols and signing consent forms, it is nearly impossible to simultaneously become friends with all ten participants and establish mutual trust and close relationships with everyone. Unlike making friends in everyday life, our first meeting with each new participant is a somewhat artificial process, so maintaining these relationships may be challenging at times. Based on my experience, I disagree with some research literature claiming

that close relationships with research participants may compromise the data collection and professional conduct of the researcher.

There is always uncertainty regarding the accuracy of transcripts which depends on the professional knowledge, personal biases and other subjective characteristics of the researcher, the interviewer, the transcriber, the interviewee, the location and quality of the recording (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Lincoln and Gonzalez (2008) propose a bilingual research text as a possibility to give voice to local communities who may not speak the dominant language. They claim that if the results of research are to be disseminated among participants as well, it would be more beneficial to keep their words in the original language. At the same time, the difficulties of adequate translation are addressed since often the true meaning is if not lost than may be changed in translation. To address this possible issue of the misrepresentation of participants' words, the participating parents in my research had an option of answering interview questions in their first language.

**Journal/story writing.** In addition to semi-structured interviews, I found that story/journal writing offered me the possibility to ruminate about my personal stories regarding everyday linguistic and parenting experiences. This method of data collection may to some extent resemble the creation of personal narratives or even autoethnography; however, in my case these stories and reflections are regarded only as a method of collecting more information about my experience of language maintenance, but a story itself is not “the phenomena of inquiry” (Phillion & He, 2007, p. 1008). Unlike in narrative inquiry, the personal stories in my case had a more descriptive and interpretative function rather than intervention (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007), “retelling” or “reliving” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

My stories were often multilingual and fragmented, resembling sometimes diary entries or observations, and other times there were complicated ideas and thoughts loosely connected. Neumann (1997) emphasizes the importance of stories but acknowledges that they may not always emerge as complete stories:

Stories, to me, are the sense and meaning we derive from ourselves and our lives, for ourselves and for others. They appear less in the clear, hard, textually rendered lines of setting and event, action and plot, movement and sequence, plan and accomplishment, than in the often fragmented, even wordless expressions of experience and emotions.

(p.109)

Consequently, in my research, interviews are considered as a primary method of data collection about my participants, while story/journal writing is a supplemental or secondary method to explore the plethora of my personal insights and challenges. Reflective journal/story writing may have also acted as a decolonizing method in this project because it provided me with an opportunity to reflect and analyze the connections between my past linguistic, political and cultural experiences in Ukraine, and how my circumstances and attitudes have changed over time due to recent changes in my home country.

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

Coles (1989) believes that the story itself can “be our discovery” (p. 22), and reminds us that as researchers, we do not possess our participants’ stories as we may be only privileged to interpret them and learn from them. Consequently, even if my project is not a groundbreaking study with astonishing new discoveries, I believe my participants’ insightful stories add new perspectives on the issues of heritage language maintenance in Canada.

The final data are presented as a case study report, which “involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). My main purpose is not analysing every unique case holistically and learning everything about it, but to use my multiple cases in order to understand the phenomenon of heritage language maintenance; consequently, the term *instrumental case study* (Stake, 1995, p. 3) is applicable to my research project.

Similar to many other case studies in applied linguistics, my research “foregrounds sociocultural, discursive, and personal (affective) aspects of experience and learning, without detailed linguistic descriptions” (Duff, 2014, p. 235). My participants also represent “a nesting of cases” (Duff, 2014, p. 236) when the phenomenon of language maintenance is studied within the context of a particular family, which in turn is situated in a broad context of the Ukrainian immigrant community in Canada with all its cultural, linguistic, political and social tensions and differences. In this study, the phenomenon of heritage language maintenance is “examined closely within the context of the case-in-context and against the backdrop of existing theory and research” (Duff, 2014, p. 237). According to Duff (2014), “four to six cases can be ideal for doctoral research” (p. 237), so I decided to include four cases followed by my own case study.

In terms of analyzing data in multiple cases, Creswell (2007) suggests starting with “a within-case analysis” focusing on details and themes relevant to a specific case, then moving on to “a cross-case analysis” searching for commonalities and differences in themes across multiple cases, and, finally, providing “assertions” i.e. researcher’s understanding and interpretation of the text. The data in my research were analyzed with the application of emergent themes analysis (LeCompte, 2000). I tried to act as an “interpretive researcher” without searching for absolute truth (Toma, 2000). Hopefully, I used what Andrews (2007) calls “research imagination”, which

enables us to envision the life we have never experienced: “our narrative imagination is our most valuable tool in our exploration of others' worlds, for it assists us in seeing beyond the immediately visible” (Andrews, 2007, p. 510). Hostetler (2005) believes that a good research in education should be related to people’s well-being in general. Furthermore, Tierney (2000) argues that new forms of research writing should be considered, so that findings can be disseminated and available to general public. I had to reconsider my initial idea to apply critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001; Rogers, 2004; Rogers, 2013; Van Dijk, 1993) in the process of my data interpretation. I realized that switching between three languages makes it difficult to adequately translate and interpret all the nuances for the audience who may not speak all three languages. Moreover, it would make member check really complicated for me and my participants.

In order not to “commodify marginality” (Spivak, 1999), the research text includes direct quotations of participants in the original format and language (Ukrainian) with translations in English to ensure participants’ voices are present not only through the lens of researcher’s interpretation. Phillipson (2008) states that language educators should “use all languages to decolonise minds, so as to facilitate equitable dialogue and to counteract occupation, physical or mental” (p. 39).

### **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), there are two ongoing crises in terms of qualitative research: “the representational” and “the legitimation crisis”. The first one reflects the impossibility of objective and accurate representation of the lived experience because it is only the researcher’s text, which may potentially disguise the actual reality. The legitimation crisis deals with the problematic traditional criteria of research evaluation such as validity,

generalizability and reliability, which are not directly applicable or relevant for qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Validity issues related to personal stories are caused by doubts as to whether it is possible to adequately express one's actual life experience (Polkinghorne, 2007). The discrepancies between the real life experience and the way people put it into words are explained by the limits of the language to express complex and meaningful experiences; the limited ability of human reflection and possibility to overlook some important nuances and perceptions hidden into subconscious; the human nature to present a socially desirable image and avoid sharing some unpleasant or controversial experiences; and finally, the act of collaboration between researchers and participants may disguise some evidence (Polkinghorne, 2007). To these problems with data collection, I would also add difficulties of expressing one's life experiences in a foreign language, and even when participants have a choice to use their first language, the subsequent translation may fail to convey some shades of meaning and experience.

Addressing the issues of validity in qualitative research, Creswell and Miller (2000) propose to share the research findings with the participants and people external to the project, as well as engage in continuous researcher reflexivity, keep documentation of all research activities, search peer feedback and provide a detailed thick description of the study. These recommendations seem very helpful in terms of my research project; by actively engaging with my participants and committee members, my hope was to create interesting and thought-provoking research text based on accurate data and relevant interpretation.

## Chapter Five: Selected Case Studies

In this chapter, I present four parents (cases) out of the ten parents (see Appendix E – Participants’ Profile) who participated in my research, but I draw on all ten cases in the Findings and Discussion sections. I decided to specifically focus on these four particular families because they represent cultural and linguistic differences among Ukrainian immigrants from different geographical regions in Ukraine. Also, the time of their residence in Canada varies from three to seventeen years. In addition, these four cases demonstrate a multitude of beliefs, attitudes, and strategies in maintaining the Ukrainian language in Canada. Furthermore, some of these parents have children born in Canada, while others have Ukrainian-born children who came to Canada with sufficient knowledge of the Ukrainian language; the children also vary in ages. Finally, when I was interviewing these four parents, I kept thinking that they were embodiments of differences within what presumably is one nation, ethnicity and culture. These four cases will be followed by my own reflections on the linguistic situation in my family, which adds more complexities to this portrayal of the Ukrainian language and immigrants in the present Canadian context. Collins (2010) notes that researchers and their memories can be valuable resources as well.

In describing my four case studies, I provided a brief background of the contemporary political context in Ukraine at the time of immigration of my participants because all waves of Ukrainian immigration to Canada were precipitated by political events and national policies in Ukraine. Such social and political contexts in a home country help predetermine the positionality of immigrants in a host country. As Couton (2014) states, “Migration is often the direct result of state policies, which in turn affect communal organizing and collective mobilization” (p. 6). Consequently, the literature identifies four waves of Ukrainian immigrants who were all

mobilized around a set of common goals and shared perspectives with regard to policies both in Ukraine and Canada.

For this research project, I intentionally wanted to find strangers, people I had never met before in order to avoid merging research data with my previous personal knowledge, subjective opinions, and potential bias. My future participants contacted me via phone or email provided in the recruitment letter. One participant I happened to meet at my sister's house, so I initiated his participation by telling about my project and asking him to consider contributing to it. The data for this project were collected via individual interviews; however, with some of my participants we also had skype chats, personal gatherings and other forms of informal communication not really intended to be recorded or documented. The process of interviewing spanned the course of ten months, which was longer than I had initially anticipated partially because of my participants' busy schedules. I had at least two interviews with all my participants, with the exception of one participant (we had to adjourn our first interview and resumed it later because she had some emergency at home). All interviews lasted no longer than an hour. With some of my study participants we became friends partially because we had children close in age, so we had much in common, and I could probably connect with them more than with other participants. On the other hand, I had an uneasy feeling – if we had more personal relationships, it might look as if I talked to them only because I needed it for my research, for my own benefits. When they failed to complete their journal writing and were apologizing every time we met informally, I had to try my best to reassure them I was in touch with them not only for the sake of my data collection.

Naturally, I was communicating in Ukrainian with all my participants during interviews, with the exception of some Russian-speaking interviewees, one of whom eventually became one

of my case studies, so the detailed portrait of this family will be presented later in this paper. Interview transcripts were also done in Ukrainian or Russian, but our email communication sometimes transpired in English; in particular, the final report was emailed to all participants in English only. Language choices are important “ethical considerations” (Li, 2011) in multilingual research projects. Although my participants did not mind using their real names in the final research report, I decided to give them pseudonyms to ensure that their privacy and personal information was protected, so I tried to eliminate any identifiable details that could potentially be associated with a particular individual. On the other hand, I had two female participants with the same first name, so I had to change names in any case. I chose to write my participants’ pseudonyms and direct quotations in Ukrainian followed by English translation. I believe that is the least I can do to make their voices and personalities more visible and to “give them voice”.

To assist my readers with imagining these four characters, I tried to depict them in detail but without too much detail in order not to put their confidentiality at risk. According to Duff (2014), “a qualitative case study of a person presents a contextualized human profile” (p. 233). By describing my participants’ cultural, linguistic and political contexts, I also attempt to show, or at least speculate, how these parents interact with their past and present contexts, and whether they seem to be more embracing or resisting whatever linguistic and cultural opportunities and challenges come their way. Finally, I also include my own case, as well as excerpts from my journal, to better illustrate the complexities of ethnicity, language, and culture in the context of a new host country. Ruminating about my impressions from my last visit to Ukraine, I was able to better interpret some assertions of those participants who had lived in Canada for only three years or so. My researcher journal was an opportunity to trace the Ukrainian language across geographical spaces and boundaries of two countries, to reflect on what it means to be a

Ukrainian in Canada and Ukraine, to observe the shifting notions of linguistic and ethnic identities as illustrated by the recent wave of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada.

### **Андрій (Andriy)**

When I first met Andriy in my sister's house, I immediately thought he was a teacher—the manner he talked, the confidence, and teaching notes in his voice identified him as a leader, or a person who was in charge of others. It turned out I was partially right: even though he is not a teacher, he has his own construction business in Canada and is the leader in a Ukrainian organization in one of the largest cities in eastern Canada. I would describe him as very opinionated, persistent, eager, and assertive in some ways. Our first interaction was very brief, and initially I did not think of him as a potential participant. Later when we did talk, I was surprised how different he was from all my other participating parents. All the mothers I had interviewed previously were somehow seeking my approval or assurance as to what they were doing was right, appropriate and beneficial for their children. Some of them even directly asked me to give them advice, information from research, or to share my personal experience. Unlike my female participants, Andriy was trying to advise me, and gave me a very straightforward advice—“Не вчіть свою дитину англійської. Це не ваше завдання” [*Ukr.* Do not teach your child English. It is not your responsibility ]<sup>4</sup> (personal communication, September 5, 2016). This

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<sup>4</sup> Deviating from the accepted norms of academic writing in English, I decided to include direct quotations in Ukrainian or Russian followed by my own English translation. This was the least I could do to honour my participants' actual words, ideas, insights, and contribution to this project. I want them to “speak” in their first language, the language they were most comfortable with. Some of them really appreciated this gesture and were pleased to see their actual words in my final report. This paper is not only about the Ukrainian language—it is a trilingual engagement outlining “linguistic landscapes” consisting of more than one language. If I am advocating the legitimacy of minority and immigrant languages beyond the boundaries of one's home, family, and community, I should give some space for languages other than English in this paper.

enormous confidence and energy were really inspiring and left me no doubt that he would succeed in his attempts to maintain Ukrainian in his family.

Before I met Andriy, I had actually got acquainted with his son, Stepan. I was visiting my sister in another province and was staying at her place for a couple of days over September long weekend. On my second day there, my ten-year-old niece had a play date. One of her friends was Stepan, an English-speaking boy with a Ukrainian name. I asked my sister about him, and she told me he was their friend's son. When we had dinner together that day, I offered some food to Stepan, and I was speaking English because that was the only language I had heard from him, so I assumed he did not speak Ukrainian. To my surprise, he answered me in Ukrainian and also said he was fluent in Ukrainian. I was puzzled because then he should have communicated in Ukrainian with my niece as well; however, they chose English exclusively. Moreover, my sister later told me Stepan was attending the same Ukrainian heritage school as my two nieces, but obviously Ukrainian was not their language of communication. As I was getting ready to leave for the airport, Stepan's parents came to pick him up. We had tea and cookies together, and I got acquainted with his parents—Olga and Andriy, both immigrants from Ukraine. They heard my twenty-month-old daughter saying “дякую” (*Ukr.* Thank you!), and somehow our conversation diverted towards the topic of languages. They asked me about my immigration story, my education, and job. They were also surprised that my daughter was attending a daycare because in Ukraine mothers usually stay with their children till at least age three. I had to somehow justify my decision to send my daughter to the daycare when she was ten months old, so I began telling them about my job and studying commitments, and naturally that brought me to the topic of my dissertation. I made a compliment to their son about his excellent command of Ukrainian, and Olga noted it was due to her husband's commitment to the Ukrainian culture and language.

Unfortunately, I had to go to the airport, so we did not really finish our conversation, but they offered to get in touch via skype. We talked shortly via Skype once I came back to Winnipeg, just a brief conversation at first, then Andriy agreed to participate in my research, so once he signed the consent form, we had our formal interview on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

The most surprising thing for me was the fact that in this family, the husband was an initiator and strong supporter of maintaining Ukrainian. Actually, his wife somehow withdrew her participation from the very beginning by saying, “If it’s about Ukrainian, talk to my husband. He knows a lot and is really passionate, so he can talk about this for hours”. Unlike all my previous participants who were mothers, in this case I got to interview a father. This is also in contradiction to research literature, which usually cites mothers as being more dedicated to issues of heritage language maintenance among their children. Obviously, in this family the linguistic responsibility was on the father’s shoulders, while the mother was not opposed to, but at the same time, not really enthusiastic about this issue.

Andriy brought his family to Canada fourteen years ago. His younger brother with his family had immigrated to Canada a couple of years prior. Andriy is originally from western Ukraine where, unlike eastern or central Ukraine, people do not use Russian in everyday communication. The western region is predominantly Ukrainian-speaking and Catholic unlike central and eastern Orthodox regions. On the other hand, the Ukrainian language in western Ukraine is quite different from both the official standard form and the Ukrainian language people speak in other parts of the country. Various historical events and the geographical proximity to other European countries account for the presence of Polish and Hungarian words in the language of western Ukraine. In fact, it is often referred to even as a regional “dialect”, not to diminish but to differentiate this peculiarity about the Ukrainian language in western regions.

Additionally, the intonation is also quite distinct and different from intonation patterns in other areas of Ukraine. Historically, western Ukraine is considered as “more Ukrainian” than any other part of my country; at the same time, these western regions were less assimilated and Russified during the time of the Soviet Union. Traditionally, it is believed that people who live there care about the Ukrainian language, culture, traditions, and religion.

In 2002, the year Andriy came to Canada, the general political mood in Ukraine was more or less peaceful, but one could probably anticipate overall discontent and volatility because of the weak economy and open public allegations of corruption and crime involving the political leaders of the country. This kind of climate was not particularly sparking a desire to immigrate, but many young people were considering going elsewhere to earn money, so the practice of getting work permits and visas was gaining popularity. The later events in 2004— Orange revolution and change of the country’s president –brought some hope and faith in the future of the country. Maybe these political and societal changes can explain the fact that Andriy several times returned back to Ukraine within first five years after his immigration to Canada.

Andriy was born and grew up in pure Ukrainian environment in western Ukraine. However, before his immigration to Canada, he had lived in central Ukraine where his wife Olga was from. They lived in Cherkasy where the Ukrainian and Russian languages were equally present, even more Russian probably, but just within a couple of kilometres, if one travels outside of the city, the countryside was exclusively Ukrainian-speaking. This could probably explain the fact that their daughter was fluent both in Ukrainian and Russian before immigration. However, Andriy noted that his daughter never spoke Russian with her family members because it was unwritten rule, or almost “taboo” as Andriy puts it, that in their house they use Ukrainian only. He says they never thought twice about their home language choice. Even though his wife

was born in the central bilingual part of Ukraine, her parents were originally from western Ukraine, so the Ukrainian language and culture were nurtured in both his and his wife's families.

Andriy strongly believes that linguistic choices within families are defined by parents only; moreover, speaking of Ukrainian immigrants in Canada, Andriy claims that the origin of parents (which part of Ukraine they are from) is the only decisive factor in whether they choose to maintain the Ukrainian language in Canada. Specifically, Andriy asserts that only parents who are from the western regions of Ukraine are committed to Ukrainian language maintenance, while all others from central, eastern, or southern parts of Ukraine give up their native language in immigration. He has close friends and relatives who are Ukrainian-speaking and whose first language is Ukrainian, but who switched to Russian either because one of the partners is Russian-speaking Ukrainian, or just because the Russian language is traditionally considered more prestigious. Andriy expresses his disrespect and even anger towards this kind of behaviour:

*Це показує рівень культури людини, рівень виховання людини самої. Вона сама себе цим принижує, тобто це показує що людина собою представляє. [Ukr. It [giving up Ukrainian] shows someone's personal upbringing. By doing this, the person humiliates herself/himself, so it shows his/her real personality.] (interview with Andriy, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

He emphasizes this idea of connectivities between parental place of birth (i.e. which part of Ukraine) and upbringing on the one hand, and their motivation to maintain Ukrainian on the other hand. He claims that those who gave up their language, also lost their national identity, sense of belonging, and self-respect.

Andriy has two children; his daughter was ten years old when they immigrated to Canada, so naturally she was proficient and fluent in Ukrainian. Consequently, our conversations

were focused more on his son, who was born in Canada, and whom I had the pleasure to meet. At the time of our first interview, his son was twelve years old, fluent in English, which is primarily his language of communication outside the family. He also has a really good command of Ukrainian, but he still has some peculiarity that I would not call an accent, but rather some nuanced pronunciation in Ukrainian. Actually, Ukrainian was his first language because he did not attend Canadian daycare, and he was even assigned an ESL support teacher when he began formal schooling in Canada. This fact did not concern Andriy at all, and he believed it was not his responsibility to teach his son English, instead he put all his energy trying to encourage Stepan to not only speak Ukrainian, but also like everything related to Ukrainian culture. Andriy states he does not really care if his son will know Russian or French (he attends Extended French program), but he is very particular about his son speaking, reading, and writing in Ukrainian.

Describing his children's linguistic choices and skills, Andriy admits that they usually communicate with each other in English even though his daughter's first language is Ukrainian. The mix of languages plays out in this family on an everyday basis because his daughter speaks Ukrainian only with Andriy and his wife, while his son tries to communicate in Ukrainian with his parents, but it is not always easy for him:

*Я його заставляю розмовляти українською дома з нами, іноді ми переходимо... деякі слова начебто акцентуємо англійською, щоб він краще зрозумів. Ми думаємо може він не розуміє (якщо він не слухається), то може він не розуміє українською, треба англійською сказати. Я думаю, що коли він говорить українською, в нього жестикуляція інша, він намагається жестами висловити більше, тобто більше жестикуляції в нього, але однозначно йому складніше українською. [Ukr. I make him speak Ukrainian at home, sometimes we code switch... we emphasize certain words in*

English for him to understand it better. If he does not listen to us, we think maybe he does not understand, so it is better to say it in English. I think he uses more gestures to express himself when he is speaking Ukrainian, but definitely, it is more difficult for him to speak Ukrainian.] (interview with Andriy, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Despite all the challenges, Stepan was really happy and felt rewarded for his efforts when he visited Ukraine. Last summer Andriy spent five weeks in Ukraine travelling all over and showing his children historical places, beautiful sceneries, and rich culture. Stepan was pleasantly surprised when he turned on TV and could easily understand everything. Stepan realized that at least his efforts of maintaining Ukrainian back in Canada were not in vain. Andriy intentionally takes his family for prolonged visits to Ukraine every summer because he is afraid when his son becomes a teenager, he may have different interests and may not be willing to travel to Ukraine. Andriy believes that it is very important for parents to encourage and, if necessary, even enforce the Ukrainian language and culture on their children before they become teenagers. Reiterating the research literature, Andriy is certain that childhood is a crucial stage in linguistic development, so it is important not to miss the opportunity.

In their family, Andriy and his wife try to speak correct and standard Ukrainian language, but this is not always the norm in Ukraine, at least not everywhere. In my country, there are many forms and dialects of Ukrainian; in particular, in some central regions people who speak Ukrainian may also insert some Russian words or pronounce Ukrainian words in a different manner. Andriy shared an amusing episode from their summer travel experience in Ukraine. They were visiting some central regions in Ukraine, and his son was puzzled a bit and asked, “Де я? Чому тут так смішно розмовляють?” [*Ukr.* Where am I? Why do people speak so funny?]. Andriy explained that some strange woman asked his son “ти по -українські розумієш?” [*Ukr.*

Do you understand Ukrainian?]<sup>5</sup>, and his son responded proudly, “Я розумію, що це не українські”. [*Ukr.* I understand that it is not Ukrainian.] (interview with Andriy, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016). So, Stepan was imitating his father’s behaviour who tries to speak standard Ukrainian and corrects his family members if they make mistakes.

In general, Andriy is quite satisfied with his son’s Ukrainian speaking skills but would like Stepan to have better writing and reading skills. He admits that one day per week in a Ukrainian heritage school is not enough, so his son has only basic literacy skills, and he is definitely behind his peers in Ukraine. Stepan finds spelling challenging, in particular, he can mix up two vowels (і / и), and some Ukrainian consonants (я, ю, є, ї) present difficulties because they are pronounced as two sounds but spelled as one letter. Stepan’s reading speed is also slow. Andriy mentioned at least one occasion when his son was reluctant to read in Ukrainian. When they were visiting Lviv (a beautiful historical city in western Ukraine), they happened to be in one ancient castle. Andriy asked his son to have a look at the wall where he could read some historical information, but Stepan was not really interested. However, when Andriy said that there was an English version, Stepan quickly ran to read it. Moreover, when they had to book an excursion around the city in Ukraine, and the guide gave them several languages to choose from, Stepan decided to have it in English, not Ukrainian. Andriy understands that English is easier for his son, so Ukrainian is not always his first choice.

Despite challenges with Ukrainian, Stepan never expressed any negative feelings or complaints about having to use this language at home. His father anticipates this resistance may be still in the future once teenage years and adolescence come into play. Andriy mentioned that he told his son if he really found it difficult, they would stop sending him to a Ukrainian heritage

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<sup>5</sup> This woman used a Russian verb in her question.

school. However, because Stepan is a social butterfly, he actually likes going to this school to meet his friends; for him it is an additional opportunity to socialize. They live in a big metropolitan city, so it takes them at least half an hour to drive to the Ukrainian heritage school at the other end of the city. Because they do not have Ukrainians in their neighbourhood, their own home, a Ukrainian church, and the Ukrainian heritage school are the only places for Stepan to speak Ukrainian. Children in this Ukrainian school are also expected to do their home work, as well as learn poems and prepare concerts for every Ukrainian national or religious holiday. Andriy and his wife help Stepan with homework (not without resistance on his part) on a regular basis. Even though their son does not like reading and writing in Ukrainian, they have never heard from him any negative comments, complaints or doubts regarding the maintenance of Ukrainian. Andriy has a goal to teach his son better reading skills, so he can be more fluent in Ukrainian, and he believes his son will be “достойний член Української спільноти в Канаді. Він знає хто він, що він, до чого він належить” [*Ukr.* a respectful member of the Ukrainian community in Canada. He knows who he is, and where he comes from.] (interview with Andriy, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016). Compared with Ukrainian children in Ukraine, Stepan is definitely more Canadian because he looks like and behaves like a child from Canada not Ukraine; nevertheless, he loves everything Ukrainian, he speaks the language, and he knows his roots, which is the most important for his father.

Besides visiting Ukraine regularly and attending a heritage school once a week, Stepan also accompanies his parents to a Ukrainian church every Sunday. They celebrate all religious holidays, and Stepan actively participates in church activities. He sometimes has to learn some verses related to religious holidays or Ukrainian poems by heart, as well as traditional Ukrainian Christmas songs. As Andriy notes, “в школах всі свята які там Шевченка, день святого

Миколая, колядки— ми ходимо на колядки вже років чотири, наприклад, то все частина культури” [ *Ukr.* In his school, all holidays like Shevchenko’s day, St. Nicholas, kolyadky [Ukrainian Christmas songs], we have been doing kolyadky for four years or so, it is all our culture.] (interview with Andriy, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016). In this Ukrainian heritage school, they celebrate not only national and religious holidays, but also encourage children to celebrate birthdays of famous Ukrainian poets and writers such as Shevchenko, Franko, and Lesya Ukrainka. To prepare for these special events, children are expected to learn some poems at home with their parents, so they can recite them later in school, or sometimes they have mini-drama performances. Andriy also loves Ukrainian songs, both folk songs and modern ones, so his son has been exposed to the Ukrainian music since early childhood. They always listen to Ukrainian music in the car, and Stepan really enjoys it. Andriy admits though that Stepan is becoming less interested in Ukrainian folk songs:

*Я з такого регіону: в нас все було українське, і пісні... Я ріс в іншому середовищі трошки, я сам люблю українські пісні і музику. Він то все чув, зараз він менше слухає, а більше сучасне, але я знаю, що то все вернеться, воно в нього там залишилося, заховалося там і сидить. [Ukr. I am from a region where everything was Ukrainian, songs as well. I grew up in a different environment, I love Ukrainian music and songs. He [Stepan] used to listen to all of that, but now he prefers more modern music, but I know it is all there, hiding inside him, it is not lost.] (interview with Andriy, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Another strategy that Andriy mentioned was a kind of “підкуп” (*Ukr.* “bribery”) as he himself put it. Every Saturday when Stepan has a break between classes in his Ukrainian school, Andriy

takes him out to some places he loves like Pizza Pizza or Tim Hortons. Consequently, there is some form of reward for Stepan.

Speaking about code-switching and whether we feel somewhat different if we have to speak English with our children, Andriy admits that he has sometimes to switch to English, but that does not bother him any more. He mentioned it was very strange at the very beginning, but now they have been in Canada long enough not to feel discomfort. However, he does emphasize the importance of speaking Ukrainian with his children. He does not think English can make the parent-child relationships more distant, but:

*Питання в тому, що ми хочемо своїм дітям дати, чому ми хочемо навчити, тобто не тільки дати свою любов дитині батьківську та материнську, щоб вона відчувала тепло та інше. Але що ми хочемо навчити, що ми вважаємо за важливе?*

[Ukr. The question is not what language we speak, but what we want to give our children, what we want to teach them, so not only give them our parental love, but what do we want to teach? What do we consider to be important?] (interview with Andriy, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

He views Ukrainian as the only language to teach his children some values related to the Ukrainian culture and mentality. Andriy is convinced that the Ukrainian school once a week is not enough, so it all depends on parental effort and commitment. He insists that in order to maintain the language, at least one of the parents should be really involved and invest time and energy.

One of the questions in my interview protocol was about the possible connections between our imagined communities, political and cultural events in our country of origin, and

our attitudes towards the Ukrainian language and culture. Taking into account the present situation in Ukraine, it is hard to avoid this topic; however, after one of my participants burst into tears, I realized how sensitive this topic could be. Eventually, I decided to either postpone this question until later interviews or just give my participants an option to decide whether or not they were willing to talk about it. Andriy definitely had his own opinion about all the events and changes both in Ukraine and the Ukrainian-speaking community in Canada. Because Andriy is actively involved in the religious, cultural, and social life of Ukrainian immigrants in his city, over the last couple of years he noticed an increase in terms of student enrolment in his son's heritage school and more people joining their church. The majority of these newcomers were originally from eastern regions and south of Ukraine. To his surprise, he noticed that in about a year those newcomers were sort of disappearing, so Andriy assumes they had just a temporary surge of patriotism, but it was not really sincere. In terms of his personal life, Andriy believes all the events in Ukraine over the last three or four years did not have any impact on how he identifies himself or what culture and language he or his family belong to. He considers himself Ukrainian, and he always felt that way without any hesitation or doubt. He is also very interested in the current situation in Ukraine, and he mentioned he could check the news ten times per day to have updated information. In his family Andriy talks about Ukrainian political and cultural events with his wife and daughter, but not with Stepan. He tries to protect him from having any negative thoughts or feelings towards other people. Andriy told me about an unpleasant incident in his son's Canadian school. They had a newcomer from Russia who addressed another boy from Ukraine by saying out loud "я хохлов ненавижу" [*Rus.* "I hate hohlov" i.e. offensive word used by Russians to refer to Ukrainians]. So, Andriy is trying to protect his son from this kind of

intolerance, and instead focuses more on the idea of being proud of who you are, nurturing your roots, and maintaining Ukrainian.

Andriy is amazed and delighted to communicate with Ukrainian Canadians at his church. Many of them are fluent in Ukrainian despite the fact that they were born in Canada. When he asked them how they managed to maintain that level of the language, they said it was due to their parents who had spared no time and effort to take them to all Ukrainian concerts, festivals, church, heritage schools, and simply prohibiting speaking English at home. Andriy believes that Ukrainian Canadians who were born in Canada but speak Ukrainian are a perfect illustration of parental efforts in language maintenance. Summarizing his motto regarding the Ukrainian language, Andriy asserts:

*Мені важливо, це моє власне переконання, тобто хто я такий, моя культура, моя мова були передана мені батьками і дідами через тисячу років. І тут знайшовся один такий Андрій, що вирішив наприклад, що його дітям це не потрібно. Я з цим не згоден, я вважаю що мені потрібно передати те, що мені передали. [Ukr. It is important for me to know who I am; my culture and my language were given to me by my parents and ancestors throughout thousands of years. And here I am, deciding it is not necessary for my children. I do not agree with this. I have to give my children what was given to me.] (interview with Andriy, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Ruminating about the distant future, Andriy would like to return to Ukraine after his retirement, but at the same time he realizes that it will probably not transpire. If his children and grandchildren live in Canada, he will most likely stay with them. All in all, by the time he retires, there would be no reason for him to return:

*Тому що людина як дерево: чим більше знаходиться на одному місці, тим більше корінням обростає. Заводиш тут друзів, знайомих, діти тут виростають, потім будеш мати внуків. То вже тяжко те кинути буде. [Ukr. Because a human being is like a tree—the more time you spend in one place, the more roots you acquire. You find new friends, acquaintances, your children grow up here, then you will have grandchildren. It would be very difficult to leave all this.] (interview with Andriy, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

### **Олеся (Olesya)**

Olesya called me in April and expressed her willingness to participate in my project. She had seen a recruitment letter in my daughter's daycare (she was a friend of my daycare provider). Because our first phone conversation had happened just days before I was leaving for Ukraine with my daughter, I had to postpone our first interview. We finally met for the first time on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in my house. At that time, Olesya was volunteering at some settlement program for newcomers, she was taking ESL classes at a local college, and was working night shifts. Olesya agreed to come to my house at 10 in the morning on July 12<sup>th</sup>, which means we had a couple of hours before she had to leave for her volunteering in the afternoon and then night shift till midnight. At that time, her children were in a Ukrainian summer camp, and she and her husband had visited them just days before we met. Since it was already past breakfast time but too early for lunch, I set up some cookies, fruits, and light snacks. While we were talking, we had tea together, and it was a very peaceful and refreshing conversation. I enjoyed the rare moments of quiet time after my stormy morning with my toddler daughter who had left for daycare just minutes earlier.

