

Positive attitudes are not enough: Minority language survival in the Canadian Prairies

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Abstract

We compared French speaking and South Asian (SA) immigrant families having preschool children in an English speaking region in Canada, with regard to the parents' attitudes towards minority language (ML) maintenance, ML use at home, and exposure of children to ML media. Parents in both groups had positive attitudes about language maintenance, however, SA parents were less hopeful that their children would retain their ML and pass it on to their next generations. SA parents made less effort to communicate with their children in the ML and provided less ML media for children at home, in comparison to their French counterparts. We discuss the results with respect to the relative position and utility of maintaining these minority languages in Canada and how these factors might influence parents' language choices.

Key words: Language maintenance, Language shift, Minority languages.

Introduction

With a surge in immigrants from all parts of the world in recent decades, Canada has become an increasingly multicultural and multilingual nation (Statistics Canada, 2006). Despite government policies that support the retention of their culture and language by minority groups (Edwards, 1998; Noels & Clément, 1998), and positive attitudes towards multiculturalism in the population (Berry, 1992; Berry & Kalin, 1995), minority groups have been shown to lose their language over the course of a few generations (Fishman, 1972; Veltman 1983; Glen & DeJong, 1996).

However, a few minority groups have been more successful than others in maintaining their minority language (ML) across subsequent generations. Majority language proficiency is essential for successful intercultural communication with the host nationals and with people from other ethnic groups in