Olesya impressed me with some kind of abundant positive energy that she was literally illuminating. It was drizzling outside, the kind of weather that makes you stay inside; however, once we finished our conversation, the weather changed dramatically, and sunshine was slowly replacing the persistent morning drizzle. I actually thought that people like Olesya with tremendous positive energy can influence not only others around them, but even the weather. When I greeted her at the door, her umbrella was dripping wet, but her face was beaming with a friendly smile. I thought I had seen her before somewhere but could not remember where and when. She is a tall woman, with blonde hair and blue eyes in her late thirties. As a rule, I can identify my former countrymen in the crowd almost unmistakably in Canada, so with Olesya it was definitely that kind of feeling.

We started our conversation by telling each other about our immigration stories and family lives. Originally from a large city in western Ukraine, she immigrated with her family to Canada in February 2014. Her parents had arrived eight years prior, so Olesya had close people to help her with settling down. Her parents also helped taking care of her two girls on weekends and evenings when Olesya had night shifts. One of the reasons I chose this family to be my case is that there were twins in the family. Research literature often provides contradictory findings regarding linguistic development of siblings, and some possible explanations for different proficiency levels in heritage languages, so I thought it was quite a rare case to have a family with twins. They were two girls, who were not identical twins; in fact, they did not look alike at all. Olesya showed me some pictures from the Ukrainian summer camp where they were spending three weeks that summer. According to Olesya, her daughters were not only dissimilar in appearance, but also had very different personalities.

Even though my main focus was Ukrainian language maintenance, at the beginning of our interview, our conversation somehow shifted to learning English. I guess because Olesya was a relatively new immigrant, English still remained a priority. She shared her negative experience of learning English in Ukraine, and mentioned that her level had been very low, just enough to meet the basic language requirements in order to apply for immigration. Her husband's skills in English were even lower and not sufficient to get a professional job in Canada. Having arrived in Canada, Olesya realized that she was comfortable speaking English in everyday situations, but that was not enough to pursue her career aspirations. She had taken several terms of ESL classes in one of the post-secondary institutions and felt much more confident with English at the time we met.

Regarding her daughters, they came to Canada basically without any English at all. In Ukraine, they had finished grade one, and half of grade two, which means they had been learning English as a school subject for a year and a half. However, Olesya believes the Ukrainian system of teaching foreign languages in primary school is not effective. In fact, she believes her children did not speak any English at all when they arrived in Canada. Olesya mentioned they were kind of taken off guard when they had finally received a confirmation from the Canadian embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine. They had taken some English classes before they applied for immigration, but then they had been waiting for more than three years and almost lost their hope together with their English skills.

To make life easier for their two daughters, Olesya and her husband decided to send them to a Ukrainian-English bilingual school in Canada. In fact, they did their best to find a good bilingual program, and they were in touch with other Ukrainian parents who had children. Olesya says the school that most parents recommended was located in a quite expensive neighbourhood,

so when they were looking for a house to buy, they simply could not afford that. Consequently, they ended up in their present Ukrainian-English program, and she is quite satisfied with it. However, she is very surprised that the principal does not speak Ukrainian, and teachers are all Canadian-born. She recalls how her daughters came home after school the first day and were making fun of teachers' Ukrainian pronunciation and all the funny Ukrainian words they had heard that day. Her daughters asked Olesya to tell their school teacher about the [s] sound in Ukrainian because they had heard her old-fashioned “Учитися, брати мої!” [*archaic Ukr.* “Let’s study, my brothers!”]<sup>6</sup>. Despite all that, her girls really liked their school once they got used to it, and they were very comfortable because of their Ukrainian skills.

The situation in this Ukrainian-English school changed dramatically during the second school year, when the teacher who was very proficient in Ukrainian, went on maternity leave, and there were numerous substitute teachers, none of whom spoke Ukrainian. Olesya says that eventually her children got a teacher from Vietnam, and that was how her daughters had to start speaking English.

Olesya admits that although her daughters are twins, they are very different, even in their linguistic development. One daughter is an extrovert, very sociable, and open to new challenges. She picked up English quickly, and Olesya was amazed with her daughter’s easiness to communicate with strangers in English. Her other daughter is a bit behind, very shy and introverted. Her adaptation to a Canadian school and surrounding was difficult, so she kept quiet at school, did not initiate any conversations with people she did not know well, tried to avoid speaking English, and if she had to do so, she was struggling and had a strong accent. Olesya

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<sup>6</sup> This phrase belongs to a famous Ukrainian poet T. Shevchenko 1814-1861, and all school children in Ukraine know this phrase from a school curriculum. It is an archaic sentence, so for Olesya’s daughters it was funny to hear it in everyday communication.

was not really concerned with that because she knew sooner or later her daughter's quietness would be a thing of the past; it was just a matter of time and comfort. However, one common feature in her daughters' linguistic abilities is that they both are gradually losing some advanced knowledge of Ukrainian:

*На побутовому рівні в нас проблем нема: в сім'ї ми розмовляємо тільки українською мовою. Тато наш намагався щоб ми почали розмовляти англійською в хаті ... то було так кумедно, що ту практику ми припинили. Вдома ми природнім чином розмовляємо українською мовою, але я все-таки хотіла б щоб вони знали більше. [Ukr. We have no problems in everyday communication: in our family, we speak Ukrainian only. My husband tried to encourage us to speak English, but it was so funny that we stopped that practice. In our house, naturally we speak Ukrainian, but I would like them [children] to know more than that.] (interview with Olesya, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Olesya's main concern now is her children's literacy skills in Ukrainian, so she also decided to send her daughters to a heritage school at a Ukrainian organization. She admits that once a week is not enough, but still they learn some grammar rules, do home work and maintain their reading skills. However, according to Olesya, her daughters' reading and writing skills are now worse than when they were in grade one in Ukraine. When she receives text messages from her children, there are spelling errors because her daughters tend to replace voiced consonants with unvoiced ones. Even though Olesya realizes that her children probably do not need to know advanced rules of the Ukrainian grammar if they live in Canada, she still believes it is a necessary foundation of any language. One of her daughters wants to become a lawyer, so Olesya constantly reminds her about the importance of having advanced writing skills.

Having mentioned during our first meeting that their immigration process was complicated and waiting time was too long, it turned out later that Olesya intentionally postponed their moving to Canada. She wanted her daughters to finish at least grade one in Ukraine in order to learn how to read and write properly, and get some other skills. She admits that because she failed to submit some documents on time, misspelled some names, and then some documents were missing, their wait time was longer than average. However, she has no regrets because she knows her daughters received at least some basic literacy skills in Ukrainian, so now her task is to maintain that knowledge. During their first year in Canada, Olesya and her husband did not invest enough time and efforts to practice reading and writing with their children because they were busy settling down in Canada; they had to attend ESL classes to improve their English, so they could start looking for better jobs. She says they have to realize their full potential because in this way they would be able to better support their children. While the parents were busy with their own adjustment process, the children did not do much in terms of reading and writing. So, Olesya decided with her husband that they would have some regular literacy tasks, and Olesya will be in charge of writing while her husband would practice reading with them because “без варіантів: як це можна не писати, не читати?” [*Ukr.* It goes without saying: how could you not know how to read and write?] (interview with Olesya, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016). So, Olesya has very high expectations from her daughters regarding their Ukrainian literacy skills.

Olesya's twin girls are enrolled in a Ukrainian-English bilingual program, they attend once a week a heritage school, and every Sunday they participate in church-affiliated youth organization. Despite all these activities, Olesya is very concerned not only about their literacy, but also their lack of advanced vocabulary. She believes their knowledge is somewhat fossilized,

but she would like her children to have a higher-level vocabulary, so they can talk about abstract things, events, and fully express themselves, not just replace the words they do not know with the all-purpose word “piч” (*Ukr. thing*”).

According to Olesya, the main problem with all these Ukrainian programs in Canada is that the administration and educators are all Canadian-born who speak old-fashioned Ukrainian with an accent, and many of them have never even been to Ukraine and have never heard the live language. Olesya says in their Ukrainian-English school there are five children from Ukraine, and in the Ukrainian organization for children and youth there are ten children who arrived approximately at the same time as Olesya’s children. The educators seem to be very pleased to have these newcomers from Ukraine because they communicate with Canadian-born children and expose them to a live language. Moreover, Canadian-born parents are volunteering in this organization and also communicate with children from Ukraine, and so this is how communication transpires between different generations of Ukrainians in Canada. Olesya was also volunteering in this organization and even organized “*vertep*” (a traditional Ukrainian Christmas drama), which was a great surprise for parents to see their children reciting poems by heart. In general, Olesya’s children are very active: every Ukrainian national or religious holiday they have to participate in three concerts in three Ukrainian organizations, so they are really involved in both the Ukrainian language and culture.

Before moving to Canada, Olesya had worked as an administrator in the local government and an assistant to the director of one national Ukrainian organization. Because of their mother’s active community involvement, Olesya’s children were exposed to the Ukrainian language and culture probably more than any other ordinary children in Ukraine. Her children used to accompany her at different celebrations, concerts, and cultural events. Talking about her

daughter's childhood in Ukraine, Olesya mentioned “Мої діти вирости в віночках, вишиванках, і на сцені, за сценою, десь на зборах, під столом” [*Ukr.* My children grew up wearing vyshyvanky<sup>7</sup> on the stage, behind the stage, at the meetings somewhere under the table.] (interview with Olesya, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016). They never questioned their nationality, culture or language. Every holiday in Ukraine, they would wear vyshyvanky, even though parents did not insist on that. Moreover, in Ukraine Olesya was a founder of a private school for girls with the focus on teaching Ukrainian songs, culture, and traditions. Olesya was inspired by their initial success and increased enrolment to also teach girls from orphanages in Ukraine. She believes those children who have a family learn about the Ukrainian culture, songs, and traditions, but orphans are less fortunate, and they need this kind of education the most. Olesya's young daughters were also actively involved in those classes—together with school girls they visited different museums, places of interest, celebrated holidays, learned how to do embroidery, and prepared for all religious holidays. Their first Easter in Canada Olesya's daughters celebrated the way they would do in Ukraine. They spent all their pocket money on eggs, paint and brushes, and asked their mom to help them paint “krashanky”<sup>8</sup>. Once they even asked Olesya if she would consider living with them together in future, so she can teach Ukrainian to her grandchildren; this request pleased and amused her. So, for this family distance did not seem to erode the sense of connection to the Ukrainian culture, language and traditions, at least not yet.

Despite all her efforts and active involvement in the Ukrainian community in Canada, Olesya has a premonition that her daughters' commitment to the Ukrainian culture and language may fade over time. She hopes they will manage to at least maintain what they had acquired in Ukraine. In fact, Olesya has a strong faith in language maintenance after she met a Canadian-

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<sup>7</sup> traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirts

<sup>8</sup> Ukrainian Easter eggs

born young girl whose proficiency in Ukrainian was amazing even though her parents were born in Canada. Olesya emphasized that it was actually a parental achievement because they had sent their daughter to all Ukrainian schools, concerts, performances, organizations, and finally, she managed to find a boyfriend from Ukraine. Olesya jokingly suggested that maybe that was a crucial factor, so she also told her twins in future to look for Ukrainian boyfriends only.

We also talked a lot about the phenomenon of code switching, especially among children. Olesya's twins communicate in Ukrainian with each other and their parents, but with other Ukrainian-speaking children, for some reason, they switch to English. Olesya's family has many Ukrainian friends in Canada, so she told me on one occasion they were spending a long weekend with another family from Ukraine. Olesya was very surprised to overhear how her daughters were communicating with another boy in English even though they were all Ukrainian-speaking. She could not really find the explanation because her twins never used English at home. In fact, Olesya thinks they may be embarrassed to speak English to their parents. Olesya also used to have the same problem when she moved to Canada. Despite her limited English skills, she managed to communicate with native speakers but was very self-conscious if she had to talk to immigrants from Ukraine or Canadian-Ukrainians. She felt they were not willing to negotiate the meaning, and instead were trying to correct her mistakes or pronunciation:

*Я дуже не любила розмовляти перед нашими там третім- четвертим поколінням... Ми ходимо до [назва організації], там люди є п'яте покоління, і вони приводять своїх дітей вчити українську мову. Тобто це така міграція коли батьки приїхали... людям по сімдесят років, тобто вони тут народилися, вони тут вчили українську мову, і вони не просто досконало володіють англійською мовою, для них це фактично рідна мова, а українська як друга мова. І вони як*

*правило так важче ставляться до нових емігрантів. Вони взагалі до нас важче ставляться, тому що вони вважають, що ми повинні пройти всі муки, які вони пройшли, але в мові так само. [Ukr. I disliked talking to the third-fourth generations. We attend one organization where there are even fifth generation Ukrainian-Canadians who bring their children to learn Ukrainian. So, they were born here, some of them in their seventies; in fact, not only are they fluent in English, but it is their first language, while Ukrainian is the second. They treat new immigrants with uneasiness because they think we have to go through all kinds of ordeals, including in language [English] as well.] (interview with Olesya, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

At the same time, Olesya was also surprised when one of her daughters (the one who is an extrovert) strategically used English in a public place. When Olesya refused to buy her a new pair of sandals, her daughter began whining in English trying to convince her to buy that new pair. Although code-switching seems to be inevitable in the context of immigrant parents and their children, Olesya has doubts she will ever be comfortable communicating with her children in English. In fact, she believes she must maintain Ukrainian only, and the Canadian environment will take care of English:

*Тому що ми себе ідентифікуємо з тією мовою, якою ми найкраще розмовляємо. Щоб передати своїм дітям чи знання якість, чи досвід, чи передати свою думку в повному об'ємі, ми все-таки повинні розмовляти тією мовою, якою ми найкраще володіємо. Тому природнім чином звичайно те, що ти скажеш будь кому, і своїй дитині в тому числі, українською мовою ти навряд чи так сформулюєш англійською. Тим більше, що ми прожили довший час разом в україномовному середовищі, і все-таки ми себе ідентифікуємо як українці слава Богу. [Ukr. To share*

our knowledge or experience with our children or to express ourselves effectively, we have to speak the language we know best—because we identify ourselves with the language we know best. Naturally, whatever you say in Ukrainian to your child or indeed to anyone, you can hardly express adequately in English. We have lived together as a family longer in Ukraine than elsewhere, and thank God, we identify ourselves as Ukrainians.] (interview with Olesya, Nov 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Olesya recalls that when they just came to Canada, her daughters complained that “найгірше що в нашому житті сталося це те, що ти нас привезла до Канади, і ми хочемо назад на Україну”. [*Ukr.* the worst thing that happened in our life is that you brought us here, and we want to go back to Ukraine]. So, she told them, “якщо хочете в Україну, вчіть українську мову, щоб не повернутися туди відсталими людьми” [*Ukr.* If you want to go back to Ukraine, learn Ukrainian so that you will not be uneducated people when you return there.] (interview with Olesya, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016). About half a year later, they stopped complaining once they had new friends and began attending all Ukrainian organizations.

Even though Olesya hypothetically offers her daughters a possibility in the future to return to Ukraine if they wish, she believes it is unlikely to happen. Olesya’s parents live in Canada, and all other relatives left Ukraine in the 1990-s and live abroad, so there is no real family to go back for, except Olesya’s sister and grandmother. However, Olesya reiterated several times in our interviews a somewhat vague statement like “you never know where you are going to live and what you are going to do”, whether because she is adventurous by nature or she is just not sure of how permanent their residence in Canada can be. She mentioned they used to have a huge new house in Ukraine, with sauna and swimming pool, but in Canada they could only afford an average town house. She decided since she is already in Canada, she has to

concentrate her energy on positive things. Olesya believes her husband is still very attached to Ukraine, and he encourages his children to watch news from Ukraine every night. The other very important factor is the context of their immigration: it was the most tragic year in the history of independent Ukraine. In February 2014, what seemed to be a peaceful protest precipitated dozens of unarmed people being gunned down by unknown snipers on the main square in Kyiv. All the preceding events and an ongoing military conflict in eastern Ukraine echoed in our conversation with Olesya. They were leaving the country in times of a volatile economy and an uncertain political situation. When they received their documents to immigrate to Canada, they were hesitant, but then decided to go anyway because immigration took time, energy, money, so they wanted to take this opportunity. She thinks that if they had stayed in Ukraine, her husband would have probably joined the military because of his very active political involvement and beliefs. Olesya says she is lucky to get acquainted with Ukrainian immigrants in Canada who are not indifferent, so together they do what they can to help their home country. However, she admits:

*Ми живемо тут, і ми повинні зробити тут зараз максимально, тому що якщо ми прийняли рішення тут жити, немає сенсу жити посередині. Скакати туди-сюди, ти не будеш ніде і нічого. Ми в Україні зробили все, все що могли. [Ukr. We made our decision to live here, so we have to do our best at it, because there is no sense in living in between. Going here and there, you'll be nobody and nothing. In Ukraine, we did everything we could.] (interview with Olesya, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Olesya and her husband definitely have their own opinions and concerns about the present-day situation in Ukraine, and they hope that life in their home country will become better and peaceful. Olesya admits she began the immigration process out of curiosity; she could have

probably done more in Ukraine, but she chose to start her life from scratch “просто з рівня навчитись говорити, писати, і читати” [*Ukr.* Just from learning how to speak, read and write.] (interview with Olesya, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

At the time of our last meeting, Olesya was preparing to start a new professional job, and was very happy with her personal progress, and her family life in Canada.

### **Руслана (Ruslana)**

With Ruslana I got acquainted through one of my study participants Yuliya who said her friend was interested in being interviewed, and she met all the recruitment requirements. Yuliya willingly offered her help and invited me and Ruslana to her place, so that Yuliya’s daughter could play with Ruslana’s sons while we were having an interview. I have to note that it worked only for a certain time, and in about an hour Ruslana’s younger son became cranky and was whining, so we had to adjourn our first interview on April 17<sup>th</sup> in order to resume it on a later day. It happened only after I returned back from Ukraine in late May. We talked on the phone prior to our second interview, and Ruslana said she had been thinking a lot about my research topic and questions as she read her transcript from her first interview, and she also believed she had reconsidered some of her earlier answers. Ruslana asked me if it was not too late to change her responses in our first interview. I was definitely not opposed to that, so we set up a meeting in my house. This time I invited Ruslana’s whole family, so that our husbands could play with the children, while we were having an interview. Since that time, we have seen each other regularly, every month or so; we arrange playdates for our children because my daughter is the same age as Ruslana’s younger son. We have also been to a couple of children’s birthday parties together.

Ruslana and her husband immigrated to Canada at the beginning of 2013 when she was eight months pregnant with her first son, and her second son was born two years later. When they were leaving Ukraine, the political situation in the country was stable, with people anticipating excitedly joining the European Union and having visa-free entry to all EU countries. It would be only at the end of 2013 beginning 2014 when the situation transferred from bad to worse ending in the bloody shooting and a civil war in eastern Ukraine.

Ruslana is originally from western Ukraine, and her first language is Ukrainian; however, she can also speak Russian. Her husband is from central part of Ukraine, and his first language is Russian, but he is also fluent in Ukrainian. In fact, Ruslana says they speak both languages in their family, and her husband can switch to Ukrainian when he speaks to Ruslana, but usually speaks Russian to his sons because he wants them to know two languages. Actually, Ruslana's husband speaks a perfect standard Ukrainian, probably because he mainly learned it in his school and university, and he does not mix up Russian and Ukrainian words in his speech like many people do in central Ukraine, which is almost like a norm in a conversational language. At the beginning of my acquaintance with this family, it was Ruslana's husband who seemed to be more concerned with their children being able to speak Ukrainian and Russian, while Ruslana was hesitant and indecisive, which was reflected in our first interview. Over time though, Ruslana also became very particular about speaking Ukrainian only to her children, especially after her father's visit.

When I got acquainted with Ruslana, she was just beginning her first professional job related to finance and accounting in Canada after a long maternity leave. Her older son attended a home day care, while the younger one was staying with her husband at home because they were still waiting for a daycare spot. Ruslana's husband could not find a job that matched his

educational and professional experience, so he had to take on various casual and part-time jobs as well as being a care provider for his younger son. A couple of months later after our first meeting, once they received a day care spot, Ruslana managed to send both children to the daycare, so her husband could also pursue a professional career. They really had to coordinate their schedules because Ruslana worked Saturdays, and her husband sometimes had to work night shifts. They also had to move their elder son from a private daycare to a big daycare centre, which was not an easy transition for him.

Our interviews were mostly focused on Ruslana's elder son because her younger one was just too little to understand which language he was actually using. Ruslana also says her elder son was a late talker, so at the time of our first interview, it was just about half a year or so since he actually started talking in words and sentences. This important milestone in the life of every child was actually quite disturbing and problematic for Ruslana and her husband because their son started talking in English only. Ruminating about his linguistic development, she recalls that before he started a daycare, he did not really talk but could understand everything in Russian and Ukrainian and willingly followed his parents' instructions or requests. At the same time, Ruslana knew sooner or later she would send him to a daycare since she was looking for a job. She also thought her son would not be comfortable in an English-speaking daycare without any understanding of the language. She remembers when he was little, they were attending some classes for moms and toddlers, and a workshop organizer was asking her son in English to do some actions or follow instructions. He was puzzled because he clearly did not understand. This was the first time when Ruslana revisited her home linguistic choices. She said she felt ashamed that they came to Canada and were supposed to respect their new country's culture and language, but instead her son did not know a word in English. She felt it was her personal guilt. On the

other hand, Ruslana remembers how she disliked people in Ukraine who had been living in the country for years or even their whole life and did not know Ukrainian.

Feeling at a loss, Ruslana did not really know whether it was her responsibility to start teaching her children English. She did not want to be a bad mother who failed to prepare her sons for the English-speaking world. On the other hand, English did not come easy to her as well— she had been struggling learning it herself. Ruslana recalls that for no particular reason when she was a child and a teenager, she dreamed about being fluent in English. Obviously, she had no idea at that time in her life that she would immigrate to Canada in future, but she would stand in front of the mirror pretending she was speaking English with someone. Now that her dream is becoming a reality, she also feels that it can be easier to learn English together with her young children. She catches herself automatically repeating after her son when he speaks English or answering his questions partially in English. Ruslana observes how many of her acquaintances, new immigrants from Ukraine, are doing this switch to English in their everyday family life for a valid reason—parents want to learn English and believe this is the express way to do it. However, some other parents who have been living in Canada for many years gave Ruslana just the opposite advice of not using English with her children but to insist on speaking Ukrainian only. Ruslana mentioned how her friend's adult children were asking their mother why she had failed to teach them Ukrainian, “А чого ти нас не навчила? А чого ти відповідала на англійській? Чого так легко перейшла на англійську?” [*Ukr. Why did you not teach us? Why did you answer in English? Why did you so easily switch to English?*] (interview with Ruslana, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

At the time of our first meeting, Ruslana was very confused and had tears in her eyes when she was talking about her ambiguous feelings towards three languages in their family life.

Her main concern was to build close relations with both of her sons, to have a harmonious and healthy family, but she had doubts as to whether it would be possible to achieve harmony in the family under these circumstances. She also had doubts her sons would be fluent in Ukrainian when they become adults. Before sending her elder son to a daycare, Ruslana spent time trying to teach him some basic phrases in English. She recalls how she persistently repeated in two languages every action her son was doing. She would ask him in Ukrainian and then in English to press the button in the elevator, for example. Then, when he started his daycare and began speaking English at home, she and her husband became concerned again, but this time already for a different reason: they realized their elder son was resistant and totally refused to speak Ukrainian:

*Тому що зараз, на даний момент, коли я його прошу: «я тебе не розумію англійською, кажи українською», і він мені каже “No, титту!”. Він починає злитися і він повторює мені те саме на англійській мові. Я не знаю як буде далі...*

[Ukr. At the moment, when I ask him “I don’t understand you, please use Ukrainian”. He replies, “No mummy!”. He gets angry and repeats the same message again and again in English.] (interview with Ruslana, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Ruslana was really surprised how quickly children could pick up languages. She said she had heard that before but just did not realize it could happen within months. At the time of our first interview, Ruslana was very upset about her elder son’s resistance to speak Ukrainian or Russian if her husband was asking him. She thought probably it was overwhelming for her son to be exposed to three different languages, and he was too little for that. She observed that he could understand everything they were telling him, but stubbornly was answering in English. At some point, she felt her children would never speak Ukrainian, so she even told her parents not to

expect that their grandchildren would communicate with them in fluent Ukrainian because it would not be their first language anymore.

When Ruslana faced her son's negativity and unwillingness to communicate in Ukrainian, she was almost ready to give up, but her husband had a more solid attitude towards this issue. For Ruslana, the most important thing was to build close relationships with her sons, to nurture them in love and to have a healthy family. However, later she realized this aspiration may not be possible without some common language. During our later interviews, Ruslana was more concerned not about whether or not she should teach her children Ukrainian, but more about how to make them love the language:

*Якщо він не захоче, то буде дуже важко йому нав'язати. Я не хочу, щоб то була нав'язана мова. Я хочу, щоб він її любив, щоб у нього не були спогади що там «мама заставляла мене говорити». Я хочу, щоб він її дійсно любив. [Ukr. If he does not want, it will be very difficult to enforce. I do not want it to be an imposed language. I want him to love it, so that he doesn't have memories that "my mom used to force me to speak". I want him to really love this language.] (interview with Ruslana, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Ruslana is trying to find some ways to make it interesting for her sons to learn Ukrainian, to come up with some interesting games and activities that will be age-appropriate and stimulate their genuine interest in speaking this language. Ruslana wants her sons to know both the language and culture, so they know their roots, but at the same time, she does not want to traumatize or spoil her relationships with them by enforcing this language.

Ruslana also shared with me her sister's experience with Ukrainian language maintenance. Her sister immigrated to Canada more than ten years ago, when her daughters were ten, six, and four years old. Because they did not speak any English, schooling in Canada was a tremendous challenge for them. Two older daughters had to attend classes right after arrival, and they were just silent. Their mother was trying to encourage them to speak English, so even though they spoke Ukrainian at home, girls eventually began communicating in English. Moreover, as they were growing up, their friends were predominantly English-speaking. Gradually, Ukrainian became just a forgotten language from the childhood. Ruslana's sister had regrets about that and said she should have enforced Ukrainian only at home. However, when Ruslana's nieces became older, around sixteen-eighteen years old, they became interested and willing to actually speak Ukrainian. The most helpful aspect was their involvement in different cultural events in the Ukrainian-speaking community. They realized so many people were communicating in Ukrainian and while they were able to passively understand, they could hardly say a word. So, it was very challenging to speak in Ukrainian, but they started actively searching for opportunities, and now they communicate in Ukrainian with their family members and other Ukrainian-speaking friends. This was some sort of reverse language shift, but because they had some passive knowledge of Ukrainian it was not too late to reactivate that.

Over the course of my meetings with Ruslana, not only her attitudes and beliefs regarding language maintenance transformed significantly, but she became more strategic and consistent in her everyday practice of communicating with all her family members. Her elder son, who is four now, is more cooperative and seems to get over his toddler's resistance, probably because he has Ukrainian-speaking friends his age right now. They have many Ukrainian books for children at home, and they watch cartoons in Ukrainian. Also, Ruslana's father was visiting them for a

prolonged period of time, and because he did not speak English at all, Ukrainian was the only language to communicate with his grandchildren. Ruslana mentioned she was a bit concerned at the beginning when they had to leave their sons with her father at home. She was not sure whether they would be able to negotiate the meaning effectively because her father did not speak English and her sons' Ukrainian was very limited, but it got better eventually. Consequently, grandfather's visit was an additional motivation to speak Ukrainian at home.

Ruslana believes Ukrainian may be more difficult for her elder son than English, so sometimes he mispronounces the words, or they are not really clear. When Ruslana or her husband is encouraging their elder son to repeat some words, he is sometimes not even able to reproduce the word correctly, which makes him upset. Ruslana agrees that Ukrainian is more difficult than English, in particular for a four-year old:

*Тому в нього три мови відразу і може трошки важко, він заплутався, але я бачу що йому англійська... По-перше, англійська мова набагато легше: що сказати "bus" а що сказати «автобус»; що сказати "Thank you", а що сказати «дякую». Мені здається, що англійська мова набагато легша, діти швидше уловлюють ніж українську. [Ukr. He is exposed to three languages, and probably he is confused a bit.*

Besides, English is easier: to say "bus" is easier than "автобус"<sup>9</sup>. It seems to me English is way easier, and children pick it up faster.] (interview with Ruslana, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

They have not had a chance to go to Ukraine for a visit, so Ruslana hopes that her parents' visits will be stimulating for her sons to speak Ukrainian. She is also planning to take them to Ukraine in future, so they can be exposed to the Ukrainian-only environment and realize that there is a country where everyone speaks this language. Besides, they are in touch with

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<sup>9</sup> There are 3 syllables in this word.

several other Ukrainian families, so they meet often for different social events or kids' birthday parties. Recently Ruslana has also been taking her elder son once a week to art classes facilitated by a Ukrainian artist. There are other children from Ukraine who can not only practise and develop their artistic skills but also communicate in Ukrainian and meet new friends.

Ruslana was also very emotional and passionate when we were talking about events in Ukraine back in 2014 and at present:

*Взагалі я то все тяжко пережила.... Майдани... ми вже були тут, але я була онлайн, постійно дивилася. Мені здається, що люди котрі там, не переживають так як ми. Коли приїжджаєш в Канаду, тут загострюється відчуття якоїсь національності, не те що національності, а якесь переживання за свою Батьківщину, що ти розумієш, що ти її втрачаєш... ти її лишив, вона далеко, ти далеко від Батьківщини. Мені наприклад, я розумію що мені більше зараз хочеться якихось українських заходів ніж коли я була в Україні. Коли ти живеш в Україні, такого не відчуваєш, ти живеш, ти того не цінуєш наскільки в тебе багата культурна країна, і де ти живеш. [Ukr. All those events were really hard for me to comprehend. We were here, but I was constantly online. It seems to me that people who live there did not take it as close to heart as I did. When you come to Canada, you have a greater sense of national identity: you understand you are losing your motherland, and you are far away from it. Now I need Ukrainian things more than ever, more than when I lived in Ukraine. When you live there, you do not appreciate your rich culture and where you live.] (interview with Ruslana, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016)*

Ruslana was very surprised when she was talking to her friends back in Ukraine, and they seemed almost indifferent. They said they preferred not to watch TV, and Ruslana could not

understand their distant attitude towards all the events that were happening at that time on the main square in Kyiv. She speculated that her sons will unlikely be interested in the life in Ukraine because for them it will be just a foreign country.

As our meetings and interviews were unfolding, Ruslana's younger son began saying his first words and sentences, so now Ruslana and her husband have to invest double amount of time and efforts to maintain their home languages in Canada.

### **Юлія (Yuliya)**

Yuliya contacted me via email on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and expressed her willingness to participate in my study. She also mentioned that we had met once briefly at my daughter's daycare where she was temporarily assisting my daycare provider. We arranged to meet at her place on Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup> because she said she would invite her acquaintance who lived not far away from her place and potentially could also become my participant. Frankly, I had doubts that Yuliya would be a suitable person to interview for the purpose of my project. She wrote her email in Russian, so I was not sure whether she actually spoke and maintained Ukrainian in her family. We had several phone conversations before we actually met, and she was also speaking Russian. When I inquired about the Ukrainian language in her family, she said they tried to maintain Ukrainian because her husband was Ukrainian-speaking, and her daughter used to speak Ukrainian when they lived in Ukraine. At that point, I speculated that I would probably interview her husband. However, I did not voice that suggestion right away because I thought she may eventually offer it herself. Nevertheless, I decided to accept her invitation because it is always interesting to meet new people from Ukraine, so I thought even if she would not be a suitable candidate, then probably her acquaintance could be my participant.

A couple of days after our first interview with Yuliya, I went to Ukraine to visit my relatives. I was surprised to see and hear more and more families where Russian-speaking parents had Ukrainian-speaking children. I reconsidered my doubts regarding whether I should include in my study only those parents whose first language is Ukrainian and who speak Ukrainian only at home. I understand that by excluding Yuliya, a Russian-speaking parent, I would also ignore a huge number of recent immigrants from Ukraine in a similar situation. Consequently, to reflect differences and a variety of challenges and strategies in language maintenance, I had to interview parents who were originally from different parts of Ukraine.

Since Yuliya's family was moving to a different city in another province just days after our first interview, her apartment was pretty much empty, except a small kitchen table, a couple of chairs in the dining area, and a bed in her daughter's room (although her daughter said they had already sold it). Yuliya said there were fifteen families from Ukraine in just her apartment building. They helped each other raising kids: some stay-at-home moms picked up neighbour's kids from school, children played together, families had picnics and regular gatherings, so they lived like a "big family".

Daryna, a ten-year-old Yuliya's daughter, was singing and dancing as we entered her room. She was watching online "Голос Діти", a talent show from Ukraine where children of all ages could demonstrate their vocal talents. Yuliya prepared spinakopita, tea and coffee, and I brought some appetizers and fruits. When we had a phone conversation prior to our interview, I offered to bring a cake from our local Ukrainian grocery store, but Yuliya refused because she said it was Lent (Ukrainian Orthodox Easter was later that year than Catholic one). The other woman was late as there was some emergency at home, so we began our interview with Yuliya. She was very responsible in terms of giving answers, was willing to share some details of their

family background even though I did not ask. Judging by her speech, I could say she was highly educated (which turned out to be true as she has two university degrees). We had an interview in her dining room, while her daughter was listening to Ukrainian and Russian pop music in her bedroom. Yuliya cried a little at the end of the interview when we talked about the situation in Ukraine. I did not expect crying during interviews, but I think since these people are new immigrants, and they actually lived through all those events, for them it was not “imagined community” like for me or immigrants who have been in Canada for a while; for these people, it is still very fresh.

Yuliya’s family is linguistically mixed, so she began by telling me about her parents and her husband’s family to explain the complexities with languages in their life. She is originally from a beautiful city, predominantly Russian-speaking, on the shore of the Black Sea. Her husband is from one of the large cities in eastern Ukraine where the Russian language can be heard probably more often than Ukrainian. However, her husband’s first language is Ukrainian; he grew up with his Ukrainian-speaking grandparents because his mother was away for eight years serving in the military. Yuliya’s husband is very close to his grandmother who basically brought him up, taught Ukrainian songs and fairy tales, and cooked Ukrainian dishes. His mother is Russian-speaking, and all her life she was functioning in Russian while doing her university degree and pursuing career. Yuliya is from a Russian-speaking family, but her grandfather on the mother’s side is Ukrainian-speaking, and her grandmother on the father’s side also speaks Ukrainian. Yuliya speaks Russian, which was the language of her daycare, school and university.

Her daughter Daryna was born in central Ukraine, where they had resided up to the very moment of immigration to Canada. Daryna is used to speaking two languages: Russian at home with her parents, and Ukrainian with her great-grandparents, her god mother, and most of her

school friends in Ukraine. She did not want to go to Canada and was crying because she thought nobody would understand her Ukrainian in Canada, and she would have no friends. Yuliya and her husband promised Daryna to find a Ukrainian school in Canada. A year prior to immigration, Yuliya and her husband came for a short visit to Canada and were communicating with other parents from Ukraine about their experience. They tried to find as much information as possible with regards to Ukrainian schools, programs, and activities. Most parents recommended one particular bilingual program, so when Yuliya and her family arrived in Canada, they rented an apartment in the neighbourhood close to that school:

*Мы очень щепетильно относились к выбору школы. Мы приезжали сюда за год до эмиграции, до landinga на визит ознакомительный и объездили все украинские школы, все учреждения, которые были. Все что можно было достать, все что было в свободном доступе, мы все изучили потому что ребенок для нас был приоритет, и ее развитие и обучение было приоритетом. [Rus. We were very particular about our choice of school. We came here for a visit a year before our immigration, before landing, and we visited all Ukrainian schools, organizations, everything. We found out all the information that was accessible because our child, her development and education were our main priorities.] (interview with Yuliya, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Besides a Ukrainian-English bilingual school, Daryna also attended Ukrainian dance classes and an art studio with other children from Ukraine and a Ukrainian teacher. Yuliya also tried to enrol Daryna in one organization for Ukrainian children and youth, but her daughter did not like it because of the strict discipline, so they decided not to force her.

Describing her daughter's speech, Yuliya admits with regrets that she has been observing gradual decline in both Russian and Ukrainian. For example, her daughter may ask the meaning of the words she used to know or is searching for words when telling about some events that happened in school. Yuliya was once reading her daughter some bedtime stories and used a phrase “горько заплакал” [*Rus. Cry bitterly (it is an idiom)*]. Daryna looked at her and asked, “what does this mean?”. Yuliya was really puzzled because her daughter would never ask her the meaning of this phrase in the past. It is a very common phrase in all fairy tales and children's stories, so Daryna has heard it hundreds of times in her life, but now she may stumble over the meaning of some words she would never think twice about before.

Another change in Daryna's speech is the mixing of languages, in particular, Ukrainian and Russian. When she is sharing with her mother some private stories or telling about her school day, she is mostly speaking Russian but inserts Ukrainian and English words as well. Yuliya recollects the first time they heard an English phrase from Daryna was when they went to the swimming pool. Yuliya was having a conversation with her husband in Russian, but their daughter probably could not understand everything, or maybe she was offended that her parents were not paying attention to her, so she interrupted them and said, “stop talking!”. This made an effect, and both Yuliya and her husband were staring at their daughter in some kind of incredulity because they could not believe their daughter would ever start speaking English to them. At her Ukrainian-English school, Daryna speaks Ukrainian with her teachers during class time allocated for Ukrainian, and switches to English when she communicates with her friends. Once she came home and asked Yuliya, “where can a Ukrainian girl like me find a Ukrainian boyfriend in Canada?”. Yuliya jokingly promised they would go to Ukraine to find a boyfriend for her in the future.

Daryna speaks the language she is addressed to and seems not to think about her linguistic choices, she simply tells her stories and shares her feelings and impressions without realizing which language or languages she is using. This code-switching and mixing of languages does not seem to bother her or affect communication in any negative way. She is also in contact via Skype with her Ukrainian-speaking peers in Ukraine because Yuliya and her husband have many friends with children back in their home country, and they try to be in touch with them. Yuliya is also planning to take Daryna to Ukraine next summer because she promised her daughter that every summer either her mother or father would travel with her to Ukraine. When they just came to Canada, Daryna did not like it because of her limited English skills, but two months later when her parents offered to go back to Ukraine, she began crying and said she wanted to stay in Canada.

Daryna can read in both Ukrainian and Russian, but Yuliya's main concern is that there are not too many books available in Canada, so they brought some books from Ukraine with them, and they also plan to go there and buy more. Yuliya says that reading material has to be age-appropriate, interesting and easy to read in order to encourage her daughter's reading skills. Daryna does not like heavy books with tiny font because she says they are hard to read. Daryna came to Canada with literacy skills in the Ukrainian language since she had finished grade one in Ukraine, so her father also tries to have dictations and some spelling activities with her at home. Daryna also asked her mom to buy a fancy pink notebook, and she keeps her diary mostly in Ukrainian, but also uses some English. At the time of our last interview, Yuliya said Daryna was writing letters to St. Nicolas<sup>10</sup>, and to her grandmother who had been visiting them for six months last summer and fall. Yuliya believes it is a "sin" and "crime" to let her daughter lose

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<sup>10</sup> Ukrainians consider St. Nicolas to be a patron of all children

literacy skills in Ukrainian and Russian if she already has them. It is the responsibility of parents to maintain these skills and offer some interesting activities to stimulate a child. Maintaining Ukrainian and Russian languages should be one of parents' main priorities and “просто родителям нужно больше внимания этому уделять, не лениться, просто не упустить, вот и все”. [Rus. Parents should pay more attention to this, not be lazy and try not to miss the opportunity.] (interview with Yuliya, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

Despite some disappointing tendencies and her daughter's decreasing skills in Ukrainian and Russian, Yuliya believes immigration to Canada had a positive influence on her daughter:

*Эта среда повлияла на Дарину, поэтому она стала взрослее заметно, у нее такой скачок произошел за этот период. И вероятно помогают какие-то грамматические связи, потому что структура русского и украинского языка другая. Изучая и осозная какие-то законы в языке, она проводит аналогии и в другие сферы жизни. У ребенка не происходит ограничение что это только английский язык, она начинает применять эту логику в любых вещах. Она как-то даже сама в Google там ищет что-то, она пытается на английском написать и на русском, и на украинском, иногда она придумывает сочетания какие-то новые, это работает, она находит что-то новое себе, это замечательно. Мы очень довольны и благодарны иммиграции за это, это положительная сторона. [Rus.*

This new environment influenced Daryna, and she became more mature. Also, the grammar of Ukrainian and Russian is different, so acquiring the structure of a new language [English], she also learned to use some analogies in other aspects of everyday life. For example, she tries to find something in Google in Russian, Ukrainian or English or mixes different languages and coins new combinations, so it works for her. We are

pleased and grateful for this, it is a positive aspect of immigration.] (interview with Yuliya, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

They have a rule not to speak English at home. Of course, Daryna uses some English words in her speech, but if she switches to English completely, Yuliya reminds her to use Russian or Ukrainian, and says she cannot give her the right answer because she does not understand English completely. Even though Yuliya is fluent in English, she admits her knowledge is still insufficient to express all her feelings and shades of meanings adequately. That is why she tries not to use English at home at all. She thinks that for her daughter Russian and Ukrainian are still emotionally closer than English because she has been using these two languages since birth, so it is a strong connection and association with her childhood. Yuliya is very close to her daughter, and she always does her best to answer all her daughter's questions. Yuliya is confident she cannot function as a mother in English because it is not natural for her and would alienate her daughter:

*Я не обладаю в первую очередь таким высоким английским языком чтобы я могла передать ей все оттенки чувств. Даже если я хочу ей что-то сказать строго, но недостаточно строго чтобы она обиделась или посчитала что это приказ, в русском или украинском языке я могу это смягчить какими-то оборотами и тоном, а в английском это будет звучать как приказ. Безусловно это бы мешало, и не добавит близости. Русский и украинский языки звучали у нее с детства, это всегда ассоциации с детством. [Rus. My English is not sufficient enough to express all shades of meanings. If I need to tell her something strictly but not to offend her, I can make it softer in Ukrainian or Russian by tone and some rewording, but in English it would sound like an instruction. Definitely, this would not make our relationships better.*

In addition, Russian and Ukrainian have been in her life since childhood, it is the association with her childhood.] (interview with Yuliya, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

At this point, Daryna enjoys doing things that are interesting for her and help her find answers to her numerous questions. Yuliya says her daughter is interested in all girlish stuff like every girl of her age. She is eager to find as much information as she can, so she is using all three languages to read about fashion, hairstyles, relationships, and friendship. At some point, Yuliya noticed her daughter was watching more movies in English, so Yuliya found online movies in Russian and Ukrainian, and they watched together. Daryna loves music, and the Ukrainian music show “Голос Діти” is one of her favourite. She usually sings and dances while watching it in her bedroom. Yuliya is trying to be on top and in control of everything that is going on in her daughter’s life; she says it is very important to have this trust in relationship with your child. Daryna’s father spends less time with her than does her mother, but he tries to practice reading and writing in Ukrainian with Daryna in the evenings. When we just got acquainted, Yuliya was a stay-at-home mom, taking Daryna to and from school, dancing and drawing classes. Yuliya’s husband had a full-time employment, but because he was offered a better position in another province, they had to move to a large metropolitan city in eastern Canada. At the time of our first interview, Yuliya mentioned she could not find a professional job that would match her education primarily because of her limited English skills. Consequently, she spent several terms polishing her English in a college, and once she decided to start looking for a job, they had to relocate because of her husband’s career. Both Daryna and Yuliya did not want to move to a different province. They enjoyed their peaceful life and a steady routine. Daryna loved her school and had many friends among children of Ukrainian immigrants.

Yuliya and her family immigrated to Canada at the beginning of all dramatic events in Ukraine. She was my first interviewee, and I was surprised to see her crying when she was telling me about her immigration history. She mentioned they had to leave Ukraine because they were concerned about their safety, and the safety and well-being of their daughter. Yuliya alludes they still have some business and real estate in Ukraine, and they are in touch with all family members and friends back in Ukraine. She believes the distance is not a big obstacle, especially now when we have Skype and all technology to help us stay in touch. Yuliya has family members and relatives in Ukraine and Russia, so the recent events and tension between two countries could not leave her indifferent. She says they are trying not to be political, but instead maintain the sense of family and connectedness.

Even though she speaks Russian, Yuliya believes she belongs to some new generation of Ukrainian immigrants. She has found many friends among recent immigrants and says they probably do not realize how different they are from all previous generations of Ukrainians in Canada. At the same time, Yuliya cannot totally dismiss the possibility that in the future they may relocate again to some other country. Having lived in many different cities in Ukraine, and now in two provinces in Canada, she is probably aware of her inner sense of uprootedness. However, her sense of ethnic identity as a Russian-speaking Ukrainian may help her to find the balance between different languages in her life. She ruminates that life is very unpredictable, and the events unfolding all over the world may also sooner or later influence the lives of people everywhere. She thinks we have to be prepared and flexible to face new challenges and opportunities, so she wants her daughter to be ready for this kind of global movements, but at the same time, Daryna should know and remember her place of origin:

*И вероятно в будущем вообще не будет границ, кто будет гражданином какой страны, это просто будет поле какой-то деятельности, и ты будешь просто перемещаться и жить то там, то там временными промежутками. И мне кажется, что нужно детей готовить: они должны быть многоязычными, мультифункциональными, всесторонне развитыми и образованными. [Rus.*

Probably in the future there will be no borders, no differentiation in citizenship; it will be simply space for activity, where you can move and live in different places temporally. It seems to me we have to prepare our children: they have to be multilingual, multifunctional, and well-educated.] (interview with Yuliya, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017)

Last time we talked via Skype with Yuliya, she said they were missing the smaller city they used to live in. Her daughter Daryna attends regular English school and is gradually losing her Ukrainian even though her godmother and a great-grandmother are trying to talk to her via Skype every weekend. Daryna's Ukrainian friends were left behind in her previous place of residence in Canada, and she does not talk to them often; from time to time, they may exchange some short messages, but for children live communication is more important. Daryna has almost lost her Ukrainian over the eight months they have been in this new city even though she used to go to a Ukrainian daycare in Ukraine and a Ukrainian bilingual school in their previous city of residence in Canada. Yuliya says when she listens to her daughter speaking Ukrainian now, it does not sound natural any more. Daryna speaks Russian with her parents at home; moreover, her Russian-speaking grandmother was visiting them for six months and practiced with Daryna some literacy activities in Russian. Daryna also takes music lessons three times a week via Skype with a Russian-Ukrainian speaking tutor. Yuliya is planning to enrol Daryna in a Ukrainian heritage school in the suburbs. Their family circumstances have changed dramatically: in their

previous city of residence in Canada, Yuliya was a stay-at-home mom and would spend all her time with Daryna, taking her to and from school, a Ukrainian dancing studio and drawing classes, but when they relocated to a different province, Yuliya had to work full-time. Last time we talked late at night, and I did not want to keep her long because they wake up at six in the morning. At 6:30 in the morning, Daryna has a music lesson via Skype with her teacher, who used to be a famous musician in Odessa, Ukraine, then she has her breakfast and leaves for school. I am wondering how long they will manage to maintain Daryna's Ukrainian skills and what language will eventually win and become her primary language of communication. There are some Ukrainian heritage schools in their new place of residence, so as Yuliya mentioned previously in one of our interviews, "it has to be parents' priority to maintain a language".

### **Наталія (Nataliya)**

Initially, I was not going to include my daughter as one of my case studies. By the time I finished writing my proposal, she was only sixteen months old and was just beginning to talk. However, as my project was evolving, Liya's linguistic abilities changed dramatically. As a first-time mother, I have been keeping a journal to record all changes and milestones in my daughter's vocabulary and speech development. In addition to four cases presented above, I thought it would be interesting to also include my child to track how three languages may potentially be accommodated at a very young age. Moreover, when I was planning my data collection procedure, I was hoping to get some journal writing from my future participants, and even gave them a separate letter with some possible prompts. Unfortunately, I did not receive any substantial journal writing or stories I was hoping for, so because I was keeping my researcher journal and my personal journal about my daughter, I decided to use them as an additional method in my project.

I should admit that before our daughter was born, my husband and I had not even discussed or made any particular arrangements in terms of what languages she would be exposed to. Since my husband does not speak Ukrainian, by default the language of communication in my family is Russian because this is my second native language after Ukrainian. It never occurred to me to question this linguistic status quo in our family before the birth of my daughter. Somehow it felt natural and right, and I did not expect that my husband had to learn Ukrainian just to communicate with me. There seemed to be no need and reason for that. We also have some friends from Ukraine and other former republics of the Soviet Union, so the Russian language is the only common language we all know. If I choose to communicate with our Ukrainian-speaking friends in my first language, my husband is comfortable with that. In fact, my husband had a Ukrainian-speaking babysitter and knew some Ukrainian when he was a child, but then it was all lost because nobody in his surrounding spoke Ukrainian, and he has never even been to Ukraine. With the arrival of our daughter, the linguistic situation in our family did not change much at the beginning. Since I was staying with her all day while my husband was at work, I was naturally talking to her in Ukrainian, and in the evening switched back to Russian once my husband was home.

Liya was very vocal as a baby, so by the time she was ten months, she called me “mama”, my husband “tata”, and was also making a lot of different vowel-consonant combinations. In fact, sometimes she acted like she was having real conversations: she changed her tone of voice, kept an eye contact, smiled, and moved her hands a lot. When she was ten months old, I had to send her to a daycare because I returned to work. I was lucky to find a Ukrainian home daycare operated by a woman from Ukraine. Liya was the youngest there, and I could see how she was literally thriving both linguistically and developmentally. There were six

other Ukrainian-speaking children; moreover, my daycare provider's parents from Ukraine were also helping her out and playing with Liya, so she simply loved the place. I remember I was crying the second day I took my daughter to this daycare: once she saw this woman's house and children waiting for her, she got so excited that she literally jumped out of her stroller and did not even look at me when I was leaving. I was jealous and felt almost betrayed. Our first separation turned out to be more difficult for me than for her.

Liya was picking up from older children not only some behaviours like drinking from a cup or cleaning up after meal time, but also her vocabulary was developing faster than we expected. Her first new Ukrainian word was “Дякую!” [*Ukr.* Thank you!]. She first said it to my husband after he gave her a candy, but he did not understand it and asked me if that was Ukrainian. I was very surprised because I knew she had not heard it from me (in central Ukraine where I am from, we usually say “Спасибі!”, which is another word for “Thank you!”). Definitely Liya picked up this word in her daycare because her daycare provider was from western Ukraine where people use “Дякую!” and “Прошу”<sup>11</sup>. To check whether my guess was correct, next day I asked my daycare provider if she had heard that word from Liya. Myroslava said Liya had been using it a lot every time her diaper was changed or after meals. Eventually, this word “Дякую!” became Liya's favourite, and both me and my husband began using it (even though I had never used it in Ukraine). I remember once my daughter gave me something, and I just automatically took it without saying anything. She looked at me surprised and said, “Мама, дякую?” [*Ukr.* Mommy, thank you? ]<sup>12</sup>. In December 2015 Liya was also trying to show us at home what dances and songs they were preparing for Ukrainian Christmas and New Year, but it

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<sup>11</sup> In other parts of Ukraine, “Спасибі” [Thank you!] and “Будь ласка” [You are welcome] are more common.

<sup>12</sup> This was a question, something like “where is your thank you?”

was still difficult to decipher every single word since she was not yet talking in sentences. We were hoping to attend their performance in the daycare and see our daughter singing and dancing with other kids, but Liya got very sick, so unfortunately, we missed that opportunity.

As Liya's vocabulary was expanding, it was relatively easy for me to track the origin or source of almost every new word or phrase. When Liya was eighteen months, she began trying to use short phrases, usually those she had heard somewhere. Once she was looking for her doll, and when she finally found it, she exclaimed "Де ти була?" [*Ukr.* Where have you been?]. On other occasion, she did not like the way I arranged her dolls on the floor, so she grabbed them all and told me "Мама, так не буде оце!" [*Ukr.* It's not going to be this way], which was another phrase from her daycare because I do not construct the sentences in that manner (in central Ukraine we never put "оце" at the end of a sentence, while it may be common in western regions). I also have to mention that in Liya's daycare they often had English-speaking visitors, educators, and student-trainees, so she was exposed to some English as well, but we never actually heard anything in English from her at home.

In spring 2016, we spent almost a month in Ukraine visiting my relatives. Liya was exposed to the Ukrainian language only, and that was the moment when her vocabulary literally ballooned. She was repeating every new word or sentence like a little parrot, persistently repeating it over and over again if we failed to understand her. It seemed to me she was able to name almost everything around her. She knew the Ukrainian words for different kinds of food, actions, clothes, and even the names of our neighbour's dog and cat. She was very excited to interact with lots of children on playgrounds and in the parks. Ukrainian cities are densely populated because people mostly live in apartment blocks, and there are crowds of people

everywhere. It was a nice warm spring time, and Liya was outside from the moment she woke up till her bedtime, which was also a refreshing change after a long and cold Canadian winter.

It was interesting to observe how Liya was communicating in Ukrainian with everyone at home, but when we first went out to a local park, she was saying “Hi!” to everyone, so she intuitively greeted strangers with the English word she used to say in Canada. For my daughter, English was the language to communicate with people outside our home, so she automatically continued this practice in Ukraine. Eventually, she was able to figure it out and began greeting people in Ukrainian.

We were in Ukraine in late April and May, and this was the time of many holidays in my home country. First, we celebrated Easter, followed by a special day when all close and distant relatives gather on cemeteries to honour those who have passed away. Then was a two-day traditional celebration of Labour Day, and a couple of days later, Victory Day. Finally, in May school children finished their academic year, and there were traditional celebrations on school yards with parents and children all dressed up and with bouquets of flowers. What really surprised me was the fact that literally everyone was wearing traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirts or other holiday clothes with embroidery. This was something I definitely had not experienced in my twenty-eight years that I lived in Ukraine. Liya also paid attention to little kids and school age children wearing embroidered shirts, so I bought one for Liya and promised she would wear it to our Ukrainian summer festival in Canada.

On our way back to Canada, Liya was speaking Ukrainian to everybody on our three long flights. Amazingly, people somehow managed to negotiate the meaning with her. For example, on a plane, Liya dropped her pillow on the floor and said in Ukrainian “упало”, and the elderly

lady sitting across picked it up and said “Oh, your pillow!”.<sup>13</sup> Liya was also greeting everyone on our flights in Ukrainian, and people happily replied in English. Watching all that interaction, I thought that my daughter had forgotten even those few words in English she used to know, but frankly that did not bother me at all.

When we returned from Ukraine, our Ukrainian home daycare closed because Myroslava had found a position in a big English-speaking daycare centre, and she also reserved a spot for Liya there. I tried calling another Ukrainian daycare, but there was a long waiting list, and they did not take children under two. So, we had no other choice but send our daughter to this new centre. I stayed there with Liya for a couple of hours the first two days. She was silently observing people speaking another language. One educator was playing with another toddler naming different parts of the body, and Liya was repeating after them touching her nose, eyes etc., but looked at me surprised. After lunch, she said to her educators in Ukrainian “Дякую!” [*Ukr.* Thank you!], but obviously, they did not understand her.

After Liya had been there for almost two weeks, I inquired about the languages she used in her daycare, and her educators said she was still speaking Russian or Ukrainian (obviously, they did not differentiate between these two foreign languages). To communicate more efficiently, Liya’s favourite teacher even learned some words in Ukrainian from Liya, so she knew the meaning of some phrases my daughter was using frequently. One day my husband and I were picking her up from the daycare; when she saw my husband, she said “папа прийшов!” [*Ukr.* Daddy’s here!] and pointed at him, then her teacher asked, “Are you ready to go home?”,

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<sup>13</sup> The Ukrainian verb “упало” [*fell*] sounds very similar to the English word “pillow”, so that was how this lady interpreted Liya’s speech based on the context.

and Liya said “Дякую!<sup>14</sup> Bye-bye”. It seems like the ability to code-switch is present even at a very young age.

She also watched cartoons in Russian and Ukrainian at home, but when she saw once the video link “The wheels on the bus”, she pointed at it and asked to play the song. She enjoyed singing and especially liked to repeat sound-imitating words “Sh-sh-sh”, “ting-ting-ting” etc. She also knew by heart some Russian and Ukrainian children’s rhymes, and her favourite one was about geese. Every time she recited it, she used gestures to show how geese fly. It was quite evident that she was not just reciting the words without knowing what she was talking about.

Having attended the new daycare for a month, Liya was still speaking Ukrainian and Russian at home; however, I noticed some changes and infrequent English words or phrases. For instance, one day we were waiting for my husband at the door to go shopping together. I called him in Russian, and then Liya echoed, “Марат, идем!” [*Rus.* Marat, let’s go!], and a second time in English “Marat come!”. She also began using an indefinite article *a* before words in Ukrainian and Russian, which sounded very amusing and made us laugh sometimes (there are no articles in Ukrainian and Russian). Moreover, Liya tried creating her own words or phrases if she did not know how to say that. In particular, she constructed negatives in the Ukrainian language without changing the verb ending, so she followed the pattern from the English language, adding “I don’t want” to the infinitive. For example, when I asked her to give me something, she replied “не хочу дай!”<sup>15</sup>. Consequently, there were not only some lexical borrowings and switching between the languages, but also some grammatical influences. Moreover, Liya did not consistently add verb endings in Ukrainian and Russian, and even if she did, there could be a feminine ending

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<sup>14</sup>*Ukr.* Thank you!

<sup>15</sup> The correct phrase is “не дам!”

where should be a masculine one. I can attribute this confusion to the fact that she communicated with me probably more than with anybody else, and I named all the actions referring either to myself or Liya, in which case I naturally used feminine endings only. Although she successfully passed the “single-word stage” (Chumak-Horbatsch, 1994) in all three languages, the next step of mastering more complex expressions proved a bit challenging.

In August 2016, we attended a Ukrainian festival in Canada, and I dressed Liya in the embroidered shirt we had bought in Ukraine. She was very unhappy at first, maybe because it was a bit cold, and I had to layer her clothes. She was cranky in the car trying to take off the embroidered shirt. Once we arrived at the event, Liya saw lots of other people wearing Ukrainian clothes. Two ladies at the door looked at my daughter and exclaimed, “Look at this cutie! So little and is already wearing vyshyvanka!”<sup>16</sup> When Liya heard this, she beamed and did not want to take off her shirt any more; in fact, she wanted to be on the stage when she saw children dancing in Ukrainian national costumes. It seems like the external acknowledgement and validation is important even at this young age.

When we were enjoying the last warm days of September playing with my daughter on a playground, I observed teenage girls speaking English to each other but using their first language to communicate with the little ones. I think it may be explained by the fact that the older children are schooled in English, while younger ones are taken care of by their immigrant mothers and grandmothers who naturally speak their first language at home. Liya was also trying to switch to English in order not to be different, so she began shouting in English, “Mama, look at me!” or “Mama, look at this!” as she was trying to climb up the ladder or was making sand figures in the sand box. Children intuitively choose some common language to communicate with each other,

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<sup>16</sup>“Vyshyvanka” is the name for a Ukrainian embroidered shirt

and this language is not necessarily the one they speak at home, even if they share the same linguistic background.

In October 2016 Liya was waiting for her second birthday, which was at the end of the month. She was singing “Happy birthday!” song that she had heard in her daycare when other kids were celebrating their birthdays. We also taught her two more birthday songs: one from a famous Russian cartoon and the other one from a new Ukrainian cartoon we found on youtube. It was hard to tell though which one she liked more. Four months after she began attending her new daycare, she did not speak much English at home, probably because she was still in the infants’ group, and children under two do not generally talk a lot. She still spoke Russian and Ukrainian at home, but I saw how English words were trickling in our daily family life. She asked for “milk” in her daycare but said “молочко” to me when she was ready for her bedtime drink. She liked to recite children’s rhymes mostly in Russian and Ukrainian, but I still had to help her a little. Liya began doing a lot of pretend play, and when she talked to someone on her toy phone, she was using some indistinguishable language and always finished her conversation with the same English phrase “OK, bye!”, clearly imitating somebody. I also noticed she spoke English when she was playing with her dolls, and she imitated the behaviour of her daycare staff from infants’ group: Liya would sit on the floor in the corner, wrap her doll in blankets, roll and sing “ABC”, “Wheels on the bus”, or “Twinkle, twinkle little star”. Once I saw her “changing” her baby’s diaper when she exclaimed “Oh my God! Look at this!” (clearly, she meant some diaper accident, and the language was from the daycare). So, for us it was obvious which phrases she had learned outside of the house.

In November 2016 Liya was moved to preschoolers where she was the youngest. Because she began communicating in English with older children, it was natural that she was absorbing

all new words she heard in her daycare. We received daily reports, photos and short videos from our daycare, so I could see Liya had no discomforts in communication. We also began noticing mostly short English phrases she was using even when she was speaking Ukrainian or Russian (“ok, bye!”, “ok, good!”, “don’t you like it?”, “lie down”, “all done”, and “go away”). They also began offering yoga classes in her daycare, so every evening she would demand our attention by screaming, “Mama! Look yoga!” in order to demonstrate what she had learned. She also began teasing me sometimes talking to me in English even though she knew a Ukrainian word for it. At the beginning, I was repeating the same word in Ukrainian, but then I realized that once I “played her game” and repeated her word in English, she would stop doing that and continue again in Ukrainian. It seemed to me she was trying to “teach” me some English. This was also the case when I mispronounced the names of her daycare friends when she brought her Valentine cards: I was reading the names to her, and she would correct me and waited for me to repeat. Liya somehow perceived that I did not speak English, so she had the authority to be my teacher.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell which language she is using at the moment. For example, Liya may start her sentence with English “it’s” or Ukrainian “це”, and because both words have the same meaning and are pronounced very similar (with [ts] consonant cluster), she uses them interchangeably, so she can say “it’s кака”<sup>17</sup>, or “this is мамочка” [*Ukr.* Mommy]. This tendency to mix up lexical units from different languages was an alarming concern for my husband, who even claimed I was the one who confused Liya by speaking to her in Ukrainian.

I cannot state that a two-year old can paraphrase or simplify her speech, but that also might be true. Once Liya had a playdate with two other kids from Ukraine, and when they left, I was cleaning up. She saw me put the cake leftovers in the fridge and said, “мама, постав в

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<sup>17</sup> “кака” means garbage in children’s vocabulary in Ukrainian

ХОЛОДИЛЬНИК, ТІЛЬКИ НЕ ЇЖ!” [*Ukr.* Mommy, put it in the fridge but don’t eat!]. A minute later, I could hear her telling my husband in the living room, “не їж!” [*Ukr.* Don’t eat!]. Because she said it in Ukrainian out of the context, my husband said he did not understand her. Then, Liya paraphrased and told him, “торт нема!” [*Ukr.* No more cake!]. Although she does not always understand which language is called Ukrainian, Russian or English, she does know how to use them, where and with whom. Liya once brought me a book and asked me to read it. Because I was busy cooking dinner, I asked my husband to read the book. Even though it was in Ukrainian, I thought he could read the same Cyrillic alphabet and assumed his incorrect pronunciation would not make any difference to Liya. After hearing my husband stumbling over pronunciation of Ukrainian words, she brought the book back to me and said, “папа не вміє!” [*Ukr.* Daddy cannot!].

I also find it challenging to explain some words to Liya in Ukrainian, mostly something I cannot illustrate directly or by showing a picture. For example, I was reading “Cinderella” in Ukrainian, and there was a phrase that Cinderella’s mother died. Liya asked me the meaning of the word “died”, and I just said Cinderella had no mother. That did not seem to be a satisfactory answer because Liya asked me again where her mom was. So, I paraphrased and told her Cinderella’s mom had gone somewhere. Then Liya made her own assumption, “Мама поїхала на роботу? На автобусі?” [*Ukr.* Mom has gone to work? By bus?]<sup>18</sup>. After I said, “так” [*Ukr.* Yes], Liya was finally satisfied and signed, “oh...ok”. She was asking clarifying questions in Ukrainian, but showed her satisfaction in English, and presumably thought I understood her.

It was relatively easy to keep track of my daughter’s vocabulary development when she was just beginning to talk, but now when she is three and talks non-stop in sentences, I can only

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<sup>18</sup> She knows I take a bus to work, so it was a logical conclusion.

take notes about some memorable or funny expressions I have heard from her in one day. Liya loves when we read books together, but she can ask me to read the same page or story over and over again. She also watches the same cartoons in Ukrainian and Russian and may ask us to rewind and watch the same episode several times. At first it may seem annoying, especially if she wants me to watch with her, but then I realized that is her way of remembering words and phrases. Later we can hear she uses the expressions from her favourite books or cartoons. She also loves watching talent shows and concerts from daycares in Ukraine, in particular those celebrating New Year. She dances, sings, and tries to imitate and repeat whatever she sees the kids on the screen are doing. In this manner, she has learned some short poems, songs, and dances.

Sometimes I feel there is bit of contradiction or tension caused by using this “one parent—one language approach”. For example, when I was watching with Liya “Peppa Pig” cartoon in Ukrainian, the moment I left, my husband switched it to a Russian version. A couple of days later when I was again watching with Liya something in Ukrainian, my husband returned from work, and Liya said to me, “папа не любить, зроби на руском” [*mixed Ukr. -Rus.* Daddy doesn’t like it, find it in Russian]. On another occasion when we were at a children’s birthday party, I was asking Liya to say “thank you” in Ukrainian, while my husband asked her to say it in Russian, and she got confused. Another father from Ukraine who was observing our struggle to make her say “thank you” told us he had the same problem with his children: sometimes when his wife was addressing them in Ukrainian and he talked to kids in Russian, they got confused and ended up answering in English.

As a mother, I love when my daughter calls me “mama” in my language, Ukrainian. However, Liya may also address me «мама», «мамочка», “mummy”. She calls my husband

“папа”, “папі», “daddy”, so she adds English suffix “-y” to Ukrainian and Russian words to make them softer. We do not love our children less because of the language they speak or do not speak, no matter how Liya calls me, my heart resonates with the same love and tenderness.

In this chapter, I presented five cases to illustrate different scenarios that may play out in immigrant families from Ukraine. While in the first case (Andriy) there is some sort of stability and status quo at least for the time being, the second case (Olesya) shows already some loss of literacy skills among children who were born and partially educated in Ukraine. The third case (Ruslana) illustrates the struggle of a young mom with the stubbornness of her toddler and emerging coexistence of three languages in this family; the fourth case (Yuliya) demonstrates the transformation of the initial enthusiasm and commitment to language maintenance into some sort of despair and necessity to come up with new plans and strategies in a new location in Canada under the changing family circumstances. Finally, the last case (Nataliya) is a culturally and linguistically mixed family where a young child is trying to navigate and intuitively use the right language with the right people at the right place, at the same time developing her insatiable desire to experiment with new words, sentences, and narratives.

## Chapter Six: Findings

This chapter presents a summary of the main findings with the purpose of answering my research questions and subquestions. The further analysis of emergent themes across the responses of all ten participants will be discussed in the next chapter. Having applied cross-case analysis, I was able to sort out differences between and discover commonalities among my research participants. Specifically, I will address three areas: the major parental challenges in language maintenance, the most efficient language maintenance strategies, and the role of macro-social factors in Ukrainian language maintenance among recent immigrants. Some additional insights will be offered to answer my subquestions about the role of Ukrainian in building close parent-child relationships, the negotiation of tensions between competing languages in immigrant families, and the role of literacy in building heritage language proficiency.

### Challenges in Language Maintenance

**Lack of time.** As often indicated in research literature (Chen, 2010; Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Cunningham-Andersson & Andersson, 2004; Kopeliovich, 2011; Nesteruk, 2010), immigrant parents do not usually have the luxury of time to spend on deliberate efforts in maintaining the heritage language. As one of my participants, Sofiya, notes:

*Ми з чоловіком обоє працюємо full-time, пізно лягаємо і рано встаємо, тому не маємо зайвого часу на якісь додаткові заняття українською з дітьми. Вдома ми говоримо виключно українською. Мої батьки, рідні сестра та брат з сім'ями також живуть тут неподалік, тому ми намагаємось часто зустрічатися, а влітку їдемо на вихідні за місто де маємо cottage. [Ukr. My husband and I both work full-time, so we go to bed late and wake up early, and we do not have extra time for*

additional activities in Ukrainian. In our house, we all speak Ukrainian only. My parents, brother, and sister with their families all live here, not too far, so we try to meet often, and in summer we spend weekends outside of the city in our cottage.] (interview with Sofiya, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

Moreover, new immigrants are usually more concerned with their own English language acquisition than with their children maintaining a heritage language. In my research project, this was particularly true for parents relatively new to Canada, who were still working on their English proficiency and were either unemployed or searching for positions to match their skills and education from Ukraine. These parents were busy spending time attending ESL classes and trying to achieve language proficiency beyond the conversational level; some of them admitted attempting to learn from their children, prompted by the popular belief that children absorb languages more quickly and easily than adults. A few participants described trying at least to listen closely to their children speaking English, even if they themselves were not yet attempting to speak English. Some of my participants (Olesya, Sofiya, and Ludmyla) highlighted their husbands' valiant but unavailing attempts to use English at home in order to speed up the process of second language acquisition for the entire family, a practice meeting little success among families relatively new to Canada.

**Lack of commitment.** Another obstacle to language maintenance seems to be the lack of commitment on the part of one or the other parent. Some of my participants mentioned the indifference of their spouses when it comes to following the house rules of “no English at home”. Language maintenance is not a one-time effort; rather, it requires persistence and long-term commitment of parents. My participant Andriy believes that at least one parent in the family must make this commitment; otherwise, parents are doomed to lose this battle:

*Це повинні бути однодумці. В мене жінка в цьому плані більш байдужа, indifferent. Тобто вона вже напам'ять знає, що я кажу, але на неї—то малий не розмовляв би українською. Повинен бути хтось з батьків, який в тому дуже сильно зацікавлений. Наприклад, це я. [Ukr. Parents should be like-minded people. My wife is kind of indifferent in this respect. She knows by heart what I am saying, yet if it were left up to her, our son would never speak Ukrainian. At least one of the parents should be very interested in that [Ukrainian language maintenance]. In our family, for example, it is me.] (interview with Andriy, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

**Lack of opportunities to communicate in Ukrainian.** For both new immigrants and those families already well established in Canada, the lack of opportunities for communication in Ukrainian seems to be another issue. For very recent immigrants, it takes time to acquire new friendships, build relationships, and extend one's social network. For parents who have been in Canada long enough to have friends among English-speaking or other multilingual speakers, Ukrainian is no longer the only language of communication, so that language mixing becomes a habit when speaking with others from Ukraine. Additionally, newer immigrants comment that they are not closely affiliated with any particular church, thus lacking another common link in social networking. Indeed, Ludmyla expressed her doubts that any substantial communication in Ukrainian happens beyond church, believing that immigrants from Ukraine who do not regularly attend a Ukrainian church in Canada are deprived of this important opportunity for using the language. While Ludmyla's nineteen-year-old daughter works for a Ukrainian organization in Canada and has social contacts among new Ukrainian-speaking immigrants, Ludmyla is concerned that her four-year old son has no real opportunity to learn Ukrainian because he attends an English-speaking daycare, and the family rarely speak Ukrainian at home:

*Младший сын говорит пока что на двух (русский и английский), но мы планируем его к пяти годам отдать в украинскую школу bilingual для того чтобы он и украинский язык тоже знал. Так как у нас внутри семьи все-таки мы говорим на русском, но песни я ему пою на украинском, сказки рассказываю на украинском и иногда перехожу на украинский язык. [Rus. My younger son speaks only English and Russian so far, but we plan to send him to the Ukrainian bilingual program once he turns five so that he can also know Ukrainian. We speak Russian in our family, but I tell him Ukrainian fairy tales, sing Ukrainian songs, and sometimes switch to Ukrainian.]*

(interview with Ludmyla, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

**Parental fear of spoiling relationships with children.** Another problem cited by some mothers, especially those of young children, is their fear of spoiling relationships with their children by forcing them to speak Ukrainian all the time. Ruslana recounted how, when her oldest child first began to talk, he spoke exclusively English, which upset her husband and herself. They had been eagerly waiting for him to start talking, but the fact that he had chosen the language of the daycare as his first linguistic foray greatly disappointed them. They tried encouraging him to repeat words in Ukrainian and even pretended not to understand him when he spoke English, which only worsened the situation because their son became unwilling to talk to them. Ruslana would ask him nicely to use some Ukrainian words, and the only answer was, “No, mummy!” Because he was their first child, Ruslana was not confident in her parental skills or home language policies. She decided her son’s well-being and her relationships with him were more important than anything else, so she stepped back until that stage of resistance was over. Luckily, she managed to find other Ukrainian-speaking families with children who were close in age to her son; in particular, Ukrainian-speaking boy in their neighbourhood became friends with

her son, and they played frequently together. In addition, Ruslana's father from Ukraine came to visit for a prolonged period of time, which also contributed to her son's positive motivation to speak Ukrainian at home. Another participant, Nadiya, seemed satisfied with her son's development in both Ukrainian and English, emphasizing that her four-year-old son's well-being is her main priority:

*Мене найбільше цікавить його емоційний стан. І для мене важливо, щоб моя дитина розвивалася емоційно, щоб в нього не було негативних емоцій і щоб не було якихось там проблем, стресу. Тому в принципі я задоволена, тому що він радо йде в садочок, він з радістю встає зранку і збирається в садочок. Він себе комфортно почуває, значить мова для нього не є проблемою; в садочку від розуміє що до нього говорять, він спілкується з дітьми, він почуває себе вільно. Так, я задоволена. Якби він не розумів що йому говорять, наприклад, «йдемо танцювати, їсти чи гуляти», а він не розуміє, то це була б проблема. [Ukr. For me, the most important thing is his emotional state. I do not want him to have any stress or negative emotions. In general, I am satisfied [with his language development] because he wakes up in the morning and is happy to go to his daycare. He is comfortable, so language is not a problem for him. He can communicate with the children in his daycare, and he understands everything. If he could not understand when they ask him to go outside, to eat, or to dance, then it would be a problem.] (interview with Nadiya, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

It is interesting to note that research findings which address the issue of resistance to speaking a family language commonly focus on teenagers and adolescents (Nesteruk, 2010; Pauwels, 2005); however, in my sample, the participants with younger children voiced this concern as well. Indeed, the participants parenting older children informed me that their sons and

daughters took the home language policy for granted, rarely if ever questioning it, although sometimes they could inadvertently switch languages and needed reminding about the home language policy. On the other hand, the findings of Chumak-Horbatsch and Garg (2006) point to children's disobedient refusal to speak Ukrainian at home, which can be a frequent cause of parental anger and frustration. Older children may also challenge parental ineffective language maintenance strategies when parents claim they do not understand English (Chumak-Horbatsch & Garg, 2006). Thus, in order to maintain a family language and at the same time preserve close relationships with children, parents should consider adjusting their expectations and strategies to make them more age-appropriate.

**Language shift between siblings and peers.** It was quite predictable to hear my participating parents articulate concerns regarding their children's language preference with siblings and peers. The fact that children who can speak their heritage language typically switch to a majority language to communicate with siblings and friends is widely documented in research literature on heritage language maintenance (Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Kopeliovich, 2011; Pauwels, 2005; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Participants whose children were born in Canada admitted that their children usually speak English with siblings and friends, a phenomenon they found both undesirable and hard to control. Andriy's daughter and son, for example, communicate mostly in English even though they both speak Ukrainian; however, when the parents are around, they sometimes choose Ukrainian. Parents in newer immigrant families noticed that their children use Ukrainian when they talk to their siblings but use English with all other friends, even those who speak Ukrainian. For example, Olesya mentioned that when they arrived in Canada, her daughters did not really speak English. However, several months later when they were staying at their friends' summer cottage over the weekend, Olesya overheard her

daughters using English with their peer. Not only was she surprised that her daughters chose English even though they were not yet fluent in the language, but also that the boy they were talking to was from a Ukrainian-speaking family. Olesya was puzzled as to their motivation to use the new language in a situation where they could have comfortably used their mother tongue. Another participant, Tetiana, came to Canada when her daughters, aged seven and fourteen, were bilingual in Ukrainian and Russian, having attended schools in central Ukraine:

*Коли ми тільки приїхали, молодшій доньці було цікаво і вона казала старшій: «А давай ми з тобою будемо говорити англійською». Старша розуміла, що якщо вони ще їй вдома перейдуть на англійську, то вони втратять і українську, і російську, тому вона відмовилась. І все, більше ніколи не виникало ніяких питань чи бажання. Вони вільно переходять на українську або російську мову залежно від ситуації чи компанії, тобто я вважаю вони розвиваються в трьох мовах. [Ukr. When we first arrived here, my younger daughter was curious and proposed to my elder daughter, “Let’s speak English”. My elder daughter refused because she realized that if they switched to English, they would lose both Ukrainian and Russian. Since that time, they have never had any questions or desire [to use English at home]. They easily switch to Ukrainian or Russian depending on their situation or the company they are with, so I think they are developing three languages.] (interview with Tetiana, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

In general, the longer children are in Canada, the higher the likelihood that they switch to using English with their peers and sometimes even siblings (Pauwels, 2005). One of my participants, Mariya, whose oldest child was born in Ukraine and two younger children in Canada, points out that even though her children all try to speak Ukrainian at home while interacting with each other, their speech is slower than when they use English:

*Українською вони розмовляють повільніше, і вони (особливо молодша) будують речення за структурою англійської мови. Вони можуть неправильно ставити наголос («нОга» а не «ногА»), і молодша плутає відмінки і родові закінчення. Син говорить вільно, і його мова більше схожа на мову підлітка, або навіть дорослого. Середня дочка говорить трохи гірше, і в неї більш проста мова. Наймолодша має навіть невеликий акцент, і якщо порівняти її мову з дітьми її віку в Україні, то в неї звичайно дуже обмежений словниковий запас. [Ukr. They speak Ukrainian slower, especially the youngest daughter, and they make sentences using the structure of English. They can put stress on the wrong syllable [example], and the youngest confuses case and gender endings. My son is fluent, and his speech is more typical of that of a teenager or even adult. My middle daughter speaks a bit worse, and her speech is simpler. The youngest daughter even has a slight [English] accent, and compared with children her age in Ukraine, she has a very limited vocabulary.] (interview with Mariya, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

All participants who have more than one child observe that their older children are more proficient in Ukrainian than their younger ones. Contemplating the reason, they attribute the difference to age or to the fact that their older children were born in Ukraine and learned Ukrainian before learning English:

*Мій син говорить українською краще бо він старший. У нього більший словниковий запас тому що ми з чоловіком завжди обговорюємо різні теми з ним. Але він також може іноді сказати: «Я не розумію що ти сказала», або «Я не знаю це слово. Що воно означає?» [Ukr. My son speaks Ukrainian better [than my two daughters] because he is older. He has a big vocabulary because my husband and I*

always discuss different topics with him. However, he still sometimes says, “I do not understand what you said”, or, “I do not know this word. What does it mean?”]

(interview with Mariya, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

**Only one parent is proficient in Ukrainian.** An additional challenge in maintaining Ukrainian comes when only one parent is proficient in Ukrainian, while the other parent, whether fluent in or holding passive knowledge of the language, does not regularly use it in the home. According to Swidinsky and Swidinsky (1997), language continuity “can be measured in several ways: knowledge of the heritage language, competence in the heritage language, use of the mother tongue as home language, or the intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue” (p. 82). Recent Russian-speaking immigrants from Ukraine obviously do not meet at least one of these measures—they do not regularly use Ukrainian in their home. This is particularly the case in families where the parents originate from different parts of Ukraine, with one parent bilingual in Russian as the first language and Ukrainian the second. As a rule, parents in these families are trying to preserve two languages by applying a “one parent—one language” approach, but this may not always be effective. Sometimes there is confusion among parents and children equally as to which language is more appropriate under particular circumstances. Ludmyla, a participant originally from eastern Ukraine whose first language is Russian, used to teach at a post-secondary educational institution in Ukraine, where she was mandated to use Ukrainian exclusively: all documentation, testing, and teaching was conducted in Ukrainian. Her elder daughter had finished a Ukrainian high school in Ukraine before they immigrated to Canada, so her daughter is also fluent in Ukrainian. However, their home language is primarily Russian:

*Дома на русском говорим, но иногда переходим на украинский, потому что у меня муж не является этническим украинцем, но он понимает на украинском языке*

*достаточно хорошо и старается что-то говорить. То есть иногда мы переходим на украинский язык чтобы стимулировать детей не забывать постановку речи и слова.* [Rus. We speak Russian at home but we switch to Ukrainian sometimes. My husband is not ethnic Ukrainian, but he understands Ukrainian and tries to speak it. Sometimes we switch to Ukrainian to stimulate our children not to forget vocabulary and the sentence structure of the Ukrainian language.] (interview with Ludmyla, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Ludmyla and her daughter are fully proficient in Ukrainian, while her husband and younger son are primarily Russian-speaking.

I was also able to track some underlying tensions around family language policies, although none of my participants articulated this as a specific concern. Some participants stated that their partners were, if not opposed to the idea of language maintenance, then at least somewhat indifferent; consequently, the task of language preservation and transmission within a family lay heavily on the shoulders of only one of the partners. For instance, Andriy mentioned that if he had not been involved in his son's Ukrainian upbringing, his son would never have been able to speak Ukrainian. Ruslana commented that her husband really wants their children to speak Russian in addition to Ukrainian, so he sometimes insists that they speak Russian to him, yet he is not as fastidious about their speaking Ukrainian. Olesya advised with some chagrin that her husband tried to speak English at home when they first arrived in Canada; Sofiya similarly remembers her husband trying to speak English with their two children at home. Consistency and mutual agreement between parents is yet one more important aspect of heritage language maintenance. It is worth noting that the task of maintaining the heritage language is more manageable when both parents agree on some plan of action and follow it, so a base of mutual

understanding, cooperation, and similar perspectives on the issue proves important. Although mothers are traditionally more engaged in motivating their children speak their family language (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2008), my participant Andriy is more committed than his wife to their son's Ukrainian language maintenance.

If disagreement around language is more visible between parents, children can sense this negativity and turn away in resentment from maintaining the family language. Baker (2000) notes that in multilingual families where children speak minority languages to their mothers, fathers may not approve of this practice:

The child will soon pick up these negative vibrations and language behavior will be affected. On the other hand, if a father encourages his children's bilingualism, applauds them speaking to their mother in her 'own' language, the effect on the child's language confidence and attitudes will be substantial. (p. 9)

Consequently, it is important to have consensus between parents and for them to support one another's efforts in maintaining family languages.

**Overreliance on external sources.** A few parents in my study, who had always spoken Russian at home and were therefore used to relying on external sources (schools, daycare, and environment in general) for the Ukrainian language training and support even back in Ukraine, continued their reliance in Canada, opting to send their children to Ukrainian-English bilingual programs. This practice seems to be insufficient in the Canadian context, however, because these programs are not similar to those of schools in Ukraine; more importantly, perhaps, there is no Ukrainian communication beyond the couple of hours these children spend in the Ukrainian-language school setting. The other question is the quality of the Ukrainian input: some parents

cite the old-fashioned Ukrainian they have heard used in the schools. Thus, it is unclear how beneficial these programs can be for children who have come from Ukraine but are exposed to the Russian language at home. The benefit may in fact be quite limited; as Andriy says, “*це так, для галочки—поставить і сказати, що були*”. [Ukr. It is just to put a checkmark that we have been to a Ukrainian school.] (interview with Andriy, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

For parents who are newer immigrants, the impact of the host environment and Canadian school system comes as a bit of a surprise. Bilingual parents who used to speak Russian in their homes in Ukraine were unused to any language concerns: their children were naturally more proficient in Ukrainian, possessing literacy skills if they were old enough to attend schools, while Russian was used as a home language because at least one of the parents was more comfortable speaking it. When these parents arrived in Canada, they enrolled their children in Ukrainian-English bilingual programs, thinking that it would be sufficient to maintain and develop their children’s skills in Ukrainian, whilst continuing to use Russian in their homes. However, these parents soon realized that bilingual programs in Canada differ drastically from Ukrainian schools in Ukraine. In fact, parents are surprised that school principals do not speak Ukrainian at all and that most teachers are monolingual in English. Even those educators who do speak Ukrainian possess an old-fashioned form of the language which sounds strange and amusing to children and parents alike. Another surprise is the limited number of school subjects taught in Ukrainian and the limited hours of exposure to the language, outside of which children communicate mostly in English. At the beginning, new immigrant parents tend not to be concerned, but gradually they begin to notice their children’s language and literacy skills deteriorating. These Russian-speaking parents face the dilemma of either switching to Ukrainian at home in order to maintain to at least some extent the level of Ukrainian their children had previously learned in Ukraine or of simply

ignoring the problem and letting their children lose the language. Indeed, the Russian-Ukrainian bilingualism that is common in Ukraine turns out to be a complicating factor in the new context of Canada, so that where bilingualism would ideally be transformed into trilingualism, not all parents are prepared or equipped for the challenge. At some point, they find themselves desperately searching for more strategies and alternative ways to provide greater linguistic exposure to Ukrainian for their children. Ludmyla, who is fluent in both Ukrainian and Russian but speaks mostly Russian at home, tells of her experience:

*Я думаю, что особенно младшему сыну будет проще говорить на английском. Но я мужу сразу сказала, что в нашей семье мы будем говорить на наших родных языках и только переходить на английский в том случае, если ребенок не будет понимать что-то и ему сложно будет объяснить. Мы договорились, и ребенка обязательно мы определим в украинскую школу чтобы он изучал украинский язык тоже. [Rus. I think that especially for my younger son, it will be easier to speak English. However, I told my husband that in our family we will speak our native languages and switch to English only if our son will not otherwise understand something, or it will be too difficult for us to explain. We agreed that we will definitely enrol him in the Ukrainian [bilingual] school so he can learn Ukrainian as well.] (interview with Ludmyla, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Although all participants deeply appreciate the bilingual programs in Canada, they believe it is not enough to prevent their children from losing skills and interest in the Ukrainian language.

To summarize, among the most significant problems encountered by immigrant parents attempting Ukrainian language maintenance were: their lack of time; children's resistance and

lack of motivation; limited opportunities for communication in Ukrainian; peer and sibling influence; lack of commitment and support from a partner with regards to home language policy; and overreliance on outside sources for Ukrainian language exposure.

### **Strategies in Language Maintenance**

Research literature on heritage language maintenance offers numerous suggestions and strategies to facilitate language transmission in immigrant families in various contexts (Baker, 2000; Cunningham-Andersson & Andersson, 2004; Pauwels, 2005). My own research findings on language maintenance strategies have all been previously cited in my literature review presented in Chapter 2. The only new method that deserves mention is the strategic choice to use two or three languages. Because this cannot be adequately described as code-switching, the borrowed term *translanguaging* (Hornberger, & Link, 2012; Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012; Li, 2014; Makalela, 2015; Velasco & García, 2014) will be used instead.

According to Baker (2000), family language planning and strategies are important to expose children to a variety of language usage in different activities and contexts. The participating parents in my study enumerated these Ukrainian language maintenance strategies: age-appropriate books, cartoons, movies, games, and other activities; online resources; family activities; travelling to Ukraine; communication with extended families and relatives in Ukraine; Ukrainian heritage schools, programs, summer camps, and church-related activities; celebration of national and religious Ukrainian holidays; rewards; translation into two languages; and translanguaging as a strategic use of multiple linguistic resources. All parents emphasized that punishment or other disciplinary methods are not effective in language maintenance.

**Age-appropriate resources.** Participating parents were unanimous that in order to stimulate their children's interest and motivation in the Ukrainian language, they need to offer interesting and age-appropriate books, movies, cartoons, games, and other activities. For younger children, the most popular strategy seems to be books with big and colourful illustrations and cartoons. Three families with younger children described how they sometimes alternate the same cartoons in Ukrainian, English, and, for those trying to maintain Russian as well, Russian. Due to the enormous amount of materials available online, this is not only the most popular but also most financially feasible strategy, not requiring the substantial spending that travelling to Ukraine does. On the other hand, parents recognize the value of investing as much as possible in their children's linguistic development, especially before the critical teenage years, which can be a breaking point in terms of language maintenance:

*Я чудово розумію, що поки дитина менша, їй треба втихнути побільше, тому що як він вже стане більшим.... наприклад чому я в цьому році поїхав в Україну на п'ять тижнів і показав йому Україну? Бо я знаю, що як йому буде чотирнадцять-п'ятнадцять, йому вже те не цікаво, він вже не хоче.... тому я старався йому все те максимально втихнути. [Ukr. I am well aware that while a child is little, you should invest as much as possible, because as he grows up.... For instance, why did I take him to Ukraine for five weeks to show him the country? Because I know when he is fourteen or fifteen, he may no longer be interested in this, so I am trying to instil this in him as much as possible.] (interview with Andriy, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Another popular strategy for language maintenance is Ukrainian summer camp, experience which school-age children really enjoy and one which Andriy, Mariya, Sofiya, and Olesya provide for their children every year.

**Books.** Parents of younger children usually bring books back with them from Ukraine or have family members ship them out. Nadiya tries to offer her son both Ukrainian and English books:

*Фактично, однакова кількість книжок: якщо це українська книжка сьогодні, то завтра буде англійська книжка, якщо це всі shapes тобто форми які він вивчив у садочку, то я все дублюю українською мовою. Тому що він зараз в такому віці, що він не знає як це називається, і йому зручніше назвати це мовою яку він просто фізично більше повторює в садочку, це англійська мова. Я хочу щоб він знав як це називається, тому я це дублюю українською. Якщо він хоче, він повторює, якщо не хоче, він не повторює, але він знає про що я говорю і він розуміє, тому що на наступний день, коли ми читаємо книжку англійською, і я прошу українською «покажи мені ромб чи овал», він показує. Так само з телевізором, у нас немає телевізора, в нас є тільки комп'ютер і так само він мультики дивиться українською і англійською. Він дивиться Свинку Пеппу українською і так само англійською...* [Ukr. In fact, it is the same number of books: if we read [them] today in Ukrainian, then tomorrow we will read [them] in English; for example, if he learns different shapes in English in his daycare, I duplicate all this in Ukrainian. He is at the age now when he does not know what it is called [in Ukrainian], and it is more convenient for him to use the language that he speaks the most at his daycare, which is English. I want him to know all this in Ukrainian, so I duplicate it. If he wants to, he repeats after me; if he does not want to, he does not repeat, but he still knows what I am talking about because the next day, when we are reading in English and I ask him in Ukrainian, “Show me a diamond or an oval”, he shows it to me. [I use] the same

approach with TV; we do not have a TV, only a computer, so he watches cartoons in Ukrainian and in English. He watches Peppa Pig in Ukrainian and English.] (interview with Nadiya, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017)

Older children attending bilingual programs also have the option of borrowing books from their school libraries, and, in general, parents are quite satisfied with the variety of books available. In addition, two mothers are particularly pleased that teachers assign homework reading in Ukrainian, with children required to keep journals:

*В библиотеке школьной много украинских книжек. Это обязательная программа, ведется журнал сколько книжек ребенок прочитал, на каком языке. Она каждые две недели идет в библиотеку и берет украинскую и английскую книжку. [Rus.*

*There are many Ukrainian books in the school library. It is part of their curriculum, so there is a journal to record the number and languages of the books she reads. Every two weeks she borrows one English and one Ukrainian book from her school library.]*

(interview with Inna, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

These home assignments are often completed with parental help, which can also be viewed as additional family time that facilitates building bonds between parents and children.

**Online resources.** Movies, and internet activities in general, are popular with older children and teenagers. Parents observe that their children find their additional language skills helpful when they search for information online. Yuliya notes that her daughter manages to use all three languages she knows in order to find complete information and obtain answers to the questions she has; she creates and enters new word combinations while conducting her online searches. Parents of older children emphasize the importance of encouraging their children's curiosity at this stage of their lives when they are avidly absorbing new information that interests

them regardless of the language it is encountered in. Yuliya adds that when her daughter began showing interest in interpersonal relations between teenagers, she found an online movie in Ukrainian which they watched together, with Yuliya providing some commentary and explanation. Another participant, Ludmyla, intentionally invites her younger son to watch his favourite cartoons and movies in Ukrainian only:

*Проще всего стимулировать через то, чем он пользуется чаще всего – интернетом. Он смотрит там мультики чаще чем сказки и песни. Я пытаюсь ему подсунуть на украинском языке мультики чтобы он слышал, чтобы украинская речь была на слуху. [Rus. Internet is the easiest way to stimulate his interest. He will watch cartoons more than songs or fairy tales online. I try to offer him cartoons in Ukrainian, so he can hear the Ukrainian language.] (interview with Ludmyla, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

The internet provides natural access to additional information in a heritage language, which may stimulate interest in the language itself (Harrison, 2000) and expose children to a rich heritage language input (Pauwels, 2005).

**Ukrainian programs and heritage schools.** Various after-school Ukrainian programs, summer camps, heritage schools, and church-related activities are beneficial for older children to not only improve their language skills but also find new Ukrainian-speaking friends. Isajiw (2010) claims that, “together with family socialization, the school is of particular importance in generational language maintenance and the development of Ukrainian consciousness” (p. 299). Heritage schools and programs are favoured by parents because they help extend their heritage language social network, facilitating acquaintance with other immigrants from Ukraine. While many participants commented that these one day per week programs may be insufficient in terms

of language development, they appreciate the fact that Canadian society provides this opportunity for their children. Younger children usually enjoy attending Ukrainian dance and drawing classes. The availability and variety of these Ukrainian programs differ in the two provinces of residence for my participants, but all the children in my study were attending some form of these Ukrainian activities or schools in Canada.

In many cases, older children are also enrolled in more than one program, in particular those whose parents regularly attend church. While none of my participants explicitly emphasized the role of religion in heritage language maintenance, church-related activities do help to maintain the language as well as culture and family traditions. I found that only parents who are originally from western Ukraine (Andriy, Olesya, Ruslana, Nadiya, and Sofiya) take their children to church on a regular basis. Other participants declared that they do not attend church in Canada or do so only once in a while. Baczynskyj (2009) notes that those who are Orthodox among the fourth wave of immigrants are not actively involved in church or religious activities in Canada. She claims they are unaware of the fact that, unlike in Ukraine where Orthodox church is funded and supported by the state, the Ukrainian church in Canada depends solely on community support. Kostyuk (2007) points out that the majority of new immigrants (almost 60%) do not attend Ukrainian church in Canada. It is worth noting, however, that while education in Ukraine is traditionally secular, the majority of Ukrainian heritage schools in Canada are aligned with churches.

Despite their criticism of the outdated nature of the Ukrainian language in Canada, parents acknowledge the important role of bilingual programs, festivals, and other Ukrainian events in maintaining not only the language but the culture as well. My interviewees expressed gratitude that Ukrainian Canadians have managed to preserve and nurture the language of their

ancestors. Parents appreciate the positive influence of bilingual programs, summer camps, and holiday celebrations in provoking interest and engagement among their children and in providing validation as well as additional opportunities for language practice.

Additional benefits of attending Ukrainian after-school programs and heritage schools are the celebrations of national and religious holidays, when children prepare concerts for their parents. Children have to recite poems by heart, dance, and sing Ukrainian songs, all of which frequently requires involving parents. These events not only help in language maintenance and literacy skill development, but they also cultivate family bonding. For example, during my final interview with Mariya, she said her daughters were preparing for Shevchenko's Days<sup>19</sup> at their Ukrainian heritage school, so she was helping them rehearse poems and prepare embroidered clothes. Although both her daughters enjoy these concerts, the preparation and poem recitation is not without effort:

*Українською їм важче запам'ятати інформацію ніж англійською, і це займає більше часу. Крім того моя молодша донька може запнутися після першої фрази, і вона не може згадати як далі продовжити. Хоча у віршах є ритм і рима, вона здається не завжди може цей ритм почути в українській мові. [Ukr. It is more difficult for them to memorize information in Ukrainian than in English, and it takes longer. My youngest daughter stops after the first line, and she cannot remember the next line. Although there are rhythm and rhymes, she does not always seem to get it in the Ukrainian language.] (interview with Mariya, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017)*

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<sup>19</sup> Shevchenko was a Ukrainian poet and writer, whose birthday is commemorated on March 9<sup>th</sup>

However, some researchers are skeptical about the overall benefit of heritage schools and programs in maintaining a heritage language (Chumak-Horbatsch & Garg, 2006). Baczynskyj (2009) presents two reasons for recent immigrants not to enrol their children in Ukrainian heritage schools in Toronto: her participants were dissatisfied with both the religious aspect of the curriculum and its strong emphasis on nationalism. In contrast, the parents in my study did not voice those concerns; their only negative comments concerned the archaic language and out-of-date materials in some of the schools. It is challenging to draw any final conclusions because there are also significant differences between Ukrainian programs across provinces. Because my research included representatives from only two provinces, I refrain from making any particular recommendations. Baczynskyj (2009) points out that the fourth wave would like their children to integrate into Canadian society, and some of her participants view Ukrainian heritage schools as obstacles to this integration, detracting from their children's future success. On the other hand, "some informants who said that their Ukrainian identity was important to them stated that they would not consider sending their children to Ukrainian school, preferring home schooling in the Ukrainian culture and language" (Baczynskyj, 2009, p. 98). It is worth noting that many of the interviewees in Baczynskyj's (2009) cohort from the fourth wave were in their twenties and childless, often single, so they were answering these questions on a hypothetical basis. Similarly downplaying the value of language schools, researchers Chumak-Horbatsch and Garg (2006) claim that only parents are responsible for heritage language maintenance:

They [parents] would do well to follow Fishman: to commit themselves to the L1 maintenance task, to adopt reasonable maintenance strategies, to work on extending their children's L1 exposure, to avoid the *X-only* claim and to acknowledge the very real presence of L2 in their homes. If they do all of this, if they take on this *hardest part* –

then their children will grow in two languages and confidently navigate their two language worlds. (Chumak-Horbatsch & Garg, 2006, p. 23)

**Family activities.** In addition to enrolling their children in interesting and age-appropriate programs and activities, parents also like to participate in family-friendly celebrations. Olesya remarked on the high number of parent-volunteers at the Ukrainian summer camp her daughters had attended the previous July. Olesya herself helped organize several performances celebrating Ukrainian holidays at her Ukrainian church and her daughters' Sunday school. She had an active social life in Ukraine which she is continuing in Canada. Olesya and her family enjoy doing activities together; for example, last Easter they went together to a Ukrainian gift store, bought the necessary craft supplies to make Easter eggs, and spent an evening decorating and painting the eggs. They also arrange frequent gatherings and parties with other Ukrainian families with children in order to continue the lifestyle they were used to in Ukraine. Ruslana accompanies her son to drawing classes with a Ukrainian teacher and other children from Ukraine. Andriy drives his son to his Ukrainian school every Saturday, after which they enjoy a fun activity together, such as going for a meal. Yuliya enrolled her daughter in Ukrainian dance studio and enjoys watching her perform. Every Sunday, Mariya takes her daughters to their Ukrainian school for a mini drama-class. Sofiya believes the family environment is very important in maintaining not only the Ukrainian language but also the culture:

*У нас в хаті українські рушники, сувеніри і ікони. Ми як справжні українці любимо гарно готувати і гарно поїсти. Я навіть маю невеличкий город де вирощую овочі. Ми беремо дітей до церкви щонеділі... То все частина нашої культури. [Ukr. We have Ukrainian embroidered towels, icons, and souvenirs in our house. Like real*

Ukrainians, we like to cook and to eat. I even have a small garden patch where I grow vegetables. We take our children to church on Sundays. All that is a part of our culture.]

(interview with Sofiya, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

Ukrainian-speaking participants emphasize the importance of being role models for their children in using the Ukrainian language:

*Тобто мова розмовна— так, це батьки мають слідувати правильну мову: по-перше, ми стараємося, враховуючи те що ми в Західній Україні вирости, російською я все розумію, але мені важко спілкуватися російською, хоча багато в нас русизмів є, тому що вирости в радянський час. Зрозуміло, тому я стараюсь говорити правильною українською, не такою як говорять тут ті хто приїхав сто років тому, але правильною, без русизмів, без всяких таких речей... Не можу сказати що супер літературною мовою, але чистою. І я думаю, що він буде говорити. [Ukr. Conversational Ukrainian is a parental responsibility, and they have to be careful about what they say. Firstly, taking into consideration that I am from western Ukraine, I can understand Russian, although it is very difficult for me to speak it; nonetheless, we do have Russian words in our vocabulary because we grew up in the Soviet era. That is why I try to speak correct Ukrainian—not the language of people who came here a hundred years ago—but a correct language without any Russian words or other things. I cannot say it is perfect, but it is pure Ukrainian. I think my son will speak Ukrainian.] (interview with Nadiya, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Tetiana believes the most effective motivation for children to maintain their family language is cultivating a sense of togetherness, strong family bonds, and close relationships based on trust:

*Ми намагаємось проводити як можна більше часу разом. Ми з чоловіком розповідаємо дітям історії про своє дитинство, про минуле життя в Україні, це їм цікаво. Вони часто спілкуються з нашими рідними в Україні, хоча коли ми їздили в Україну, старшій було більш цікаво, в неї там залишилися друзі, а молодша донька якось відривається, їй не так цікаво. [Ukr. We try to spend as much time as possible together. My husband and I tell our daughters stories about our childhood and our past life in Ukraine, and they find it interesting. They often communicate with our relatives in Ukraine, however, when we went to Ukraine, my elder daughter enjoyed it more because she still has friends there, while my younger one is losing this connection, so it was not as interesting for her.] (interview with Tetiana, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

**Travels to Ukraine.** Naturally, travelling to Ukraine enhances not only language skills but also the appreciation of culture. My participants try to visit their extended families every year or so, and they also invite their parents to Canada for prolonged visits. Andriy took his son to Ukraine for five weeks to tour cities, show him famous sights, and share the rich culture and beauty of the country. It was also a validating experience in terms of language practice. However, because this kind of travel is so expensive for an entire family, some parents alternate turns. These trips abroad are probably more worthwhile for children who were born in Ukraine; even so, parents admit that their children tend to lose close communication with the friends left behind in Ukraine. The whole of Pauwels' (2005) claim—that visits to a home country provide not only immersion in the language but also opportunities to communicate with peers—is not borne out in my interviewees' experience. The immersion opportunity certainly holds true, but even those children who were born in Ukraine and used to have friends there lose those long-distance friendships over time. My participant Tetiana advises that while her older seventeen-

year-old daughter manages to keep up connections with her friends in Ukraine, her younger ten-year-old daughter is no longer interested, saying her former friends are her friends no longer. Yuliya points out that, unlike adults who can stay in touch at a distance, young children rely on in-person contact, so long-distance friendships do not really exist for them. Parents whose children were born in Canada also note that it is unrealistic for their children to establish new friendships in Ukraine, even if they stay there for several weeks. Consequently, while travelling to Ukraine does provide opportunities for language immersion, it does not necessarily offer many opportunities for peer interaction, at least not for most of the children represented in my study.

Younger children seem to enjoy travelling to Ukraine, while teenagers may not be willing to accompany their parents. Mariya tells of her disappointment when her son refused to travel to Ukraine with the family:

*Минулого літа він хотів поїхати з другом (також україномовним, його батьки іммігранти з України) подорожувати Україною, «explore» як він сказав. Ми його відмовили беручи до уваги складну політичну ситуацію на той час. Цього літа ми їздили в Україну майже на цілий місяць, вся сім'я крім мого старшого сина. Він відмовився бо спланував провести літо з друзями тут і гарно відпочити перед початком навчання в університеті. Він вже дорослий, і я не можу його заставляти. Моя мама в Україні плакала коли дізналась що він не хоче їхати. [Ukr.*

Last summer my son wanted to travel and “explore” Ukraine together with his Ukrainian-speaking friend (whose parents are also immigrants from Ukraine). We talked him out of it because of a difficult political situation there at that time. This summer we spent almost a month in Ukraine—our whole family except my son. He refused because he had planned to spend the summer with his friends and relax before the beginning of his first

university term. He is an adult, and I could not force him. My mother in Ukraine cried when she found out he did not want to go to Ukraine.] (interview with Mariya, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

**Online communication with extended families and others in Ukraine.** Regular conversations via Skype with extended family and relatives in Ukraine not only promote family bonding but also help in language maintenance. In this context, it is important that younger children also know their grandparents personally. Nadiya recounted how, when her mother came to visit them in Canada, her four-year old son could not understand how his grandma happened to be in their apartment, so he kept searching for some button to “switch her off”. Despite such confusion, Nadiya is confident that her son will know about events in Ukraine because he will be communicating regularly with their relatives:

*В нас на сто відсотків буде інформація, тобто він буде знати що відбувається в Україні. Зараз по-перше, мені здається важко не знати враховуючи те що є можливості, інтернет, і ти отримуєш інформацію з перших рук, і ти дізнаєшся про подію через годину, через дві. Знову ж таки при бажанні, мені здається в нього буде бажання... В мене, наприклад, є моя сім'я, моя сестра з якою ми дійсно спілкуємося, які не планують і не хочуть переїхати сюди і вони будуть в Україні. Я думаю що він буде знати як вони живуть, чим вони живуть; його двоюрідні брати майже його віку, тобто якщо він буде з ними спілкуватися, він буде знати. Наприклад, там ситуація складна, можливо не буде знати що політична ситуація складна, але зараз вони там не мають за що купити їсти наприклад. А чому немає за що купити їсти? Тому, тому, тому... ми їм фінансово допомагаємо. А чому ми так робимо? Ну так, так склалося.... [Ukr. We will have information for sure, so he*

will know what is going on in Ukraine. Nowadays it seems impossible not to know, given all the opportunities and the internet, so you know about any event in an hour or two. If one has a desire—and it seems to me he will have a desire.... I have my family—my sister’s family—who does not want to move here [to Canada], so they will live in Ukraine, and we communicate a lot. My son will know how they live because his cousins are almost his age, so if he communicates with them, he will know about their life. For example, he may not know about the complicated political situation, but he knows that they do not have money to buy groceries. “Why?” “Because of this and this.... We help them financially”. “Why do we do this?”. “It happened this way....”] (interview with Nadiya, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017)

Ruslana’s children do not get to talk to their grandparents regularly via Skype because Ruslana works on Saturdays, and on Sundays by the time they return from church, it is already late in Ukraine, so Skyped conversations are typically short, held on Monday mornings when Ruslana has a day off. Yuliya’s daughter communicates regularly with her grandmother and godmother in Ukraine; while she had once also been in touch with some of her former classmates and friends there, those conversations have virtually dwindled away over time. Tetiana similarly describes how her younger daughter had become alienated from her former Ukrainian friends by the time a year or so after the family's arrival in Canada had passed. Unlike adults, who can sustain communication and relationships at a great distance, children seem to depend upon in-person communication and interaction to support their friendships.

Online communication is also helpful when parents want additional academic support for their children. They find tutors from Ukraine not only to practice the language but also to support other academic subjects or even, as in Yuliya’s case, to provide music lessons. Admittedly,

online communication can neither replace nor serve as an adequate alternative to personal contact, but in the case of immigrant families who have close family members in Ukraine, this is the most popular, and sometimes only, way to keep up relationships. It generally proves more beneficial for children who were born in Ukraine or have at least visited Ukraine several times, so that they know, in real life, the people that they are communicating with virtually.

**Rewards.** Depending upon the age of a child, parents offer different rewards to their children for their success with the Ukrainian language. For older children, these are usually material rewards such as eating out in a favourite place, buying something, or making a family trip somewhere. Immediate rewards are necessary for younger kids, who need instant gratification for reacting as desired to the particular context and person they are communicating with, rather than a deferred reward they are told is for speaking in a certain language when they do not yet comprehend the concept of speaking distinct languages. Positive comments and praise are encouraging at any age.

**Translation and repetition.** Repetition and translation are also popular language maintenance strategies, especially among parents of young children or children who were born in Canada. My participant, Nadiya, usually emphasizes to her four-year old son, Danylo, that everything has two names, and then she will say the word in both Ukrainian and English. Whatever her son learns in English, Nadiya tries to duplicate in Ukrainian; for instance, if his daycare teaches shapes and fruits, Nadiya teaches him shapes and fruits at home in Ukrainian. She believes that her son does not distinguish between two separate languages, but that he knows he can call anything “like this or like that”. Some parents translate their Ukrainian speech into English if their children seem to be puzzled, especially with Canadian-born children. For instance, Andriy, Mariya, and Ludmyla admit they sometimes have to translate or explain to

ensure there is no misunderstanding. From my own experience, I readily admit that translation between two languages can be quite exhausting, so rather if my three- year-old daughter talks to me in Russian or English, I usually translate her words into Ukrainian, which she will then repeat. For instance, when she asks me in Russian “Что ты делаешь?” [*Rus.* What are you doing?], I say the same thing in Ukrainian “Що ти робиш?” [*Ukr.* What are you doing?], which she repeats, and only then do I give the answer. I recognize that while this strategy may work well with preschoolers, it may not be effective with older children.

**Translanguaging.** Although it may not technically be a language maintenance strategy, *translanguaging* (Hornberger, & Link, 2012; Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012; Li, 2014; Makalela, 2015; Velasco & García, 2014) proved to be another tool used by families in my study to find common communicative ground and to balance three languages in their everyday life. While this was truer for parents who had been in Canada for a long time than for more recent immigrants, almost all participants recounted some way or other in which they have to deviate from their policy of “only Ukrainian at home”. There are many external and internal reasons for both parents and children to resort to languages other than Ukrainian. While none of my participants would say they speak English at home, they all admitted that this language has some place in their homes. Children tend to use two or three languages very strategically in communication with their peers, siblings, and parents as well as in online activities. Different situations with various patterns of linguistic engagement thus offer additional opportunities for developing language competence.

The term *translanguaging* is a relatively new and developing one, attributed first to Williams (1994), who applied it to pedagogical practices in Welsh-English bilingual programs where children would practice their receptive skills in one language and their productive tasks in

another (Baker, 2001; Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012). There is a body of literature addressing the potential and beneficial pedagogical implications of translanguaging (Baker, 2001; Makalela, 2015; Velasco & Garcia, 2014); some researchers point beyond language acquisition to even further advantages of translanguaging. In particular, Li Wei (2014) defines translanguaging as “the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users for purposes that transcend the combination of structures, the alternation between systems, the transmission of information and the representation of values, identities and relationships” (p. 159-160). Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) differentiate between “Classroom, Universal and Neurolinguistic Translanguaging”, where the linguistic practices of my participating parents and their children would be examples of *universal* translanguaging, demonstrating the *multicompetence* (Li, 2014) of multilingual children.

As Dagenais and Lamarre (2005) note, in many cases immigrant children in Canada acquire English or French in addition to the one or more languages they learned in their countries of origin. In my research sample, the children who were born in Ukraine arrived in Canada with established bilingual linguistic practices in Ukrainian and Russian, a repertoire to which English, and in some cases French, was then added. Moreover, upon arrival to Canada, children of my Russian-speaking participants had already experienced functioning in a linguistic diglossia<sup>20</sup> in Ukraine, so multilingual competence was neither a new phenomenon nor a novel communication strategy in these immigrant families. All participating parents knew at least two or three languages besides English, so they could not imagine their children becoming monolingual

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<sup>20</sup> A term expanded by Fishman (1967), who stated that “bilingualism is essentially a characterization of individual linguistic behavior whereas diglossia is a characterization of linguistic organization at the socio-cultural level” (p. 34)

speakers of English only. Nadiya, for instance, explains how multilingualism is naturally embedded in their family:

*Я працювала з австралійською туристичною фірмою, потім з американською туристичною фірмою, тому в мене досвід був з іноземцями. І в Україні в нас була приватна садиба, такий міні-готель bed & breakfast, і специфіка теж була що всі, майже всі, гості були іноземці. Чоловік дуже добре говорить німецькою, бо він вчився в Австрії і Німеччині, дуже добре говорить англійською; тобто в нас так склалося, що англійська була до того, як ми приїхали сюди. [Ukr. [in Ukraine] I used to work for Austrian and then American travel agencies, so I had experience working with foreigners. In Ukraine, we also had a small hotel, a kind of private bed & breakfast, and almost all our guests were foreigners. My husband is fluent in German because he studied in Austria and Germany, and he is also fluent in English, so we had all learned English before we arrived here.] (interview with Nadiya, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

To illustrate the complex intersections and coexistence of multiple languages within someone's linguistic repertoire, Hornberger and Link (2012) refer to what they call "the continua of biliteracy model" (p. 266), broadening the concept of translanguaging to encompass all receptive and productive aspects of language competence. According to my participants, their children are involved on a regular basis in multiple activities that transpire via a complex combination of three or sometimes even four languages. Andriy's son attends an English school with 50% of the instruction in French, has classes at Ukrainian heritage school once a week, and attends Ukrainian church every Sunday. Olesya's twins attend an English-Ukrainian bilingual public school program, a Ukrainian church-affiliated school, and a Ukrainian heritage school once a week; they also participate in all Ukrainian celebrations, yet they speak English with the

majority of their friends. Nadiya's four-year-old son speaks Ukrainian with his parents and extended family, but he attends an English-speaking daycare, so he can already sometimes use the two languages he knows interchangeably:

*Коли це дуже інтимна ситуація, наприклад ми лягаємо спати, він мене обнімає, він каже: «Мама, я тебе люблю», це буде українською. Якщо це ще зранку, коли він встав: «Мама, візьми мене на ручки»— це буде українською мовою. Тому що він сонний, для нього мама асоціюється з українською мовою, він буде говорити українською мовою. Коли він хоче сік, він може сказати: «Я хочу яблучний сік», він може сказати: «apple juice», від цього міміка та жести не міняються зовсім, це однаковий процес, майже однаковий, для нього різниці немає. [Ukr. In some intimate situations—for example when I put him to bed—he says “Mummy, I love you” in Ukrainian. In the morning when he is sleepy and asks me to hold him in my arms, he speaks Ukrainian because his mummy is associated with Ukrainian. However, if he wants juice, he says either “я хочу яблучний сік” [Ukr.] or “apple juice”, with the same gestures and facial expression for both, because the language he uses is incidental to him.] (interview with Nadiya, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017)*

Sofiya's children attend French immersion school, speak Ukrainian with all family members, and attend Ukrainian church weekly. Ruslana's son goes to English-speaking daycare, speaks Ukrainian and Russian at home, and attends painting classes with a Ukrainian-speaking teacher and Ukrainian-speaking children his age. Yuliya's daughter speaks mostly Russian at home, used to attend Ukrainian school in Ukraine and now attends English-Ukrainian school in Canada, and has a tutor from Ukraine as well as Ukrainian-speaking friends both in Ukraine and Canada. Ludmyla's adult daughter is trilingual, speaking mostly Russian at home and English,

Ukrainian, and “Canadian Ukrainian” at work, while her four-year old son mixes Ukrainian, Russian, and English in his daily life. Tetiana’s older daughter is fully proficient and literate in both Ukrainian and Russian, while her younger daughter speaks Russian at home but English and Ukrainian at school. A Russian-speaking participant, Inna, helps her daughter with her homework in Ukrainian from English-Ukrainian school, while her husband is responsible for helping with all assignments in English. Mariya’s older daughter attends English public school, Ukrainian heritage school, has music lessons with a Russian-speaking tutor, and receives vocal training in English, while Mariya’s younger daughter attends English kindergarten and Ukrainian heritage school and speaks Ukrainian and English with her siblings and family members. All participating parents believe they are trying to maintain and develop their children’s skills in Ukrainian, but their home language is rarely “pure” Ukrainian due to the complex linguistic environment of their children. Nadiya cites her son’s ability to switch languages almost intuitively:

*Дома він переключається на українську, сто відсотків він переключається на англійську коли ми граємось, коли ми дивимось якісь мультики які були англійською, коли ми робимо те що вони робили в садочку, і йому простіше говорити англійською, бо це те саме що він робив там сім годин в садочку. Тобто я кажу, в нього немає асоціації з мовою, в нього є асоціація з предметом, тобто він цей предмет може називати так, а може називати так. В нього є асоціація з людиною: зі мною він може говорити українською, але в нас є друзі канадійці, з якими він спілкується англійською. [Ukr. At home my son switches to Ukrainian, but he is more likely to speak English when we play, watch cartoons in English, or do something he did in his daycare, and it is easier for him to use English. While he does not*

have associations with any one language, he does have associations with an object, which he can call this or that. He also has associations with people: he speaks Ukrainian with me, but he speaks English with our Canadian friends.] (interview with Nadiya, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

### **The Role of Macro-Social Factors**

Besides significant differences in family circumstances and parental attitudes, beliefs, and strategies of heritage language maintenance, there are also undeniable political, cultural, and linguistic influences from both the host society and immigrants' home country that help determine linguistic landscapes in immigrants' families. Some of my participants were more outspoken than others in the interviews I conducted, but it was hard for me not to notice the layered tensions that all voiced or implied in their answers. In particular, there is an uneasiness between the different waves and generations of Ukrainian immigrants in Canada. Linguistically, there is tension between the modern Ukrainian language of recent immigrants and the archaic language of Canadian-Ukrainians, and between the hierarchies of Russian and Ukrainian in Ukraine and of English and Ukrainian in Canada. Family bilingualism also complicates the process of Ukrainian language maintenance in Canada.

**Imagined communities of recent Ukrainian immigrants.** In spring 2016, I returned to Ukraine after a six-year absence. Despite my extended physical separation from the country, I had believed I was fully in touch with my home country via all the modern ways that technology has to offer. I discovered I was mistaken because there are intangible aspects and nuances that are not transferrable unless one is physically present in the society. The first thing I noticed was my sense of denial over the ongoing war in the eastern part of Ukraine. Perhaps this attitude sprang from the Easter season and May holidays, so that the flamboyant spring with blooming

lilac and tulips was giving hope to tired people and a wounded land. Everything seemed normal to me on the surface; however, the serenity was deceptive—I started to notice things: a big billboard on the highway side with a smiling young face in uniform saying “Є така професія—Батьківщину захищати” [*Ukr.* There is an occupation—to defend your motherland] or “Хлопці, вся Україна молиться за вас” [*Ukr.* Guys, all Ukraine is praying for you]. My schoolfriend mentioned that half of the fathers in her son’s class are in the military zone. My relative who graduated from the aviation academy told me how many friends he had lost in less than a year. In this context, everything related to one’s native land can become extremely significant as never before, perhaps driven by a terror that one is losing it, fearing for the physical and moral survival of a nation. The experience was a bitter eye-opener for me, revealing that immigrants are only “deterritorialized viewers” (Appadurai, 1997) despite the fact that they may be actively involved in the events in their home country. The same can also be true with regards to the language—it becomes uprooted, decontextualized, artificial, mixed with traces of other languages, and constantly struggling for survival and its place among the subsequent generations. Before one realizes it, the language has become marginalized despite one’s best efforts.

As I have indicated elsewhere (Kharchenko, 2014), there is one arguable point in Anderson’s (1992) interpretation of the nation as a community because he states that, “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p.7). An examination of the ongoing political and military crisis in Ukraine reveals no “horizontal comradeship”, at least not across the nation as a whole. Consequently, I looked further and tried to analyze whether there is any “horizontal comradeship” among immigrants from Ukraine and whether they share similar perspectives on their linguistic and cultural heritage or whether they too are divided by non-negotiable

controversies such as those causing irreversible changes among the present-day Ukrainian population.

Initially, my intention was to search out any noticeable connections between immigrants' past and future imagined communities and their attitudes towards their language and culture. Participant interviews revealed that socio-political, cultural, and linguistic conditions in Ukraine can indeed not only influence immigrants' perceptions and attitudes with regard to their linguistic choices, but also persist as uniquely distinguishing features of each way of immigration from Ukraine.

Unlike the previous waves of immigration from Ukraine, recent immigrants not only have a unique set of motives for coming to Canada, but they also have a particular sense of national and ethnic identity that is not shared by previous immigrants. All newer immigrants in my study are in their early, mid- or late thirties, which means they experienced the transitional period following the proclamation of independence of Ukraine in 1991. Their children were born and raised in a Ukraine where Ukrainian was the sole official language of politics and education. Two of the families had immigrated just before or soon after the beginning of the tragic political events at the end of 2013 and beginning of 2014. These immigrants all have a heightened sense of ethnic identity and set of attitudes toward everything related to Ukraine. Unlike previous waves of immigrants, these people have experienced a "new, different Ukraine", a country beyond and nothing like the Ukraine of the 1990s that was still brand new to its independence. Consequently, in contrast to Kostyuk (2007), I would suggest that the fifth wave originates not after the Orange Revolution in 2005, but in 2013 and the years following, because it is the children of these people who represent a new generation of Ukrainians. Shortly after the proclamation of independence, all government efforts were directed to establish the dominance

of the Ukrainian language (often against the will of the people who did not speak the language), but it would be naïve to think that a new national identity and language was forged overnight. Crucial changes like these take a generation to see results, a change that is only now transpiring and bearing fruit in modern Ukraine.

There is a tremendous and omnipresent influence of imagined communities (Anderson, 1992) in immigrants' lives, regardless of the length of their residency in Canada. Participants all alluded to their spike of attention to the political events in their home country after the end of 2013. One of my participants, Inna, burst into tears when we began talking about immigrants' imagined communities. She had previously indicated that she was from eastern Ukraine, but not the part currently affected by military conflict. However, it turned out she had been born and grown up in Crimea and then moved to eastern Ukraine with her husband after getting married. Her parents still live in Crimea; her mother's first language is Ukrainian because she is from western Ukraine, while her father is a Russian-speaking Crimean. The recent events and annexation of the peninsula brought great distress to her family, to the extent that they can no longer discuss particular topics. This woman's homeland is now partially imagined because she grew up in a Crimea that was part of Ukraine and left while it was still part of Ukraine; if she returns now for a visit, she will arrive in a new country—Russia. A change that drastic is difficult to fully comprehend when one is far away from one's native land:

*Я прожила уже, наверное, больше в Украине, чем в Крыму, и мне важно чтобы я знала украинский язык, чтобы дети знали украинский язык. Мы себя считаем украинцами, потому что мы большую часть жизни прожили в Украине, когда Крым был Украиной и выучили украинский язык в школе. Для нас это важно и здесь мы будем поддерживать украинский язык. [Rus. I lived longer in Ukraine than I*

did in Crimea, and it is important for me and my child to know the Ukrainian language. We consider ourselves Ukrainians because we lived most part of our lives in Ukraine, when the Crimea was a part of Ukraine, and we learned Ukrainian in school. It is important for us, and we will maintain the Ukrainian language here.] (interview with Inna, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Warriner (2007) states that globalization and immigration create “translocal spaces”, so that in the process of starting new lives in host countries, immigrants and refugees may form identities that are “simultaneously territorialized and deterritorialized” (p. 204), even if they do not physically travel back to their countries of origin. My participating parents who had lived in different regions of Ukraine before immigrating to Canada also illustrate this “emerging understandings of locality as a mobile and shape-shifting imaginary that interacts through human engagements with other localities within a shifting global terrain” (Brydon, 2014, p. 42). If immigrant children manage to preserve their home language, they may well become engaged in transnational global online discourse in future, given the role of online communication in the lives of young people today (McGinnis, Goodstein-Stolzenberg & Saliani, 2007).

Some of the participants in my study believe that a sense of ethnic identity and connection to one’s motherland may become even stronger in exile. For instance, Ruslana states:

*Коли приїжджаєш в Канаду, тут загострюється відчуття якоїсь національності, не те що національності, а якесь переживання за свою Батьківщину, що ти розумієш, що ти її втрачаєш... ти її лишив, вона далеко, ти далеко від Батьківщини. Мені наприклад, я розумію що мені більше зараз хочеться якихось українських заходів ніж коли я була в Україні. Коли ти живеш в Україні, такого не відчуваєш, ти живеш, ти того не цінуєш наскільки в тебе багата культурна*

*країна, і де ти живеш.* [Ukr. When you come to Canada, you have a greater sense of national identity: you understand you are losing your motherland, and you are far away from it. Now I need Ukrainian things more than ever, more than when I lived in Ukraine. When you live there, you do not appreciate your rich culture and where you live.]

(interview with Ruslana, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016)

However, Andriy, Tetiana, and Ludmyla aver that recent events in Ukraine have not influenced their beliefs, attitudes, or sense of national identity because they have always been and remain closely connected with their home country.

Moreover, in our globalized modernity (Appadurai, 1997), internet and social media erase distances and create a feeling (or an illusion) of being “present” in your homeland—if not physically, then mentally. One of my participants contends “*ми живемо тут, і ми повинні зробити тут зараз максимально, тому що якщо ми прийняли рішення тут жити, немає сенсу жити посередині. Скакати туди-сюди, ти не будеш ніде і нічого*”. [Ukr. We made our decision to live here, so we have to do our best at it, because there is no sense in living in between. Going here and there, you’ll be nobody and nothing.] (interview with Olesya, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016). However, it is obvious that first generation immigrants reside simultaneously in two different countries, Ukraine and Canada. My participants offer a multitude of examples illustrating their connection to the motherland: sending money to relatives, frequent and prolonged visits to Ukraine, watching news from Ukraine regularly, being available almost around the clock for online connection with relatives and friends, and contemplating possible future scenarios for their country.

**Ukrainian immigrants in the host society.** Analyzing data from the 1981 and 1991 Canadian Census, Swidinsky and Swidinsky (1997) conclude that heritage language transmission

declined dramatically between 1981 and 1991, especially in the prairie region. Because rates differed across the provinces, there are perhaps factors in the host society to consider as partial determinants of the maintenance of heritage languages.

It is also worth mentioning the multi-directional connections of Ukrainian immigrants with the mainstream society. In one way, immigrants are very dependent upon their surroundings in terms of both English language acquisition and gaining new social skills. Predominantly, Ukrainian parents have friends and acquaintances among Ukrainian immigrants with children; however, they also have English-speaking friends and are not isolated or restricted in their communication with members of the mainstream society. On the other hand, these same immigrants also seek the help of the host society in their objective of Ukrainian language maintenance. Although my participants all agreed that family and parents play a key role in maintaining the Ukrainian language and culture in Canada, they do not underestimate the influence of the outside factors. For instance, Tetiana admits that the availability of heritage schools, bilingual programs, cultural events, and other resources, which essentially depends on the political will of the local government, positively affects family efforts in encouraging children to speak Ukrainian.

All participants acknowledge the importance and significant benefits of bilingual programs and heritage schools in Canada. My interviewees are highly appreciative of the fact that they are free to practice their language, religion, and cultural traditions in a new country. First-generation Ukrainian immigrants have a tendency to be integrated in the mainstream society without giving up their mother language, culture, and traditions. In a host society, the validation of minority language and cultures is extremely important and inspiring for both parents and children. Immigrant parents cite numerous Ukrainian events and festivals in Canada

when their culture is celebrated and validated by the members of the mainstream society. I, for example, really appreciate the cultural displays in my daughter's daycare where children can bring and share artifacts from their parents' country of origin. For children to appreciate their heritage, it is crucial not to feel like outsiders in their host country; for parents to enjoy their heritage maintenance processes, it is critical not to be judged for their efforts to keep up the family language and culture.

In their efforts to maintain the Ukrainian language and culture in their families, immigrant parents are also trying to develop a sense of global citizenship in their children. My participants believe that any additional language, skills, or knowledge can be potentially useful in future life trajectories of their children. Some parents also enrol their children in French immersion programs, trying to bring up their children with the knowledge of Canada's two official languages. Dagenais and Berron (2001) point out that immigrant parents "view multilingualism as a linguistic capital and recognise that, in the context of global population movements, their children may in all likelihood move to another country where their multilingualism will serve them well" (p. 149). Yuliya speculates that the notion of citizenship and ethnicity may be entirely erased in the future:

*И вероятно в будущем вообще не будет границ, кто будет гражданином какой страны, это просто будет поле какой-то деятельности, и ты будешь просто перемещаться и жить то там, то там временными промежутками. И мне кажется, что нужно детей готовить: они должны быть многоязычными, мультифункциональными, всесторонне развитыми и образованными. [Rus.*

Probably in the future there will be no borders, no differentiation in citizenship; it will be simply space for activity, where you can move and live in different places temporally. It

seems to me we have to prepare our children: they have to be multilingual, multifunctional, and well-educated.] (interview with Yuliya, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017)

In a similar vein, Olesya reiterates that “ніколи не знаєте де ви будете жити” [Ukr. You never know where you are going to live in the future] (interview with Olesya, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016). Andriy does not rule out the possibility that one day he might return to Ukraine. Consequently, it would be inaccurate to say that immigrants from Ukraine are preoccupied only with acquiring English skills, for they also attempt to maintain their native language and to provide as many additional linguistic opportunities to their children as possible. Speculating about the future linguistic choices of her children, Ludmyla opines:

*Старшая я думаю что будет говорить скорее всего, если конечно она не выйдет замуж за англоговорящего, то скорее всего у нее будет русский язык в семье или по-украински если она свяжет судьбу с украинцем, потому что ей уже 19.5 лет, и мы смотрим на то что она может сделать свой выбор. А младший .... 99% у него основной язык будет английский. Наша задача заключается в том, чтобы как можно больше поддержать украинский и русский. Русский допустим он и так будет понимать, потому что это язык в нашей семье, а вот украинский, мы договорились с мужем что мы будем прилагать дополнительные усилия чтобы он знал язык. [Rus. I think my daughter will speak Russian or Ukrainian in her future family, provided that she does not marry an English-speaking person. She is already 19.5, and we know she can make her own choices. My younger son... I am 99% sure that his main language will be English. Our task is to help them maintain as much Russian and Ukrainian as we can. He will understand Russian because it is our family language, but*

my husband and I agreed to make additional efforts so that our son can know Ukrainian.]  
(interview with Ludmyla, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

In the previous section, I presented my findings with regard to my three main research questions. In the section that follows, my intention is to also address some major findings relevant to the three subquestions in my project.

### **The Role of a Heritage Language in Building Close Parent-Child Relationships**

The participants in my study fell into two categories among immigrant families from Ukraine. In some families, both parents speak Ukrainian only, whereas in others, one or both parents' first language is Russian. In Ukrainian-only families, parents want their children to be bilingual, while in Russian-Ukrainian families, parents ideally expect their children to become trilingual. Baker (2000) points out the benefits for children of communicating with their parents in their first languages; additionally, he acknowledges the parents' own need to speak their first language with their children:

For many mothers and fathers, it is important for them to be able to speak to the child in their first language. Many parents can only communicate with full intimacy, naturally and expressively in their first (or preferred or dominant) language. A child who speaks to one parent in one language and the other parent in another language may be enabling a maximally close relationship with the parents. At the same time, both parents are passing to that child part of their past, part of their heritage. (Baker, 2000, p. 1)

Contradictory parental feelings and behaviours are reported among immigrant parents from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For example, a study by Buettner (2016) reports that some Korean immigrant women who are married to English-speaking husbands are

concerned that their children will not know the Korean language, so they try to maintain it, at least to some extent. At the same time, other participants said that because they want to master English themselves, they switch to English when talking with their children. Another participant, fluent in English, is comfortable using the mainstream language in everyday communication with her children but does deal with a sense of guilt because her children cannot communicate with their grandparents (Buettner, 2016). Yet another participant asks that her son call her “mom” in Korean because the English word sounds unnatural to her; however, over time she has tended to switch into English when communicating with her children (Buettner, 2016).

In my research project, all parents, no matter the term of their residency in Canada and the proficiency of their English, admit that they can best express themselves in their native language. For newer immigrants, Ukrainian is also their children’s first language, the language they have been exposed to the most since their birth. Olesya characterizes the situation:

*Тому що ми себе ідентифікуємо з тією мовою, якою ми найкраще розмовляємо.*

*Щоб передати своїм дітям чи знання якість, чи досвід, чи передати свою думку в повному об’ємі, ми все-таки повинні розмовляти тією мовою, якою ми найкраще володіємо.*

*Тому природнім чином звичайно те, що ти скажеш будь кому, і своїй дитині в тому числі, українською мовою ти навряд чи так сформулюєш*

*англійською. Тим більше, що ми прожили довший час разом в україномовному середовищі...*

[Ukr. To share our knowledge or experience with our children or to

express ourselves effectively, we have to speak the language we know best—because we

identify ourselves with the language we know best. Naturally, whatever you say in

Ukrainian to your child or indeed to anyone, you can hardly express adequately in

English. We have lived together as a family longer in Ukraine than elsewhere.] (interview with Olesya, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

For parents who have been in Canada long enough to have reasonable facility in English (Andriy, Mariya, and Sofiya), using some English at home seems to be the norm. On occasion, in an inversion of the more common scenario, Mariya's son will even ask her not to speak English:

*Іноді я приходжу з роботи і автоматично продовжую говорити англійською, тоді мій старший син каже мені: «Мама, я тебе не сприймаю англійською». Тому вдома ми не розмовляємо англійською. [Ukr. Sometimes I come home from work and automatically continue using English; then, my son asks me, “Mom, it doesn't seem like you when you use English”. That is why we do not speak English at home.] (interview with Mariya, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Although English, in one way or another, permeates my participants' relationships with their children, none of them can envision communicating with their children entirely in English. Chumak-Horbatsch and Garg (2006) report that while parents in their study followed a “Ukrainian-only” rule in their families, English was still present in their homes—so much so that four parents indicated their children spoke more English than Ukrainian at home (Chumak-Horbatsch & Garg, 2006). My participating parents did not report this phenomenon, but they did acknowledge their disappointment and concern that communication between siblings is mostly in English, a pattern which is consistent with research findings in the literature (Harris, 2006; Pauwels, 2008).

The common home language plays a significant role in building those close relationships that are built on trust and mutual respect. My participant Nadiya believes that despite her fluency

in English, she can express her emotions and intimate feelings to her four-year-old son, Danylo, only in Ukrainian:

*Більш якість інтимні речі... для мене –так, коли ми лягаємо спати, коли встає, коли я кажу «тато, мама, ми сім'я» мені комфортніше говорити українською. Мені комфортніше сказати йому: «Ти моє сонечко. Я тебе дуже люблю. Ти в мене найкращий хлопчик в світі!». [Ukr. I feel more comfortable using only Ukrainian in intimate situations: for example, when we go to bed or wake up, or when I say, “mommy, daddy, and you—we are one family”. When I say to him, “You are my sunshine. I love you so much. You are the best boy in the world!”] (interview with Nadiya, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017)*

There are some intimate aspects of family life where English is still a stranger. It appears that no matter how fluent one becomes in a foreign language, it can hardly ever be claimed as one's own.

### **The Negotiation of Balance Between Two or Three Different Languages**

In terms of finding balance between the various languages in their lives after immigration to Canada, distinct differences between immigrants align with the length of residency in Canada. All newer immigrants recall that they were overly concerned with their English language proficiency when they arrived in Canada. It seems that new immigrants from Ukraine are anxious about their children's ability to cope with life in English even if they have the support of being enrolled in Ukrainian-English bilingual schools.

It is worth noting that this insecurity with English language proficiency seems to be a gendered issue particular to males. Some of my participants (Sofiya, Ludmyla, Inna, and Olesya) expressed that their husbands were so concerned about it that they attempted to impose English

as the language to be used at home, although that strategy failed in maintaining a healthy family environment. Chumak-Horbatsch and Garg (2006) report that children in their research project spoke Ukrainian with their mothers but English with their fathers at home. In my study, it was sometimes the children's own anxiety over the lack of their ability in English that prompted their parents to enrol them in the relative security of bilingual programs. For example, Yuliya's daughter, Daryna, was very anxious about moving to Canada because she thought her limited English skills would prevent her from making new friends. Yuliya had to promise her daughter that she could attend a school with Ukrainian programming in Canada. Olesya similarly admits that, because her twins spoke hardly any English when they came to Canada, she decided to simplify their lives by enrolling them in Ukrainian-English school. Some of the parents felt that their children's English was insufficient for them to function well in the host environment, so they turned to the comfort of bilingual schools for their children. Over time, however, all these parents began to notice their children's deteriorating skills in Ukrainian, adding concerns over heritage language loss to those of English language insufficiency and acquisition.

Unlike newer immigrants, whose children have arrived in Canada with little or no English, parents whose children were born in Canada had no concerns over English acquisition to deal with. Instead, their efforts were focused solely on Ukrainian language maintenance and on motivating their children in that regard. Whereas for children born in Ukraine, the parental task was to preserve the knowledge they brought to Canada, parents whose children were Canadian-born seemed to face an even harder task in both starting from scratch and in engaging in a long-term commitment to developing and maintaining a home language. One of my participants, Ruslana, felt desperate because, as a young mother, she was searching for ways to stimulate her son to speak Ukrainian, yet she could find no means to overcome the resistance she

faced and inspire his motivation and love for the Ukrainian language. On the other hand, Nadiya expressed the concern she felt when she observed her son transitioning to the use of English:

*Був один період, коли він більше говорив англійською, і я почала переживати, що він не буде говорити українською. Але я думаю, що це було пов'язано з тим періодом коли він почав себе дуже комфортно почувати в садочку, йому було зручніше так говорити. Я хочу щоб він говорив українською, тому що я хочу щоб він спілкувався з бабусею, з нашими рідними, друзями в Україні, і я говорю до нього українською. [Ukr. There was a period when he began to use more English, and I was concerned that he would not speak Ukrainian. I think it happened when he began to feel very comfortable at his daycare, so it was more convenient for him. I want him to speak Ukrainian because I want him to be able to communicate with his grandmother, our relatives, and friends in Ukraine, and because I speak with him in Ukrainian.] (interview with Nadiya, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Home languages and languages in the outside society do not always coexist harmoniously or on a parallel basis with each other. Even though my participants did not overtly express any negative feelings or tensions regarding the major language of the host society, it was obvious that they are continually trying to negotiate and find some kind of balance between the two or three languages in their lives. There is some intangible dissonance between Ukrainian and Russian on the one hand and between Ukrainian and English on the other. My participants acknowledge the importance of English in their own lives and the future of their children, so they cannot ignore the fact that they all need to be fully functional in this new language. They realize that the social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of Ukrainian is not very high at this juncture of history and their personal circumstances. On the other hand, Ukrainian is the only language they identify

with and the only language with which they can realize their full potential as parents. In case of mixed families or those where Russian is the home language, parents struggle with an additional challenge—they are also trying to preserve Russian in one form or another. Justifying her decision to maintain Ukrainian in their home, Ludmyla states:

*Я считаю, что ценность украинского языка и поддержание украинского языка для иммигрантов важнее чем русского языка. На своем личном опыте могу сказать, что здесь в Канаде я столкнулась с такой неприятной ситуацией, когда англоговорящие люди задают мне вопрос откуда я, и я говорю с Украины. Потом они спрашивают на каком языке я говорю, и я говорю на русском, и мне не очень приятно что, несмотря на то что я украинка, я говорю на русском языке. Да, так получилось, но для иностранцев, для людей не украинского происхождения это остается большим вопросом почему мы украинцы идентифицируем себя как украинцы, но продолжаем говорить на языке другой страны. Учитывая положение, которое сейчас в нашей стране сложилось, и тот скажем так негативный имидж в какой-то степени, я бы хотела, чтобы мой ребенок и старший, и младший больше себя идентифицировали как украинцы именно. Это было бы гораздо ... ..проще для самоидентификации. Когда ребенок, особенно младший. когда он вырастет в англоязычной среде и будет говорить только исключительно на русском языке, ему будет сложнее самоидентифицироваться как украинцу. Разные языки: мало того, что английский не свой, и еще и внутри семьи получается русский. А почему тогда я украинец? [Rus. I think that for immigrants, the maintenance of Ukrainian is more important and valuable than Russian. From my own life experience, I face an unpleasant situation here in Canada when people*

ask me about my country of origin, and I say I am from Ukraine. They then ask me which language I speak, and I have to say I speak Russian, even though I am Ukrainian. These are the facts, but English-speaking people really wonder why we identify ourselves as Ukrainians when we continue to speak the language of the other country. Taking into account the [political] situation in our country, I would like my children to identify themselves as Ukrainians, which will be easier for their self-identity. If we speak Russian at home, it will be difficult for my younger child in particular, as he grows up in an English-speaking environment, to identify himself as Ukrainian. The conundrum of different languages: not only is English not my language, but in our family, we speak Russian, so how am I Ukrainian?] (interview with Ludmyla, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

For those parents whose children are born in Canada, there exists the dilemma of choosing which languages to speak, setting relative priorities for those languages, and determining to what extent their children should be exposed to them. Although Ukrainian is the language of the nation-state, there seems to be little or no validation of this language beyond Ukraine, so there are parents who question the practicality of Ukrainian beyond the boundaries of their families. Although the participants in my study still feel it is their responsibility to maintain Ukrainian, not all of them are confident that their children will appreciate their efforts in future.

Mateus (2014) reports on the reactions of kindergarten children to the bilingual competence of their peers in a dual-language program in the United States. It appears that perception of the inferior status of some languages and speakers can emerge as early as kindergarten. The children in Mateus' study valued bilingual competence in English and Spanish as well as English monolingualism over Spanish proficiency. In particular, one girl attempted to

imitate behaviour in order to look like her English-dominant peers—representatives of the more prestigious and powerful group. She tried to demonstrate her English competence in order to challenge the inferior monolingual Spanish identity prescribed by her peers. Mateus (2014) poses an interesting question, “Is it possible that when children are invested to gain power and position, they will learn language?” (p. 71). Traces of the societal discourse of elevating some languages and their speakers and marginalizing others can be found even among children. Baker (2001) distinguishes between two forms of bilingualism that are directly linked to the power and status of the speakers:

Elective bilingualism is about choice. Circumstantial bilingualism is often about survival with little or no choice. The difference between elective and circumstantial bilingualism is thus valuable because it immediately raises differences of prestige and status, politics and power among bilinguals. (p. 4)

Despite the fact that multilingualism is a reality in Canada, our “linguistic landscapes” (Pennycook, 2012) are still generally monolingual, even within an officially bilingual governance context, promoting French in Quebec and English in the rest of Canada in both formal and informal ways. According to Brydon (2017), “Official bilingualism and biculturalism came relatively late, with the Official Language Act passed in 1969. Official multiculturalism came in 1988” (para. 11). The presence or absence of minority languages in public spaces may affect the way multilinguals position themselves in a host society (Dagenais, Moore, Sabatier, Lamarre, & Armand, 2009). Analyzing “linguistic ecosystems” in Canada and Japan, Kouritzin and Nakagawa (2011) conclude that there are significant and visible differences between the countries in societal endorsement of multilingualism and multiculturalism. While there is little evidence of support for multilingualism in Canada (interestingly, multiculturalism is more highly

valued)<sup>21</sup>, foreign languages in Japan are valued in their own right, even without any attachment to culture groups. Linguistic ecosystems in modern Ukraine are somewhat similar to those in Japan, viewing foreign languages and English, in particular, as indispensable assets. The majority of the Ukrainian population is bilingual in Ukrainian and Russian, but over the last two decades, English has been popularized and supported by all means societally. Consequently, Ukrainian immigrants arrive from a country where “linguistic landscapes” are shaped by more than one language. Canadian “linguistic ecosystems”, however, are dominated by English only (Kouritzin & Nakagawa, 2011)<sup>22</sup>. As an example of the Canadian experience, I recollect taking my daughter to a birthday party with 17 Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking children. It was interesting to hear and observe the mix of languages among parents as well as children. The gym leaders were young teenage girls giving instructions in English, so the kids who did not know English were confused, but they just watched the other children and imitated them. Two of my study participants were also in attendance with their children. It was amusing to witness the interaction between Nadiya and her son, Danylo, who was climbing a wall. Nadiya cautioned him, “*Обережно з камінчиками*” [Ukr. Be careful with the stones], and her preschooler replied, “*Це не камінчики! Це ABC!*” [Ukr. These are not stones! These are ABC!] (they were shaped like letters of the English alphabet). It is hard to disagree with a four-year-old boy who points out his mom’s “mistake” to her, but at the same time, it is disagreeable to recognize that the environment judges one language as more legitimate than the other. Children feel those intangible boundaries between home languages and the mainstream language of the society, so

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<sup>21</sup> This situation may change with respect to Indigenous languages as the government and educational system seek to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in order to promote more respect for and learning of Indigenous languages.

<sup>22</sup> Quebec may be an exception

they adjust their speech accordingly. One of my participants recounted an interesting event that happened just before Christmas:

*Вчора наш сусід сказав мені що він був здивований, коли моя найменша донька співала йому пісні про Хануку. Я пояснила, що напередодні вона виступала в школі де вони святкували Хануку і палили свічки, це як вшанування multiculturalism. Моя донька також вивчила українські колядки і щедрівки в її недільній школі при церкві, але вона напевне вирішила що для нашого англомовного сусіда треба співати англійською. [ Ukr. Yesterday our neighbour said he was very surprised to hear my youngest daughter singing Hanukkah songs. I explained that the day before they had been celebrating Hanukkah with songs and candles in her kindergarten, celebrating multiculturalism. My daughter had also learned Ukrainian Christmas songs in her Ukrainian school at church, but she probably decided that she had to sing in English for our English-speaking neighbour.] (interview with Mariya, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

It seems that parents in a multilingual family are always on a slippery slope, never knowing how much of which language is enough, nor when it is the right time to impose their authority and when to step back. Obviously, the challenges are not the same for the parents of Canadian-born versus Ukrainian-born children. For parents who also desire to maintain Russian, the ongoing trilingualism poses the additional challenge of which language or languages should be prioritized. Even if they determine not to speak Ukrainian at home, parents feel responsible to at least preserve the level of proficiency their children had gained in their home country, given that this is the language the entire family knows and that the children are most accomplished in.

Because parents in my study envision global, translingual, and transcultural identities for their children in the future, they value not only their home languages, but view virtually any

additional language as a significant asset. Pennycook (2012) believes that languages should be viewed as “mobile resources that move across landscapes” (p. 27). Many of my participants also enrol their children in French programs, a complicating factor that may make it even more challenging to maintain the home language because children are now exposed to three or four languages. Kostyuk (2007) found that more than 40% of recent Ukrainian immigrants in Saskatchewan would like their children to speak Ukrainian, English, and French, while more than 17% of parents would also add Russian. In Ukraine, speaking more than one language is the norm, so Ukrainian immigrants definitely do not envision their children becoming monolingual in Canada. Nonetheless, I could still sense the way they prioritize their children’s future linguistic abilities. It goes without saying that English is the prerequisite for the future success, while Ukrainian is desirable to secure identity and family communication. For those who also speak Russian, the Russian language is relegated to interpersonal family communication only, without any solid attachment to identity or culture. Parents whose children attend French immersion programs view French as a desirable asset but are not particularly invested in it. There is no doubt that multilingualism is highly valued among Ukrainian immigrants, but the question is to what extent their expectations and hopes are reasonable and whether they can be successfully implemented in practice. On the other hand, the symbolic, economic, and cultural values of Ukrainian, Russian, and English are very different. Baker (2000) cites the communicational, cultural, cognitive, personal, academic, and economic advantages of bilingualism, but for children of Ukrainian immigrants, the combination of two or even three languages may not necessarily be associated with significant benefits beyond family communication.

Analyzing linguistic preference in the homes of Ukrainian immigrants, Chumak-Horbatsch and Garg (2006) have little optimism with regard to the success of Ukrainian language maintenance efforts and believe that a combination of ineffective parental strategies and the frequent use of English at home put the establishment of Ukrainian in the homes of immigrants from Ukraine at risk. A set of complex factors that potentially influence parental success in raising bilingual children includes:

... geographical stability and mobility, changing relationships within the nuclear and extended family, the father's and mother's employment conditions, the language situation and attitudes of the local community, being a recent or established immigrant, changing priorities in the family (how important is language development compared with other developmental issues in the family), the attitudes and motivations of the child itself, the influence of brothers and sisters, friends and 'significant others' outside in the community and the effects of the child's school. (Baker, 2000, p. 7)

I was able to trace the effect of all these above-mentioned factors in the context of my research project. For example, the relocation of Yuliya's family to another province had a tremendously negative effect on her daughter's fluency in the Ukrainian language because she left behind her Ukrainian-speaking friends, Ukrainian-English school, and the Ukrainian dance studio in the city they moved away from. With regard to nuclear and extended family changes, it is obviously beneficial to have Ukrainian-speaking grandparents on prolonged visits to Canada, as mentioned by my participants Ruslana, Sofiya, Olesya, Mariya, and Nadiya. Having family members who do not understand English motivates children to speak primarily Ukrainian. Naturally, full-time employment of both parents does not leave much free time, so while Yuliya had the time to take her daughter to various after-school programs when she was a stay-at-home mom, she finds it

extremely difficult now that she has a full-time job. On the other hand, Andriy's wife is a stay-at-home mom, so she has the time available to help their younger son Stepan with his homework, although it is primarily Andriy's responsibility to drive him to Ukrainian school. The influence of peers and siblings is definitely not in favour of the Ukrainian language, with the exception of Ludmyla's family, where the nineteen-year old daughter refuses to speak English with her four-year-old brother. In general, as Baker (2000) notes, children's bilingual abilities change over time, depending on the context and other contributing factors.

### **Literacy in the Ukrainian Language**

Although recent research on literacy "has moved beyond focusing on reading and writing in one or two languages to consider how people adopt a complex range of literacy practices in multiple languages and spheres of activity" (Lotherington & Dagenais, 2008, p.1), for the purpose of my project, by the term *literacy* I mean "the ability to read and write in the HL [heritage language]" (Kim & Pyun, 2014, p. 295). The questions regarding literacy skills are applicable only to those of my participants who have school-age children. It is worth comment that the term heritage language does not accurately describe the Ukrainian literacy skills of children born in Ukraine. Consequently, the Canadian-born children develop literacy skills in their heritage language, while Ukrainian-born children maintain literacy skills in their first language in Canada.

Developing literacy in a heritage language is "a challenging task that requires sustained efforts, continuous exposure to the language, and active parental involvement" (Kim & Pyun, 2014, p. 295). While research literature suggests using heritage languages as "a tool for literacy" to facilitate balanced bilinguality (Hamers & Blanc, 2000, p. 217), in reality this turns out to be a challenging task for both parents and children, in particular for Canadian-born children who are

expected to develop literacy skills simultaneously in two languages. Those children born in Ukraine developed their literacy skills sequentially: first in Ukrainian in Ukraine, and later in English in Canada. Usually, literacy skills in a heritage language are developed either at home or in community-based heritage language schools (Kim & Pyun, 2014); in my project, however, there was a third factor—elementary schools in Ukraine.

The degree of parental involvement in developing children's literacy varies significantly. For example, Inna, whose daughter completed grade one in Ukraine, helps her daughter with the Ukrainian reading homework that is assigned in the Ukrainian-English program her daughter attends in Canada. Every two weeks her daughter takes out one Ukrainian and one English book from her school library, and while Inna helps her with the Ukrainian-language assignments, her husband is responsible for the homework in English. Olesya has enrolled her twins in a community heritage school once a week in addition to their regular Ukrainian-English program. Even though she feels it is still not enough to develop an advanced level of vocabulary and grammar, she is pleased with the fact that her daughters have regular homework in writing. Olesya realizes that her daughters probably do not need to know advanced grammar rules in Ukrainian, but on the other hand, it just does not seem right to Olesya for her daughters not to have literacy skills in Ukrainian. In addition, Olesya and her husband also try to give their daughters literacy tasks at home. On the other hand, Nadiya, who has a four-year-old, is planning to send her son to a heritage school in the future because she believes it is not her job to teach him literacy, and she doubts she would be able to cope with this task alone. In another vein, Mariya tends to believe conversational skills are sufficient at this point:

*Я думаю на даному етапі для них досить. Вони ж ще вчать французьку мову в школі. Вони володіють мовою достатньо щоб спілкуватися і з дорослими, і з*

*дітьми. Коли ми їздимо в Україну, вони спілкуються без проблем. Якщо їм потрібно буде в майбутньому навчитися читати або писати, їм буде набагато легше. Зараз вони і так дуже зайняті в школі, і я не бачу сенсу докладати зусиль щоб вчити їх писати і читати.* [Ukr. I think at this point it is enough. They also have French in school. They speak [Ukrainian] well enough to communicate with adults and children. When we go to Ukraine, they have no problems with communication. If in future they need to learn how to read and write it, I think it will be easier for them. They are very busy in school, so I do not see any point in making efforts to teach them how to read and write [in Ukrainian] (interview with Mariya, Dec 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Hudyma (2012) suggests that social media can be helpful in developing reading and writing skills in a heritage language, but in my interviews, only one participant, Yuliya, referred to the positive influence of online communication. Overall, such influence is very limited and definitely does not promote advanced literacy among immigrant children from Ukraine.

Almost all parents consider that literacy skills are crucial in knowing any language, so they emphasize the importance of reading and writing in Ukrainian. Analyzing the importance of literacy in any language, Ludmyla shared her personal experience of learning English when she was able to communicate but could not read and write. She believes literacy skills are important for any educated person:

*Здесь много украиноговорящих, и когда я, например, сталкиваюсь с людьми, которые здесь уже во втором, в третьем поколении, и они говорят по-украински, но они не знают, как писать и читать, мне немножко становится грустно. Поэтому я бы предпочла, чтобы мой сын все-таки знал, как писать и читать, а не только говорить на украинском. Во-первых, у нас большая семья в Украине, это*

*очень важно, когда он будет приезжать в гости, чтобы он мог не только на слух, но и прочитать какие-то важные сообщения, документы, это очень важно. [Rus.*

There are many Ukrainian-speaking people here, and when I meet second or third generation Ukrainian-Canadians, and they speak Ukrainian but cannot read and write, I feel sad. That is why I would prefer that my son be able to also read and write and not only speak Ukrainian. We have a big family in Ukraine, and when he visits them, it is critical that he not only understands the language but can also read messages or documents, so it is very important.] (interview with Ludmyla, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Literacy is a problematic aspect not only for Canadian-born children; those children who came from Ukraine tend to lose their literacy skills soon after arriving to Canada if they get no practice. Even if they manage to keep up the knowledge acquired previously in Ukraine, their parents observe that their children do not advance in their literacy skills, remaining somewhat fossilized at the elementary level. For example, Olesya reveals that her two daughters' reading and writing abilities are now worse than when they were in Ukraine, and she says that when either daughter texts her in Ukrainian, there are spelling errors. Another participant, Tetiana, advises that she and her younger daughter communicate in Russian, but because her daughter never had any formal schooling experience in Russian, she can write only in Ukrainian or English. When she texts Tetiana in Ukrainian, her daughter makes spelling errors, even as she will sometimes do in English. On the other hand, Tetiana's older daughter, at seventeen years of age, is literate in both Ukrainian and Russian, so she can now read and write in three languages. Another participant, Yuliya, is concerned that her daughter's reading and writing skills have been deteriorating dramatically since they moved to another province, and her daughter began

attending a regular English school. In summary, even having acquired literacy skills in Ukraine does not keep children immune from losing them once they move to Canada.

Participating parents whose children arrived at a very young age or were born in Canada also evidenced disappointment over their children's Ukrainian literacy skills. For example, Mariya's nineteen-year-old son has almost lost his literacy skills since he stopped attending heritage school years ago and no longer gets any regular practice:

*Він вільно розмовляє українською, але читає десь на рівні першого класу. І писати він не може. Наприклад коли він грає зі своїм другом і йому треба українською щось написати, він мене питає, він не може. Хоча раніше він міг, коли ходив до української школи, він забув. Моя старша дочка також відвідує українську школу при церкві, і вона вміє читати, хоча плутає букви іноді. Вона може щось написати також, але в основному якісь окремі слова, а так щоб написати повне речення або як ми в школі писали твори в її віці, вона не може. Наймолодша дочка ще маленька, тому в неї немає ще цих навичок. [Ukr. He is fluent in speaking, but his reading skills are at a grade one level. He cannot write. When he plays computer games with his Ukrainian-speaking friend and he has to write something in Ukrainian, he sometimes asks me. However, he used to be able to write when he was attending Ukrainian school; now, he has lost this skill. My older daughter attends a Ukrainian school at church, and she can read, but she mixes up letters sometimes. She can write some things, some words, but not complete sentences or essays like we used to write at her age. My other daughter is too young, so she does not have these skills yet.] (interview with Mariya, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Andriy would like his son to have better reading skills in Ukrainian. His son Stepan makes grammar and spelling errors in Ukrainian and is not very enthusiastic about doing his home work from Ukrainian heritage school. Chumak-Horbatsch and Garg (2006) also report on the unwillingness of Canadian-born children who attend Ukrainian-English schools to complete written assignments in Ukrainian; moreover, the quality of their work in Ukrainian is much lower than in English. While Ukrainian oral proficiency is viewed as useful social skill, reading and writing skills are usually marginalized (Hudyma, 2012).

In general, my findings are consistent with other literature on heritage language literacy. In particular, there seems to be no advancement or progress beyond some basic elementary skills in reading and writing. No matter the age of the children or the number of years spent in Ukrainian programs, the literacy skills of children are definitely lower than their peers' in Ukraine. Kim and Pyun (2014) acknowledge:

Unlike the native language literacy competence, chronological age or years of schooling is not an indicator of developmental increases in HL literacy. This implies that literacy may not necessarily develop or accumulate with cognitive maturity or length of education. It appears that when HL learning is not a part of mainstream education, length of schooling or one's age exerts no positive effect on HL literacy skills. (p. 310)

To sum up, parents do expect their children to have literacy skills in Ukrainian, but their expectations are reasonably lower than they would have been in Ukraine. My findings, such that children can be fluent in speaking but have very limited reading and writing skills in their heritage languages, are consistent with those in research literature (Choi & Yi, 2012; Shibata, 2004; Sridhar, 1985).

## Chapter Seven: Discussion

In the previous chapter, I presented a summary of my findings to answer my three main research questions as well as three subquestions. In this next chapter, my purpose is to address some bigger themes that emerged in the process of cross-case data analysis. I have singled out five dominant constructs that can shed light not only on parental efforts in Ukrainian language maintenance but also on some common aspects of immigrant communities and their status in host countries. To present these overarching themes, I focused on some commonalities across the interviews and positioned these themes within the theoretical framework of my research, namely the theories of postcolonialism (Andreotti, 2011; Pennycook, 1998; Said, 1994; Smith 1999; Spivak, 1999), language socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), and social capital (Bourdieu, 1991). I will try to merge my case-based findings with overarching themes (Stake, 2005).

### **A New Wave of Ukrainian Immigration**

Research literature on Ukrainian immigrants traditionally defines four waves of immigration to Canada: the first wave arrived before the First World War; the second one occurred during the interwar period between two World Wars; the third wave was comprised of displaced persons after the Second World War; and the last wave has been ongoing since 1991 (Baczynskyj, 2009; Isajiw, 2010; Kostyuk, 2007). Although originating in the same country, the Ukrainian immigrants of the different waves are not homogeneous. Whereas the first, and numerically the most significant, wave of Ukrainians was predominantly from the territories which now belong to western Ukraine, the subsequent waves of immigrants were increasingly heterogeneous, representing other regions of Ukraine as well. Research literature reports on historical and ongoing tensions between the various groupings, especially between the

representatives of the older generations of Ukrainian-Canadians and the more recent fourth wave of Ukrainians precipitated by the proclamation of the independence of Ukraine (Baczynskyj, 2009). These differences are observed linguistically (Ukrainian-Canadians speak an archaic form of the language), at the religious level (Ukrainian-Canadians are mostly Catholic, while new immigrants are mostly Orthodox), and politically (new immigrants are considered to be more passive and less engaged in their communities) (Baczynskyj, 2009; Kostyuk, 2007).

Additionally, the fact that recent immigrants, especially from central and eastern Ukraine, may choose to send their children to both Ukrainian and Russian heritage schools in Canada is often frowned upon by the older generation of the third wave of Ukrainian immigrants (Baczynskyj, 2009). Recent immigrants are also reportedly not greatly involved in Ukrainian communities in Canada (Baczynskyj, 2009; Couton, 2014; Kostyuk, 2007). Among possible reasons for the low engagement and disconnectedness of new immigrants suggested by the literature are religious, linguistic, and financial differences, along with divergent understandings of the civil society in Ukraine (Baczynskyj, 2009) and differing interpretations of ongoing political events in Ukraine (Couton, 2014).

I should add another significant reason to explain this indifferent and passive behaviour: recent immigrants have very little in common with the generations of Ukrainian immigrants who were born in Canada. They grew up in countries and environments so different from each other that even the Ukrainian language and culture may be insufficient to unite these several waves of immigrants. One of my participants, Ludmyla, observed that joining a particular church seems to be an unwritten precondition to being accepted within the Ukrainian-Canadian community in Canada. Another participant, Tetiana, was disappointed by the fact that in her daughter's Ukrainian-English school, children are exposed to an archaic form of the Ukrainian language of

one region only, whereas newcomers represent different parts of Ukraine. While many of these tensions and differences evolved naturally and historically as a result of distant relationships between diaspora and home country, there also seem to be some artificial barriers, as pointed out by some of my participants, which could potentially be resolved. For example, Olesya points to her discomfort in speaking English with Canadian-Ukrainians, who seem to think in stereotypes:

*Вони не просто досконало володіють англійською мовою, для них це фактично рідна мова, а українська як друга мова. І вони, як правило, так важче ставляться до нових емігрантів. Вони взагалі до нас важче ставляться, тому що вони вважають, що ми повинні пройти всі муки, які вони пройшли, але в мові так само.*

[Ukr. In fact, not only are they fluent in English, but it is their first language, while Ukrainian is the second. They treat new immigrants with uneasiness because they think we have to go through all kinds of ordeals, including in language [English] as well.]

(interview with Olesya, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Analyzing differences among the four waves of Ukrainian immigrants and their reasons for leaving the home country, Kostyuk (2007) claims that after the Orange Revolution in 2004, the main reason for emigration was dissatisfaction with the outcome of this political event. Consequently, he claims that as of December 2005, there was a new, fifth wave of immigrants from Ukraine. While I do not deny his assertion, I would consider it arguable and, at the very least, insufficiently validated and perhaps inaccurate in its dates. In fact, my participants provided me with good reasons to define the fifth wave of Ukrainian immigration as those young adults who grew up in or spent a significant portion of their lives in independent Ukraine and were thus exposed, whether willingly or not, to the Ukrainian culture and language rather than to Russian. Unlike those who came in the 1990s and were originally from Russified Soviet Ukraine,

these immigrants are a new generation, representatives of the generation it takes for newly implemented language policies to take effect and for public attitudes to change. Yuliya, a Russian-speaking research participant, states:

*Мы не те украинцы, которые раньше уехали, но вот мы такая новая генерация. И наши друзья, все с которыми мы общаемся последнее время, возможно не отдают себе отчета и особенно не называют себя вот как-то так, но это чувствуется, что все находятся в такой же ситуации. Мы все какой-то конгломерат, который выльется во что-то, пока мы в состоянии жидкого сплава. [Rus. We are not like those Ukrainians who left Ukraine in the past; we are a new generation. All our friends probably do not realize it, but we are all in the same situation. We are some sort of a new conglomerate that will pour into something, but at the moment, it is still in the process of being cast.] (interview with Yuliya, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Political or economic reasons (or a mix of both) are commonly cited as the major reasons for immigration, not only for the Ukrainian community in Canada but also for immigrants from other countries. While the previous four waves of Ukrainian immigrants arrived in Canada in search of political stability and financial security, recent immigrants cite different reasons for relocation. In Kostyuk's (2007) survey, new Ukrainian immigrants from Saskatchewan said that their main motivation was to give their children "an opportunity to improve the quality of their lives" (p. 19). Recent immigrants in my study also cited reasons of physical safety and security. For instance, Yuliya and her husband still have real estate and business in Ukraine, but they had to leave out of concern for their safety. Olesya used to have a huge new house, a steady well-paid job, and a better financial situation in Ukraine than she has in Canada, but her family also had to leave the country. In a similar vein, new immigrants in Saskatchewan admitted that, were there

to be any military aggression, they would not consider returning to Ukraine to defend it (Kostyuk, 2007). This study in Saskatchewan was conducted long before the beginning of the present military conflict in Ukraine, but even at that time there was fear of an uncertain future and the possibility of violence. Consequently, the political and societal changes in Ukraine over the last three or four years have caused an additional reason for young Ukrainians to consider relocation.

Despite significant differences among the four or five waves of Ukrainian immigrants, Ukrainian culture—and not necessarily language—can provide connections between several generations of Ukrainians in Canada. In fact, all parents participating in my study expressed amazement that many representatives of third, fourth, and even fifth-generation Ukrainian-Canadians still speak the Ukrainian language. This seems like an ideal scenario for many families to be able to continue their family language and culture. There should be more acceptance and tolerance with regard to language, religion, and culture among all waves of Ukrainian immigrants to promote common values and similarities rather than differences.

### **Language and Ethnic Identity**

**Ethnic identity.** There is an extensive body of literature suggesting definitions of ethnic identity: its components, features, and connections with the languages one speaks (Baker, 2000; Brown, 2009; Cho, 2000; Fought, 2006; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Isajiw, 2010; Leeman, 2015; Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2015). Despite some peculiar differences in interpreting ethnicity and ethnic identity, scholars seem to be in agreement that the concept of ethnic identity is highly subjective.

According to Tajfel and Turner's (1986) *Social Identity Theory*, people generally tend to identify themselves with a particular ethnic group:

From the social-psychological perspective, the essential criteria for group membership, as they apply to large-scale social categories, are that the individuals concerned define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group. (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p.15)

This process of ethnic identification usually involves two layers of subjectivity, specifically for minorities whose self-defining as particular ethnic groups should also be validated and acknowledged by the way others perceive them (Brown, 2009; Isajiw, 2010; Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2015). These personal and social aspects of ethnic identification are inseparable (Brown, 2009), yet they may clash in cases where individual aspirations do not coincide with those of the social environment. The extreme divisions between personal identifications and societal alienation was very pronounced in the 1990s in all former Soviet Republics after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ethnic conflicts were based primarily on people's ethnic origin and/or the languages they spoke. As Fought (2006) notes, "ethnicity is linked to boundaries between groups and, more importantly, ideologies about those boundaries. Language may be used as a way to preserve those boundaries, cross them, or subvert them altogether" (p.17).

Ethnic origin implies that the individual is either socialized into a particular ethnic group or belongs to it by virtue of ancestry (Isajiw, 2010). Consequently, it is reasonable to assert that Ukrainians from Ukraine belong to the Ukrainian ethnic group by means of being socialized into it, whereas Ukrainian-Canadians are symbolic members through their Ukrainian ancestry. There are internal aspects of ethnic identity formation and external ones; the former are related to personal feelings and obligations, while the latter are behavioural characteristics (Isajiw, 2010). Even though ethnic languages belong to the external aspects of ethnic identity formation, there is

a substantial literature connecting ethnic identity and language proficiency. While Brown (2009) concludes that heritage culture is a more salient factor in developing ethnic identity than is a heritage language, other scholars (Cho, 2000; Fought, 2006; Makarova & Hudyma, 2015) assert that there exists an inextricable link between one's ethnic language proficiency and one's ethnic identity. For instance, Korean-American university students with a strong proficiency in Korean had a solid sense of identity and connection to their heritage language community in Cho's (2000) study, while the second-generation heritage language speakers in Park's (2011) study were marginalized by the first-generation Koreans based on their non-native proficiency in the Korean language (as cited in Leeman, 2015). In cases where an ethnic language is a significant component of the ethnic identity, scholars address it as "ethnolinguistic identity" (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). All my participating parents from Ukraine emphasized the importance of the Ukrainian language in ethnic and national identity formation, so they view it as "ethnolinguistic identity", whereas for Ukrainian-Canadians a heritage language simply has a symbolic meaning.

To avoid "ethnic absolutism", defined by Gilroy (1987) as fixity of people's ethnic identities and their prescription by birth (as cited in Rampton, 2005), some scholars suggest that individuals may possess multiple ethnic identities in different contexts (Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2015). Another term, *metrolinguism*, suggested by Pennycook (2012), means "the ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language..." (p.18). Dagenais and Lamarre (2005) found that multilingual youth in Vancouver and Montreal possess a *multilingual identity* that transgresses the boundaries of one particular nation or ethnicity; additionally, these researchers believe heritage languages can be valuable resources not only linking people to the local language community, but also expanding

their opportunities to communicate with a larger transnational community (Dagenais & Lamarre, 2005, p. 20).

In the process of ethnic identification, primary socialization plays a crucial role (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). In order to develop a bicultural and bilingual identity among immigrant children, society should value both languages; ideally, there should be no conflicts or tension between these languages (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). In multicultural families, parents usually make important decisions as to what languages and cultures their children will experience in formal education (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). It is worth noting that in Ukraine those decisions were predetermined by the government, so parents did not really have a choice in terms of what language their children should be educated in. However, in Canada their choices are significantly expanded: they can enrol their children in English schools, French immersion, bilingual programs, and heritage schools. On the surface, parents do have a role in the process of their children's language socialization, but in reality, society is equally, if not more, important in determining those outcomes.

**Nation and national identity.** Since Ukraine is traditionally a monocultural country, the concepts of ethnic and national identities usually coincide. Before the proclamation of the independence of Ukraine in 1991, there was no clearly defined concept of a national identity because Ukrainians were part of a bigger country, the Soviet Union, so while ethnically they were Ukrainians, nationally they were considered Soviet people. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine became a nation-state, and the idea of national identity has crystallized since then. Unfortunately, in cases where there are mismatches between the national and ethnic identities, the possibilities of conflicts, misunderstandings, and even territorial separations become a dire reality.

While Ukrainian immigrants and Ukrainian-Canadians may share a common ethnic identity, they definitely have, at least initially, different national identities. Smith (2010) defines nation thus:

... a named and self-defined human community whose members cultivate shared myths, memories, values, symbols and traditions, who reside in and are attached to an historic territory or 'homeland', create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe common laws and customs. (p.3)

The fact that the recent immigrants from Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada do not share a common experience and may not share the same "myths, memories, values, symbols and traditions" (Smith, 2010, p.3) complicates their belonging to the same nation.

**Ukrainian diaspora.** Despite differences among the four or five waves of Ukrainian immigrants, they all belong to a single Ukrainian diaspora, which is defined as "communities of people who share the same cultural or 'home' background but live permanently in different countries throughout the world, who retain a form of their identity, and maintain a real and/or symbolic relationship with their 'home' country" (Isajiw, 2010, p. 289).

Isajiw (2010) states that retention of ethnic identity and relationship with Ukraine are two main characteristics of the Ukrainian diaspora. However, with regard to Ukrainian-Canadians, it is very problematic to define who has retained a Ukrainian ethnic identity. Makarova and Hudyma (2015) report that subsequent generations of Ukrainian immigrants in Saskatchewan do not always identify themselves as Ukrainians; in fact, the hyphenated term Ukrainian-Canadian is more preferable to most, while some claim they are simply Canadians.

In the past, the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada traditionally viewed its role as preserving and nurturing the Ukrainian language, culture, religion, and traditions. Isajiw (2010) claims that

after the proclamation of independence of Ukraine, the diaspora's main function shifted to helping a newly-formed nation-state because "the existence of one's own political state appears to function as a validation of one's ethnic identity and thus makes one more secure with it" (p. 317). However, Baczynskyj (2009) claims that the Ukrainian diaspora in Toronto felt disappointed with the new wave of immigrants arriving after the proclamation of Independence of Ukraine in 1991 because these newcomers were considered inauthentic Ukrainians:

Third Wave identity in Toronto gave high priority to maintaining the Ukrainian language and a religiously-infused culture. However, this priority may mean little to some members of the Fourth Wave, particularly among those from eastern and southern Ukraine, as well as those from urban areas. (p. 63)

However, during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, representatives of all the waves of immigration in the Ukrainian community in Canada demonstrated solidarity and support (Baczynskyj, 2009; Couton, 2014), showing their strong attachment to and interest in events in Ukraine.

**Ukrainian language and identity.** I was presenting my research project at the Doctoral Forum in Seattle in March 2017, where I ran into a teacher from Ukraine. She was surprised that my participants had opinions to express about their national identity because when she was conducting her project amongst school teachers in Ukraine, most avoided addressing this topic explicitly. At the time, the only answer I had was to quote one of my research participants, Ruslana:

*Коли приїжджаєш в Канаду, тут загострюється відчуття якоїсь національності, не те що національності, а якесь переживання за свою Батьківщину, що ти розумієш, що ти її втрачаєш... ти її лишив, вона далеко, ти далеко від*

*Батьківщини. Мені наприклад, я розумію що мені більше зараз хочеться якихось українських заходів ніж коли я була в Україні. Коли ти живеш в Україні, такого не відчуваєш, ти живеш, ти того не цінуєш наскільки в тебе багата культурна країна, і де ти живеш. [Ukr. When you come to Canada, you have a greater sense of national identity: you understand you are losing your motherland, and you are far away from it. Now I need Ukrainian things more than ever, more than when I lived in Ukraine. When you live there, you do not appreciate your rich culture and where you live.]*

(interview with Ruslana, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016)

However, as I contemplated this issue later on my way home, I gained additional insight. The teachers in Ukraine likely felt fear and uncertainty because the political, cultural, and linguistic situations in their home country would swing like a pendulum, multiple times in opposite directions, depending on who was in power in the country. Unlike people in Ukraine, immigrants have the opportunity to analyse and interpret events from a distance, so it is understandable that they would have different ideas and perspectives.

One of my participants, Andriy, who is originally from western Ukraine, claims that there is a holistic concept of language, culture, history, and identity which depends primarily on the part of Ukraine that immigrants were born and grew up in. He believes that the environment, even within the geographical borders of the same country, plays a crucial role not only in defining people's first language, but also in how they identify themselves and what their attitudes are toward Ukrainian history, religion, and culture. He states, *“іммігранти, які приїхали із західної України, вони це зберігають; всі хто інші, приїхали з інших регіонів – 99 відсотків моїх знайомих які українською тут вдома ніхто не розмовляє”*. [Ukr. Immigrants who came from western Ukraine preserve it [the Ukrainian language and culture]. All others from other

parts of Ukraine—99% of the people I know here—do not speak Ukrainian at home.] (interview with Andriy, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

Baczynskyj (2009) also believes that regionalism is a determining factor in shaping the identities of the fourth wave of Ukrainian immigrants. She claims that recent immigrants from western Ukraine have more similarities with the third wave of Ukrainian immigrants in Canada because they are historically from the same geographical region and are more likely to share similar perspectives about Ukrainian language, culture, religion, and history. Baczynskyj (2009) states that, unlike the recent immigrants from western Ukraine, those originally from central, eastern, or southern Ukraine have slim chances of integrating into the Ukrainian-Canadian community. Regionalism also accounted for different perspectives regarding the Ukrainian language in Baczynskyj's study: interviewees from eastern Ukraine characterized the Russian language and culture as urban and more prestigious, while Ukrainian was just a school subject for them (Baczynskyj, 2009). In my project, however, the immigrants from eastern Ukraine did not value Russian more than Ukrainian (at least they did not explicitly say so); in fact, they emphasized that it is very important to know the official language of the country you are born in, even if it is not your home language. My participant Ludmyla discussed her distress when people in Canada ask about her nationality and mother tongue: she says she is Ukrainian but speaks Russian, which may appear illogical to foreigners. Given that my sample was so small, I cannot overgeneralize and claim that Russian-speaking Ukrainians have changed their attitude toward the Ukrainian language, but at the same time there is no evidence in my project to concur with Baczynskyj's (2009) findings. However, I do agree with her statement that "the identities brought from Ukraine since 1991, are far more varied or specific to particular individuals, each of whom react to the existing community in a particular way" (Baczynskyj, 2009, p.74).

Considering Norton's (2000) idea of learners' "investment", it would be natural to expect that those parents who identify as Ukrainians would invest time, effort, and money into their children's Ukrainian language development: researchers (Cho, 2000; Dorian, 1999; Fought, 2006; Guardado, 2010; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Lee, 2013; Makarova & Hudyma, 2015) point out the link between ethnic identity and language. However, it seems that the Ukrainian language is not a component of the "core values" (Smolicz, 1995) and is not a prerequisite for claiming Ukrainian national and ethnic identity. This is the case both in Ukraine and in Canada. Russian-speaking immigrants from Ukraine identify themselves as Ukrainians even though they do not speak the language at home and may have only a passive knowledge of it. At the same time, a huge percentage of generations of Ukrainian-Canadians who do not speak the language at all also claim their Ukrainian identity. Among recent immigrants from Ukraine in Saskatchewan, almost 55% define Ukrainian as their native language (Kostyuk, 2007), while the rest of Ukrainian immigrants would be Russian-speaking. Struk (2000) notes:

There is a possibility in contemporary Ukraine for a person calling himself or herself Ukrainian (i.e. using the nation as an identity marker) not speaking Ukrainian. This is an extremely hard concept to accept for the diaspora Ukrainians, who for so long have seen the preservation of language as the major factor in the preservation of their ethnic identity. (p. 69)

On the other hand, Makarova and Hudyma (2015) point out that even individuals of Ukrainian origin who identify themselves as Canadians allocate the Ukrainian language an important role in their ethnic identity.

Admittedly, the connections between language and ethnic identity are not clearly defined either in research literature or in everyday life. The importance of knowing or not knowing the

language seems to be arbitrary, depending heavily on the context and on external validation and acceptance. All the participants in my study knew the Ukrainian language, even those who did not use it at home. For my participating parents, the knowledge of Ukrainian was felt to be a mandatory objective, yet not a gatekeeper to claiming a Ukrainian ethnic identity. They identify themselves as Ukrainian, but at the same time they indicate that even though their children speak the Ukrainian language, they may not identify as Ukrainians in the future. Consequently, knowing Ukrainian in Canada does not automatically imply Ukrainian ethnic identity, especially for generation 1.5<sup>23</sup> and for those children who were born in Canada. Apparently, the knowledge of the Ukrainian language has ceased to be an indispensable identity marker, especially in Canada (Struk, 2000, p.73).

After six years of being away from Ukraine and then going back, I noticed a particular spike in nationalism and ethnic identification. However, the bitter truth is that it has taken twenty-five years of independence filled with tragic events to develop this sense of solidarity and national pride. Thus, it is fair to say that life-changing events are able to provoke a sense of national identification: in Ukraine, on a national level, this evolved as a result of strife and tragedy, while on a personal level, immigration can serve as the breaking point in the lives of all immigrants.

### **Dominant Imperial Languages and Their Influence in Post-Empire Times**

Similar to the persistence of English in postcolonial countries, Russian has continued as the lingua franca in Ukraine long after the collapse of the Soviet empire. This diglossia<sup>24</sup> will

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<sup>23</sup> children who were born in their parents' countries of origin but immigrated at a young age and received education in a host country (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988).

<sup>24</sup> A term expanded by Fishman (1967), who stated that "bilingualism is essentially a characterization of individual linguistic behavior whereas diglossia is a characterization of linguistic organization at the socio-cultural level" (p. 34)

likely be experienced for many generations. In the same way that we do not blame the peoples in postcolonial spaces for speaking English, so should we not judge Russian-speaking Ukrainians for a lack of commitment to their native language and culture. It is unethical to blame people for the languages they speak or do not speak—to call them “less Ukrainian” if they are not fully proficient in their nation’s official language or do not use it at home. It is not their fault if they have been socialized via Russian since they were born, attending Russian-speaking daycares, schools, and universities, and marrying Russian-speaking spouses. Yuliya’s husband, for instance, was brought up by Ukrainian-speaking grandparents but had a Russian-speaking mother, while Yuliya spent most of her life in eastern and southern Ukraine exposed primarily to Russian. It is unfair to question the desire of new immigrants to maintain their children’s Ukrainian in Canada—it is a personal right and a decision that deserves encouragement, not suspicious judgement.

Taking into consideration Bourdieu’s (1991) social capital theory, it is easy to understand how, in the former Soviet republics, including Ukraine, the Russian language was valued and elevated while other ethnic languages were marginalized and viewed as inferior. Particularly in Ukraine, Russian was considered to be more urban and was associated with education, prestige, and an almost elite upbringing, whereas Ukrainian was considered to be the rustic language of the countryside, of informal interactions, and of folklore. Job availability created a tendency for people to move from the countryside to industrialized urban centres; as a result, even the Ukrainian-speaking population of the countryside shifted to using Russian in some or all areas of their lives after relocation to the cities.

Unlike Indigenous languages in Canada, ethnic languages in the former Soviet Union were not vanishing or dying out when Russian became the lingua franca; rather, the ethnic languages were assigned a particular niche or relegated to specific functions. It was quite possibly a strategic state policy “to maintain minority languages in order to divide and rule” (Hamers & Blanc, 2000, p. 279). It would be unfair to claim that the Ukrainian language was forbidden, or its use punished because books, TV and radio programs, schools, and cultural events were all available in Ukrainian; however, the proportion of materials and resources in Russian was significantly higher. This form of language hierarchy strongly influenced people’s perceptions and linguistic choices. Since Russian was the language of science and education, parents tried to enrol their children in schools where subjects were taught in Russian. For instance, my daycare and kindergarten were predominantly Russian, but when I went to a local Ukrainian school, none of my childhood friends went with me even though we all lived in the same neighbourhood. It was not unusual to have families where Ukrainian-speaking parents who were originally from the countryside had children speaking Russian as their first language.

The subordinate position of the Ukrainian language transformed dramatically after the proclamation of the independence of Ukraine in 1991. Although Baker (2000) asserts that languages have rarely been the causes of wars or conflicts historically, Hamers and Blanc (2000) provide a different lens. “With nationhood, however, the issue of a national language and its relation to other dialects and languages, where they exist, arises immediately. Contemporary history abounds in examples of nationalist movements based essentially, though not exclusively, on language demands” (p. 280). Throughout many former republics after the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnic languages, together with ethnic origins, became indicators and determinants

of who had a legitimate right to stay and who had to leave a particular territory. Mary Louise Pratt (1991) defines so-called “contact zones”:

... the social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in context of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermath as they are lived out in many parts of the world today. (as cited in Patel, 2013, p. 100)

Ukraine is relatively fortunate in that there were only two languages “in contact”, while other former Soviet republics, more multi-ethnic and multilingual, faced dramatic conflicts immediately after the Soviet Union dissolved. In Ukraine, however, despite the proclamation of Ukrainian as the only official language of the nation-state, the place of the Ukrainian language continued to feature in political debates and campaigns for years afterward.

This long-time hierarchy of and competition between the Russian and Ukrainian languages continue its ripple effects even decades after Ukrainian was granted its secure status as the dominant language in Ukraine. Apparently, this is also reflected in interpersonal relations and different “speech accommodations” determined by social-group status (Hamers & Blanc, 2000), including immigrant families from Ukraine in Canada. For instance, my participant Andriy is disappointed with the fact that the majority of the mixed families he knows in Canada (where one partner speaks Ukrainian and the other speaks Russian as the first language) choose Russian as their home language. Indeed, even his own brother, who grew up in the exclusively Ukrainian-dominant environment of western Ukraine, speaks Russian at home. Obviously, language decisions within a particular family are personal choices, but they are undoubtedly shadowed by influences of the dominant society. All in all, language issues in postcolonial spaces quite often provoke highly sensitive and convoluted debates.

### **The Different Facets of Ukrainian for Immigrant Parents and Their Children**

Primary language socialization is very important for the future formation of ethnolinguistic identity (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). In general, by *language socialization* scholars mean “the process by which novices or newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in the group” (Duff, 2007, p. 310). As I indicated above, the linguistic situation within many families in Ukraine has reversed over the decades since 1991: if, in the Soviet Union, many Ukrainian-speaking parents had Russian-speaking children, now those same Russian-speaking children have themselves become parents, and they have Ukrainian-speaking children. In Ukraine, the whole society now socializes children from an early age into the Ukrainian language and culture, so the parental role, while still important, is not critical. However, when families immigrate to Canada, the parents’ involvement in their children’s linguistic and cultural choices naturally becomes more pronounced. And while Ukrainian-speaking immigrant parents socialize their children into a Ukrainian “community of practice” (Wenger, 2000) with relative ease in Canada, Russian-speaking immigrant parents are not always successful in this role.

Some of the key aspects of language socialization are the importance of developing communicative competence through everyday activities, the crucial roles and functions of expert members in the process of socializing, and the continuity of language learning and socialization over a lifetime (Duff, 2007). All my participating parents stated that their children have no problem functioning in Ukrainian in everyday, routine activities; at the same time, the parents realize that this level of usage is insufficient to constitute complete language proficiency and literacy. As a result, all my participants have enrolled their children in Ukrainian-English programs, heritage schools, and church-aligned Sunday schools to involve experts with

professional teaching and language qualifications in the process of socializing their children into Ukrainian language and culture. The major problem is that these programs and teachers do not always live up to the parents' expectations. Moreover, the lifelong continuation of this Ukrainian language socialization is seen as precarious by almost all my participants. Some of them expressed doubts as to whether their children would continue attending heritage schools once they reach their teenage years, a concern of particular relevance in Manitoba, where there is no official Ukrainian program for high school students. Another parental concern is the future environment of their children, potentially populated by English-speaking friends and possibly even spouses. Although parents have some control over their children's Ukrainian language socialization in childhood, beyond that their influence is extremely limited.

The roles and functions of the Ukrainian language in Ukraine and Canada are also very different. In Ukraine, one cannot be successful academically, financially, and professionally without knowing the official language of the country, while in Canada immigrants view the Ukrainian language primarily as a family language without any claims for material benefits or success (Hudyma, 2012; Makarova & Hudyma, 2015). However, for Russian-speaking immigrants from Ukraine, the Ukrainian language does not even perform the role of uniting a family in Canada because they primarily speak Russian at home. Russian-speaking parents in my study were able to provide three main reasons for maintaining Ukrainian for their children in Canada. Firstly, many of them have extended Ukrainian-speaking family in Ukraine, so they would like their children to be able to communicate with their grandparents and other relatives during visits to Ukraine. Secondly, their children have been already socialized into and completed some formal schooling in Ukrainian, so they feel it is unacceptable to let their children simply lose that valuable knowledge and skill set. Finally, they believe the Ukrainian

language helps their children identify as Ukrainians in Canada. For example, my participant Ludmyla states that while her nineteen-year old daughter has no question about her Ukrainian identity, her four-year old son will be confused if he grows up in the English environment of Canada hearing only Russian at home: he will not be able to identify as Ukrainian. As a former post-secondary educator in Ukraine, Ludmyla is fluent in Ukrainian, so she intentionally switches to Ukrainian at home on occasion to stimulate her younger son to speak Ukrainian:

*Я считаю, что самоидентификация— это очень важно для человека, нужно всегда понимать кто ты больше на самом деле. Ну хорошо, когда ты уже взрослый человек и можешь анализировать, а ребенок не может анализировать, он просто чувствует, и важно направить его чувства в нужное русло, чтобы он не чувствовал себя каким-то потеряшкой в этом мире, а чтобы он знал что он украинец. [Rus. I think self-identification is very important for every person; you should always understand who you are “the most of”. When you are an adult, you can analyze, but a child cannot analyze, he can only feel, and it is important to direct his feelings in the right way, so he will not feel like a lost thing in this world, but he will know that he is Ukrainian.] (interview with Ludmyla, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016)*

Whether or not the Ukrainian language facilitates the identity construction of the children of Ukrainian immigrants remains a matter of speculation. For instance, Harris (2006) reports that British adolescents who used to speak their home language in childhood but had switched to English as they started formal schooling continued to consider themselves part of their parents’ diasporic community. There seems to be no firm connection between heritage languages and ethnic identities.

The language of primary socialization is also important in the process of enculturation<sup>25</sup> (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). In Ukraine, children are exposed to two languages—Russian and Ukrainian—but only one Ukrainian culture. Children born in Ukraine, as well as their immigrant parents, have to go through the process of acculturation<sup>26</sup> (Hamers & Blanc, 2000) via English when they come to Canada. For Canadian-born children, however, English is more often the primary language of enculturation, while it is Ukrainian that facilitates acculturation into the Ukrainian culture. At the same time, it is not uncommon for Ukrainian-Canadians to be bicultural but not bilingual. Jedwab (2000) concludes that Ukrainian language retention in Canada is rather low; meanwhile, there is a significant and steadfast presence of Ukrainian culture. To what extent children of immigrants from Ukraine can be successfully bilingual as well as bicultural depends on many factors. For instance, my participant Andriy believes that his son Stepan is totally different from his peers in Ukraine, even though he speaks Ukrainian, Stepan is more a Canadian child than Ukrainian. In general, all my participants are trying to maintain not only the Ukrainian language, but also as much Ukrainian culture as they can. Nadiya explains her commitment to maintaining Ukrainian culture and traditions in her family:

*Так я буду всі свята, всі традиції, сімейні традиції будемо всі підтримувати, тому що я не вважаю що ми можемо настільки перейняти традиції, культуру цю, тому що ми приїхали вже в такому віці, в якому ми не можемо це зробити. По-друге, враховуючи те що ми в Канаді, яка в принципі країна емігрантів, я не кажу що в них немає своїх традицій, але це не наші традиції. Дуже багато традицій, які не є*

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<sup>25</sup> “A part of the socialisation process by which a child acquires the rules of behaviour and the values of his culture” (Hamers & Blanc, 2000, p. 371).

<sup>26</sup> “The process by which an individual adjusts to a new culture; this usually includes the acquisition of the language(s) of that culture” (Hamers & Blanc, 2000, p. 367).

*корінні канадські, і я не вважаю що моя українська сім'я має переймати традиції, які є навіть не канадійськими. Вважаючи наскільки зараз легко поїхати назад в Україну, я вважаю що моя дитина має знати що там відбувається, яка ситуація. Він має про це знати, тому що він з України, він народжений в Україні.* [Ukr. We will maintain all family and cultural traditions and celebrate all holidays because we came [to Canada] at the age when we cannot adopt another culture. Also, taking into account that Canada is a country of immigrants, I am not trying to say that there are no traditions here, but they are not our traditions. So many traditions [here] are not originally from Canada, and I do not think my Ukrainian family has to follow traditions that are not even Canadian. Considering how easy it is to go to Ukraine now, I believe my son should know what is going on there, what the situation is like. He must know all this because he is from Ukraine, he was born in Ukraine.] (interview with Nadiya, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017)

The Ukrainian language itself is also not homogeneous, either in Ukraine or Canada. As Laursen and Dahlstrup Mogensen (2016) note, the linguistic differences “are not between nations and standard languages, but appear within the nation or the language itself” (2016, p. 575). As I mentioned previously, there are regional varieties of and dialects in Ukraine apart from the standard Ukrainian language, so immigrants demonstrate these differences in their speech. Languages have the ability to travel across the world (Laursen & Dahlstrup Mogensen, 2016) and emerge in unexpected places (Pennycook, 2012). We can state that the Ukrainian language travels the world not only via Ukrainian-speaking immigrants, but also passively via Russian-speaking Ukrainians who may not be using Ukrainian in everyday communication, but who are nonetheless fluent in it. Apart from regional variants of the language in Ukraine, there is also a significant difference between the Ukrainian-Canadian in heritage schools and the language that

Ukrainian-born children bring with them to Canada. While many of my participants remarked on their own and their children's initial surprise at being exposed to archaic Ukrainian in Canada, they still value the opportunity to communicate in their first language in a foreign country. As Olesya says, her Ukrainian-born children communicate with Canadian-born children and their parents in Ukrainian summer camps and heritage schools, and this is how the community language is refreshed, by mutual learning and enrichment.

With sadness, most parents recognize that their children will be unlikely to have deep, advanced knowledge of Ukrainian grammar, vocabulary, and literature. Despite being proud of their children's achievements and performances at school concerts, parents also understand that the Ukrainian culture and language will not have the same place in their children's lives that it did in their own. Trying to speculate about future scenarios that may play out regarding their children's dominant language, many parents emphasize the importance of environment, friends, and future spouses. Parents are fully aware of the limited exposure to Ukrainian in Canada and have no delusions that their children's Ukrainian is at the same level as that of their peers in Ukraine, an acknowledgement also documented in the literature: "children, and especially adolescents, seldom acquire the registers typical of their age group" (Pauwels, 2005, p. 126).

### **Code-Mixing, Language Shift, and Translanguaging as Adaptation and Language Maintenance Techniques in Host Environments**

In general, research literature views code-switching and language-mixing as preliminary signs of language attrition or loss. Even taking this into consideration, I think that for parents in my study these practices actually represent language maintenance strategies rather than evidence of language loss. The parents engage in these practices with full awareness of the consequences, recognizing that in some cases there may be no better options. These communication strategies

do not undermine their parental authority and “Ukrainian only” or “one parent—one language” home policies; rather, they demonstrate the parents’ commitment to negotiating meaning with their children using all possible resources. The term *translanguaging* (Hornberger, & Link, 2012; Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012; Li, 2014; Makalela, 2015; Velasco & García, 2014) seems more appealing and appropriate to describe this linguistic behaviour. Translanguaging is described as “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (Baker, 2011, p. 288 as cited in Lewis et al., 2012, p. 641).

Usually code-switching is viewed as a phenomenon more applicable to adults because “infant bilinguals are claimed to lack the awareness of dealing with two languages and hence language mixing is interpreted as a sign of linguistic confusion” (Lanza, 1992, p. 634). However, both I and my participants with young children notice that children do indeed have this awareness of dealing with more than one language, but that they simply cannot name the language they are speaking. For instance, my three-year-old daughter can clearly differentiate the three languages in her everyday life, but she is not very successful at labeling them: she may ask me to find a cartoon or a book in English when she really means Ukrainian. Ludmyla also says her four-year-old son once asked her not to speak English with him when she was actually speaking Ukrainian.

Explaining this phenomenon of children’s ability to switch languages, my participant Nadiya describes how her four-year-old son, Danylo, has linguistic associations with particular objects or people without knowing which language is which. For example, he communicates with his parents and (via Skype) his grandparents, cousins, and other relatives in Ukraine in Ukrainian, but with the family’s English-speaking friends he uses English only. Nadiya details how, when they had English-speaking visitors in their home, Danylo spoke English with them

but Ukrainian with his parents all evening. As Lanza (1992) concludes, “language mixing per se is not a valid measure for determining a lack of bilingual awareness” (p. 637). Consequently, while children may lack particular pragmatic awareness as to why they switch languages, I believe that, at a very young age, this is not a sign of language loss or inadequate vocabulary, but simply a way of experimenting with the languages they are still learning.

Canagarajah (2013) provides an example from the Tamil community, where young adolescents may incorporate other languages they speak into their Tamil or may acquire only receptive knowledge of the language, but where the net effect is one of building and bolstering intergenerational bonds. Canagarajah (2013) believes that “this conversational strategy is so significant that there would be serious damage done to family relationships and community identity in diaspora settings without it” (p. 5). Similarly, Rampton (2005) illustrates the phenomenon of linguistic “crossing” or the use of bits of different languages by youth in Britain as the natural outcome of co-existing in the same physical and social space. These conversational practices are inevitable in a multilingual environment and should not be perceived as deficiencies. For instance, my daughter can reply with a “thank you” in three languages simply because she may not know which of the three words to use at that time. In Ukraine, Andriy’s son Stepan was excited to read the historical note on an old castle in English because, according to his father, it was simply easier for him than to read in Ukrainian; on the other hand, Stepan might just have been curious to see English in an unexpected place—Ukraine. This is exactly how I felt during my last visit to Kyiv. I noticed that all the street signs and announcements in underground trains were in two languages, Ukrainian and English, whereas in the past they had been mandated to be posted in Russian and Ukrainian. Because it was such a startling sight, it was the English signs I paid attention to despite my ability to read Ukrainian. One of my participants,

Yuliya, believes it is an asset for her daughter to use her three languages interchangeably when she searches for information online, even creating unique word combinations, a strategy which works well for her. Ludmyla's nineteen-year-old daughter, who works in a Ukrainian organization, has to speak English, Ukrainian, and the Canadian-Ukrainian that she has been exposed to in Canada but had never heard while she lived in Ukraine. Mariya's daughters can be talking to each other in English one moment and singing a Ukrainian song together the next. All in all, these functional linguistic adaptation strategies are evidence of language facility rather than language loss. As Lanza (1992) states, language-mixing is not a result of one language dominating over the other, but rather "a response to context" (p.655).

The linguistic choices and code-switching of younger children may also be a direct response to their parents' language maintenance strategies. Research literature provides some examples of parental accommodation strategies when dealing with multilingual children (Baker, 2000; Hamers & Blanc, 2000). Investigating adult strategies in dealing with bi-/multilingual children, Ochs (1988) identifies the "minimal grasp strategy", "expressed guess strategy", "adult repetition", and "adult code switches" (as cited in Lanza, 1992, p. 649). While parents in my study resort to all these strategies, there are some variations depending on the age of the children. For instance, those with younger children employ "minimal grasp" and "expressed guess" strategies when using clarifying questions to prompt children to repair a sentence. Ruslana and Nadiya say that their sons may become frustrated if they are not able to pronounce or repeat a difficult word in Ukrainian, or they may simply refuse to repeat a word at all if they discern that the adults have already understood them. Parents may sometimes laugh if their children's incorrect speech sounds amusing; children's own reactions to their language errors vary

(Nadiya's son, for example, was unhappy when he could not correctly pronounce "верблю́д"<sup>27</sup>). As I previously mentioned, repetition is a strategy frequently used by my participants. It is worth noting that all these adult strategies also depend on parental filters. For example, if the parents are tired, they may well choose to ignore their children's incorrect pronunciation and grammar or even to default to code-switching themselves. Although most of my parents emphasize the fact that they try to keep the languages separate and to speak the standard form of Ukrainian in the presence of their children, they still sometimes use English to make their interaction more effective and to avoid misunderstanding.

This section presented some general themes that emerged in the process of doing this project. In particular, I speculated about the possible new wave of Ukrainian immigrants, addressed the issues of the legacies of imperial languages, attempted to link the concepts of nation, ethnicity, and heritage languages, analyzed various facets of Ukrainian for immigrants and their children in Canada, and finally described some multimodal parental strategies in dealing with bi-/multilingual children. The last section of this paper will provide some recommendations for various stakeholders with respect to immigrant languages in Canada and the Ukrainian language in particular.

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<sup>27</sup> (Ukr.) "camel" (there is a consonant cluster difficult to pronounce, so the English word is easier to say)

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendations

There are no right or wrong answers, nor are there language maintenance strategies effective in all cases, but there are different families, attitudes, and circumstances. My five case studies cannot be sufficiently all-encompassing to reflect the many possible scenarios that play out in Ukrainian immigrant families across Canada. In fact, many cases are clearly out of the scope of this study; for instance, I did not have mixed families where one of the partners is Canadian-born, nor did I have representatives of second or third generation Ukrainian-Canadians. Obviously, such samples would have shed additional light on the issues of the language maintenance in Canada. On the other hand, on a personal level, I easily connected with recent immigrants because of my own background, whereas I am not sure that would have been the case with second or third generation Ukrainian-Canadians. I have encountered criticism with regard to my sample: someone commented that I should have focused either on Canadian-born children or on those who came from Ukraine, but not on both. The selection criteria were focused on parents rather than the children, so the birth origins of the children were happenstance: in many families there were older children who were born in Ukraine and younger ones born in Canada.

Despite the differences among my participants, one common thread united them all, a thread that I believe is pertinent to all Ukrainian immigrants—unsayable, intangible, and everlasting sadness for something lost. Some of my participants travel to their motherland once a year; others have not been there since the time they left; yet others feel they have no reason to travel to Ukraine. While geographic separation is fixed, recent immigrants bring with them their native language and culture, hoping to recreate a familiar lifestyle in the host country. Ukrainian

immigrants also try to parent their children in the way they were brought up in Ukraine, but they discover that they need to learn a new language or combination of several languages in order to parent effectively in the new country of residence.

During their interviews, some of my participants voiced questions I could not find answers to. Ruslana's question, "How can we make our children love Ukrainian?" left me puzzled for months after our conversation. No research literature specifies pedagogical strategies to foster "love": not just vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar skills, but the sincere, deep, unconditional love people have towards their parents, native language, culture, and the place where they were born and grew up. Other participants expressed their concerns over the difficulty of sustaining their children's interest in Ukrainian once they become teenagers and adults. Another participant, Ludmyla, articulated the problematic task that faces immigrant parents from Ukraine in helping their children develop a healthy sense of who they are. While children naturally love their parents, they are not obliged to love their parents' native language or country of origin. Within the context of Canada, the Ukrainian language is deprived of its soul and its deep sense of meaningfulness and instead serves primarily a utilitarian communicative function. In contrast, I remember my school years in Ukraine, in particular the elevated attention to the Ukrainian language, culture, literature, and history after 1991 when Ukraine gained independence. We had daily classes in the Ukrainian language and literature; moreover, all subjects were taught exclusively in Ukrainian, with the exception of foreign languages and Russian. While the Russian language was still considered more popular and prestigious, our educators were trying hard to encourage us to fall in love with our native language, with its melodic sounds and rich vocabulary. There is no doubt that this kind of experience is impossible to replicate in Canada, even taking into consideration the commitment and dedication of many

Ukrainian parents to sustain and develop their children's Ukrainian. Moreover, the Ukrainian language of generation 1.5 is different from both the contemporary language in Ukraine, on the one hand, and on the other, from the Canadian-Ukrainian that has developed from previous waves of Ukrainian immigration.

My research data and findings could have been interpreted in other ways by applying other theoretical frameworks. My data resemble a kaleidoscope with ever-changing pictures, patterns, perspectives, and images. One moment it seems like the participants are confident in their success in language maintenance, so that Ukrainian is there to stay; the closer look of the next moment, however, reveals uncertainty, language melange, and doubts. I think if I had the opportunity to interview the participants again in another five or ten years, the findings would be different. The life of any immigrant family could be the plot for a novel, and a home language is just one chapter of many among the array of vivid and dramatic human experiences. The immigrants participating in this study were situated along a broad spectrum, ranging from those who felt happy, successful, and confident in their efforts of language maintenance to those who felt doubtful and uncertain but were, in all likelihood, more realistic in their expectations.

My research topic immersed me into the community of immigrants from Ukraine, making me speculate about my family life had I stayed in my country of origin, wondering whether my parenting in a single language would have been easier and more beneficial for my daughter. Over the last year or so, I have had a recurrent nightmare where I am visiting my relatives in Ukraine, and, for some unknown reason, I am not able to return to Canada to reunite with my daughter and husband. I can interpret this dream as a sign of the diversity within my family— my husband, daughter, and I do not belong to the same nation or culture; we are three entities, and I am the only Ukrainian in my family. I realize that, similar to my participants, my

success in developing my daughter's Ukrainian skills will be very much context-dependent. At the moment, I feel relatively happy because my daughter likes "reading" books and watching cartoons in Ukrainian, and she has a Ukrainian-speaking educator and two Ukrainian-speaking friends in her daycare. I also understand that, as is true for my participant's families, children's linguistic choices are tied to a particular context and circumstances, so that any life change may have potentially detrimental effects on immigrant children's home language. Similar to some of my participants, I experience doubts about my own home language strategies, especially when my daughter seems to be confused or creates unusual combinations of words and incorrect sentences like "Это что так?"<sup>28</sup> I also realize that heritage language schools represent programs that are added on top of other extracurricular activities children are involved in. As parents, we believe we always know the best for our children, and we hope that in future they will appreciate our efforts in maintaining our home languages. However, multilingual youth "attribute different values to the languages in their repertoires, values that do not necessarily correspond to those held by their families, teachers, or schools" (Dagenais & Lamarre, 2005, p. 20).

Over the course of my data collection, I had to revise and change my initial title, "Home is where you speak your mother tongue", as it no longer reflects my findings. Home is where you feel at home, no matter which languages you have to use there. In fact, many of my participants have to negotiate meaning on a regular basis via languages other than their mother tongues. The Ukrainian language may be the mother tongue for one member of the family and heritage language for another—just the language of the country of birth, a distant and fading connection to the place left behind.

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<sup>28</sup> (*Rus.-Ukr.*) "What is this?" (the first two words are Russian, while the third one is Ukrainian)

I conclude my paper with some recommendations for immigrant parents, community members, heritage language teachers, public school teachers, policy makers, immigrant settlement programs, and future researchers. However, any recommendations presented below should be taken with the caveat that there is no single person, organization, or family that can guarantee heritage language maintenance.

### **Recommendations for Immigrant Parents and Future Parents**

Traditionally research literature emphasizes the crucial role of family in heritage language maintenance (Ariagada, 2005; Chen, 2010; Chumak-Horbatsch, 1999; Fishman, 1991; Guardado & Becker, 2014; Iqbal, 2005; Kouritzin, 2000; Lee, 2013; Li, 1999; Li, 2006; Melo-Pfeifer, 2015; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002). At the same time, Pauwels (2005) points out the importance of family supported by community and “appropriate government policies on language, linguistic and ethnic diversity” (p. 69). With regard to Ukrainian in Canada, Hudyma (2012) highlights that good intentions should be “transformed into real actions in the sphere of language preservation, especially in family settings” (Hudyma, 2012, p. 69). Parents whose children were born in Canada should use a complex of multimodal strategies and provide as much exposure to Ukrainian as possible in order to stimulate their children to speak Ukrainian. Even though my participants strongly believe that literacy skills are very important, realistically they do not expect that their children in Canada will be at the same level as their peers in Ukraine. Parents whose children were born in Ukraine and came to Canada fully literate cannot assume that their children will automatically preserve and further develop their skills in Ukrainian. Unfortunately, as my participants note, even though their children attend bilingual programs and/or heritage schools, they tend to lose fluency, particularly in writing. Finally, adults in linguistically and culturally mixed families would benefit from discussing and planning

their linguistic choices before becoming parents, consciously deciding what languages their future children should be exposed to in Canada. The popular myth that children effortlessly absorb all the languages they are exposed to is true only to a limited extent.

### **Recommendations for Community Members**

As was previously mentioned, the history of Ukrainian immigration to Canada spans more than one hundred years, consisting of four or five waves of immigrants and different generations. Community members should realize that the Ukrainian population in Canada is very diverse, so they have to demonstrate tolerance for and acceptance of linguistic, cultural, regional, religious, and political differences. While appearing to be monocultural and similar on the surface, even Ukrainians in Ukraine are heterogeneous or “hybrid” (Bhabha, 1991; 1994). In order to preserve and develop the Ukrainian language and culture in Canada, generations of Ukrainian immigrants should engage in cooperation and unite their efforts, which would be beneficial and enriching not only to the community but also to society as a whole. Baczynskyj (2009) notes:

Yet, the Ukrainian mainstream has been hard to accept the consequences of Ukrainian sovereignty, namely the end of collective purpose in the community and the reality of diverse political, linguistic and personal identities emanating from a democratic Ukraine. In order for the Ukrainian community to fuse into a connected group once again, it must find a cause which all Ukrainians can support. The organized community may need to shift the focus away from homeland politics. (p.108)

This common cause can be, if not the language (due to significant differences), then definitely the Ukrainian culture. While it is very important to preserve old traditions, recent immigrants can enrich and invigorate the Ukrainian culture of the diaspora.

**Recommendations for Heritage Language Teachers**

In order to sustain interest and enrolment in Ukrainian programs and heritage schools, there should be some rejuvenation of the resources and materials. Any language and culture is like a living being, in constant flux, so it is not reasonable to teach a language that people in Ukraine no longer speak. While we do have to know our history and traditions, our primary task and the expectations of parents should be that schools prepare children for a successful future, one where multilingualism could be an asset. Both immigrant and Canadian-born children would benefit more from being exposed to a language that is living rather than to some archaic form of it. In addition, it would be beneficial to allow qualified representatives of the last wave of immigration to teach the Ukrainian language in heritage schools and bilingual programs in Canada. Heritage language teachers are very important ambassadors of the distant but beautiful country Ukraine, with its ancient culture, melodic language, and rich literature. At the moment, immigrants who have taught Ukrainian in Ukraine are not deemed qualified to do the same in the Canadian education system unless they first obtain a Canadian bachelor's degree.

**Recommendations for Public School Teachers**

Educators in the public school system experience an ongoing influx of immigrant children from different nations and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. While there are certain characteristics common to people from the same country, there is as well a plethora of differences and even some antagonism amongst representatives of the same language and culture. As my participants illustrated, Ukrainian immigrants are very diverse, and while adults may be mature enough to negotiate those differences, children often lack this skill. One of my participants cited a conflict in his son's school between two Russian-speaking boys, one from Ukraine and one from Russia. It is obvious that having a language in common does not always

guarantee a mutual understanding. Because public school teachers have to deal with all sorts of issues on a regular basis, they would benefit from being aware of political, cultural, and other tensions currently existing within and across nations and ethnicities. In particular, it is important for teachers to know their students' background, especially that of newcomers from other countries.

As indicated in research literature on heritage language and identity, cultivating a sense of connection to a heritage culture is even more important than fostering fluency in a heritage language. Consequently, educators do not have to know the heritage languages of their students, but they should encourage their students of different backgrounds to appreciate and be proud of their culture. Educators can create space for translanguaging (Hornberger, & Link, 2012; Lewis et al., 2012; Li, 2014; Makalela, 2015; Velasco & García, 2014) and for translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013 Palmer, Martinez, Mateus & Henderson, 2014) to allow their multilingual and multicultural students to use their linguistic repertoires resourcefully.

### **Recommendations for Policy Makers**

Many Ukrainian immigrants in Hudyma's (2012) study claim that the Ukrainian language and culture should be nurtured in families and that the Canadian government is not in a position to do anything to facilitate the process of language maintenance; however, the parents participating in my project had a different perspective. Although my participants acknowledged the primary role of families, they also found outside resources to be an important support in terms of language maintenance and development, particularly literacy skills. As one of my participants noted, it is political will that determines whether there are Ukrainian books in school libraries, festivals, and bilingual programs.

In their analysis of decline in heritage language transmission across Canadian provinces, Swidinsky and Swidinsky (1997) suggest including heritage languages in school curricula so that all children, irrespective of their actual linguistic and cultural background, can potentially benefit from additional languages. Similarly, Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) notes that there is a “need for language competence in strategic languages”, so “rethinking the role that heritage learners can play is advisable” (p. 215). There is also a need to challenge the predetermined “expectations about language and place, about things being in their right place” (Pennycook, 2012), so we can create space for languages other than the official ones or the languages of majority, especially in multilingual countries like Canada. Pennycook (2012) refers to the concept of “linguistic landscapes” as “the ways in which language is not something that exists only in people’s heads, in texts written for institutional consumption, or in spoken interactions, but rather is part of the physical environment” (p. 26). Scholars emphasize the importance of cultivating people’s desire to speak more than one language (Canagarajah, 2013; Mateus, 2014) because “bilinguals are environmentally friendly people” (Baker, 2000, p. 168). Moreover, Tavares (2000) advocates for more career opportunities that build on multilingual capabilities, although the application of the Ukrainian language in Canada is still extremely limited.

### **Recommendations for Immigrant Settlement Programs**

While the main role of these programs is to help newcomers settle in a host country, they may also assist new immigrants to integrate into the local ethnic community. All my participants mentioned that they searched for information about heritage programs, activities, and schools through word-of-mouth or via online chats and forums. However, new immigrants who may not have yet established a social network in Canada would benefit from any information about Ukrainian community organizations, schools, and social events. Pauwels (2005) believes that

new immigrant families are “prime candidates” for information on ethnic language maintenance, yet they are often preoccupied with their English language acquisition. Ideally, recent immigrant children should acquire proficiency in English simultaneously with maintaining and developing their first language.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Since language maintenance is a life-long commitment, it would be beneficial to have more longitudinal studies tracing children’s progress and changing attitudes and circumstances. Even in my small-scale study, I was able to observe changes in parental practices and family routine caused by external factors such as relocating to another province, finding a new school, and building a new social network. On the other hand, I realize that interviewing parents only provides an incomplete picture of family linguistic landscape without also talking to children and spouses and observing family life and the home atmosphere. Although such research practices offer more objectivity and comprehensiveness, they are also very intrusive, so fewer people would willingly participate in and commit to this level of obligation. It would be interesting for future research to track connections between Ukrainian language and identity “to establish the components of Ukrainian Canadian ethnicity and explore its diversity and complexity, particularly in relation to the maintenance of the Ukrainian language” (Makarova & Hudyma, 2015, p. 106). While interviewing is an appropriate method for the small sample in this study, data could also be obtained by anonymous surveys and questionnaires, which would enable researchers to obtain bigger samples. Finally, it would be interesting to have more male participants to confirm suspected gender differences with regard to home languages that I observed informally but did not include in this paper for ethical reasons.

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## Appendix A

**Interview questions and prompts**

*(these questions will be translated into Ukrainian; the questions will not necessarily be asked in this order)*

1. Tell me about your family and immigration history.
  - *When did you come to Canada?*
  - *What part of Ukraine are you from? Do you speak Russian as well?*
  - *Is your husband (wife) from Ukraine?*
  - *Are you both fluent in English?*
  - *What do you do for a living? Did you practice the same occupation in Ukraine?*
  - *Did your children accompany you from the very beginning of the immigration? If yes, how old were they?*
  - *Were your children born in Canada?*
  
2. Describe your child's language.
  - *When your children speak Ukrainian to you, do you feel different than when they use English? Have you noticed any changes in behaviour, intonation, body language when your child uses Ukrainian and English? Is it the same with peers, parents, members of extended family?*
  - *What do you feel/think when your child does not sound "authentically" Ukrainian?*
  - *Are you satisfied with your child's heritage language competence?*
  - *What would you like to change/see different in terms of your child's heritage language skills?*

3. Please describe for me your child's attitude towards your heritage language.
  - *What kind of expressions about Ukrainian have you heard from your child?*
  - *How did his/her attitude change over time?*
  - *Are there any visible positive or negative reactions? Any comments about the difficulty of Ukrainian or any doubts regarding the practical use of the language?*
  
4. Please describe your home language(s).
  - *Do you use Ukrainian only as the language for communication in your family? If yes, does your child need to be reminded about your language policy?*
  - *Do you give your children freedom to choose the language of communication?*
  - *How would your family life be different if your child did not speak Ukrainian?*
  - *(if there are siblings in the family) How are your children different in terms of their language preferences and use? Can you provide any specific examples? Can you give some possible reasons?*
  - *Describe the linguistic landscape of your home. Do you think that all languages coexist harmoniously or are there any tensions?*
  - *Tell me how your heritage language contributes to the close relations with your child.*
  - *Do you think it would be possible to keep close relations with your child if you both spoke English only?*
  
5. Describe your efforts/strategies in maintaining Ukrainian in your family.
  - *Why do you want to maintain your heritage language?*
  - *What heritage language strategies are the most/least successful?*
  - *What do you do if your child fails to understand you in your first language?*

- *Is literacy important? If yes, how do you encourage your child to read and write in Ukrainian?*
  - *Do you have high expectations regarding your child's heritage language proficiency?*
  - *What would you do differently in terms of your family language if you had a chance to return back in time when you just arrived in Canada?*
6. Your attitudes towards recent events in Ukraine.
- *Do you have family, relatives, or friends in Ukraine? Are you in touch with them?*
  - *What influenced your understanding of the events in Ukraine since the end of 2013? Were you or any of your close relatives affected by the changes?*
  - *Do you think those dramatic events in Ukraine influenced your family languages/attitudes towards Ukraine and the Ukrainian language? If yes, please explain how.*
  - *Did you talk about the political events in Ukraine with your children? How did you help them to make sense of what happened?*
  - *How do you view the status of Ukrainian at present? Any speculations regarding the language and culture in Ukraine in case of joining the European Union or further annexation of lands by Russia?*

Do you have any questions/comments for me before we finish our conversation?

Thank you so much for your participation in this project!

## Appendix B

**Prompts for writing personal journals/stories**

Dear Participant,

Thank you very much for participating in our interviews and sharing your experience regarding Ukrainian language maintenance in your family. To help me better understand the role of Ukrainian in your relationships with your child(ren), I ask you to keep a personal journal for about 4-5 weeks writing your observations, feelings, reflections, questions, comments, blogs or stories about your experience in maintaining Ukrainian in your family.

You may consider looking at some prompts provided below or you may ignore them and write whatever you think may be important and relevant in terms of understanding your everyday experience of being a Ukrainian-speaking parent in Canada. I do not expect you to follow any specific guidelines, format or style. You may write in Ukrainian or English. Your stories may vary in length, and they do not have to be connected; in fact, you may share your vivid moments and memories from the past as well as write events that will happen over the next 4-5 weeks.

If you wish, you may consider the following questions while writing your personal journal:

- 1) What family activities do you do together with your children that involve speaking Ukrainian only? How often do you engage in them?
- 2) Have you ever wanted to give up Ukrainian and switch to English? What kind of motivation did you find to maintain speaking Ukrainian to your child?

- 3) What language(s) do you speak when you have disagreements (or teachable moments) with your child?
- 4) Describe some situations when you were compelled to speak English with your child. What was your child's reaction? How did you feel?
- 5) What prevents your child from being more proficient in Ukrainian?
- 6) Can you share some specific episodes when you were really proud of your child's ability to speak Ukrainian? If possible, please provide details regarding the event.
- 7) Do you think your child will speak more or less Ukrainian 10-15 years from now? How do you think this may affect your relationships?

Thank you very much for sharing your stories! You can email them to me ([kharchen@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:kharchen@myumanitoba.ca)) or if you prefer to have a personal meeting, let me know what date, time and location will work for you.

## Appendix C

**Final interview questions**

*(these questions will be translated into Ukrainian; the questions will not necessarily be asked in this order)*

1. Can you tell me what activities or events your child has been engaged in since our last meeting (e.g. attending a new heritage school or program; visiting Ukraine; participating in some Ukrainian cultural events etc)?
2. How are you preparing to celebrate Ukrainian winter holidays (e.g. колядки, щедрівки i.e. traditional Ukrainian songs performed during winter holidays; going to church etc)? Any activities you're planning to do as a family? Do you also celebrate Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup>?
3. In your previous interview, you mentioned literacy skills were important. How often do you engage in literacy activities with your child(ren)? For how long? Who initiates these activities? Has this practice changed over the last few months?
4. What language do you think your child feels most comfortable with at the moment?
5. You previously mentioned the importance of outside resources (heritage schools, bilingual programs, books etc). What percentage would you allocate to your contribution in language maintenance as a parent and the contribution of heritage or bilingual schools?
6. Can you think of anything that could provide more opportunities for your child(ren) to speak Ukrainian?
7. What are some major barriers or challenges you face trying to maintain your home language?
8. Do you think that in your family both parents are committed to language maintenance?

9. How would you finish this sentence “My home language is important to my child(ren) because.....”?
10. What have you learned from participating in this project?
11. Would you like to add or tell me more about something we discussed in our previous interview? What do you think I should know as a parent of a multilingual child? Any advice you could give to other immigrant parents of Ukrainian background?
12. Do you have any questions/comments for me before we finish our conversation?

Thank you again for your participation in this project!

## Appendix D

**Final interview questions (translated in Ukrainian)***Заключні запитання*

1. Чи ваша дитина (діти) приймала участь або відвідувала якісь україномовні заходи з моменту нашої останньої зустрічі (наприклад: нова школа або програма, поїздка в Україну, участь в українських культурних заходах і т.д.)?
2. Як ви готуетесь відзначити українські зимові свята (наприклад: колядки, щедрівки, піти до церкви і т.д.)? Якісь сімейні заходи можливо? Ви також святкуєте Різдво 25 грудня?
3. У вашому попередньому інтерв'ю ви згадували навички письма і читання. Як часто ви займаєтесь цим з дитиною (дітьми)? Як довго? Хто ініціює ці заходи? Ця практика змінилася якось за останні кілька місяців?
4. Якою мовою ви думаєте ваша дитина відчуває себе найбільш комфортно на даний момент?
5. Ви раніше відзначили важливість зовнішніх ресурсів (української школи, двомовних програм, книг і т.д.). Який відсоток ви вважаєте можна виділити на ваш внесок у підтримання рідної мови як батьків, і який відсоток належить україномовній школі та іншим ресурсам?
6. Як ви вважаєте можна надати більше можливостей для вашої дитини (дітей) говорити українською мовою?
7. Які основні перешкоди або проблеми, з якими ви стикаєтесь, намагаючись зберегти свою рідну мову?
8. Чи вважаєте ви, що у вашій родині обоє батьків однаково підтримують рідну мову?

9. Як би ви закінчили це речення "Моя рідна мова має важливе значення для моєї дитини (дітей), тому що ....."?
10. Ви щось дізналися від участі в цьому проекті?
11. Ви хочете можливо щось додати або розповісти мені більше про щось що ми обговорювали в нашому попередньому інтерв'ю? Що ви думаєте, я повинна знати як мати багатомовної дитини? Будь-які поради які ви могли б дати іншим батькам українського походження?
12. Чи є у вас які-небудь питання / коментарі для мене, перш ніж ми закінчимо нашу розмову?

Дякую за участь у цьому проекті!

## Appendix E

## Participants' Profile

<i>Participants' pseudonyms</i>	<i>Originally from</i>	<i>Length of residence in Canada</i>	<i>Number of children and their age</i>	<i>Languages spoken at home</i>
<b>Andriy</b>	western Ukraine	14 years	daughter 24 son 12	Ukrainian only
<b>Olesya</b>	western Ukraine	3 years	twins (daughters 11)	Ukrainian only
<b>Nadiya</b>	western Ukraine	3 years	son 4	Ukrainian only
<b>Sofiya</b>	western Ukraine	11 years	son 10 daughter 6	Ukrainian only
<b>Ruslana</b>	western Ukraine (husband from central Ukraine)	4 years	son 4 son 2.5	Ukrainian and Russian
<b>Yuliya</b>	southern Ukraine (husband from eastern Ukraine), but they lived in central Ukraine)	3 years	daughter 11	mostly Russian
<b>Ludmyla</b>	eastern Ukraine	3 years	daughter 19 son 4	Ukrainian and Russian
<b>Tetiana</b>	central Ukraine	3.5 years	daughter 17 daughter 10	Ukrainian and Russian
<b>Inna</b>	Crimea (lived in southern and eastern Ukraine)	2 years	daughter 10	Russian

<b>Mariya</b>	central Ukraine	17 years	son 19 daughter 11 daughter 4	Ukrainian and Russian
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## Appendix F

**Volunteer recruitment letter**

UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

Volunteer recruitment

I, Nataliya Kharchenko, am a graduate student from the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. I am doing the research project examining the parental strategies and challenges in encouraging their children to maintain the Ukrainian language in Canada.

I am looking for volunteers who are 1) Canadian permanent residents or citizens of Ukrainian speaking background who have lived in Canada for at least three years; 2) who has at least one child from 3 to 16 years old; 3) able to spend between two and three hours being interviewed about their family language practice.

If you are interested in participating in this project, you can contact me at [kharchen@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:kharchen@myumanitoba.ca) or by telephone at XXXX.

## Appendix G

**Consent form**

UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

Project title: Home is Where You Speak Your Mother Tongue: Heritage Language

Maintenance in Ukrainian Immigrant Families in Canada

Researcher: Nataliya Kharchenko

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 me. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This study is being conducted by a graduate student from the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada, Nataliya Kharchenko. The purpose of this project is to analyze the parental strategies and challenges in encouraging their children to maintain the Ukrainian language in Canada.

This research project is being completed in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree Doctor of Philosophy. All the documents generated from this study as well as the findings of the project will be shared with my committee members and advisor Dr. Sandra Kouritzin.

You are asked to consent to two interviews which should each last no more than one hour. The time and location of the interview will be determined by mutual convenience. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim and will examine the successful

parental strategies in maintaining Ukrainian in Canada. You will be asked to express your perspective regarding the importance of the Ukrainian language in your family context and evaluate the abilities of your children to speak their heritage language. I will also ask you to define the influences (if there are any) of the recent events in Ukraine on linguistic landscapes of your family. A copy of the interview transcript will be returned to you so that you can check the accuracy of my representation of what you have said which should take approximately 2 more hours of your time. All data (recorded and written) will be destroyed at the completion of the thesis. There are no risks involved in this study. Direct benefits include the possibility to be informed about the study results, and the opportunity to compare the attitudes towards heritage language maintenance among Ukrainian-speaking immigrant families in Canada.

Please understand that you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation in this study at any time, without prejudice or consequence, by simply contacting me. Please be assured that your confidentiality will be maintained at all times. At no time will your name or any closely identifying information be included in any documents generated from this study. You may choose a pseudonym for yourself if you like. All interview information received from you will be stored digitally by pseudonym on a computer to which only the researcher will have access. The informed consent sheet containing your name will not be kept with the interview data and will be stored in a locked drawer in the researcher's house where only she has access to it, avoiding the possibility of connecting your name to any information that you have given. You have the opportunity to request a copy of the summary of the study's result.

The study has been approved by the ENREB. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Nataliya Kharchenko at XXXX, or by email [kharchen@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:kharchen@myumanitoba.ca)

If you are interested in participating in this study, please read the following statement and sign and date it. One copy is yours.

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in this study. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time by simply telling the researcher. I have read and understood the above description of the study. I understand that my privacy will be safeguarded as explained above. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns, I may contact the researcher and/or the researcher's advisor Dr. Sandra Kouritzin at the email given above.

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 this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher 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 questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice 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.

This research has been approved by the ENREB. If you have any concern or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Signature of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive a summary report of the findings:

\_\_\_\_\_  
YES

\_\_\_\_\_  
NO

Please mail a summary report of the findings at:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_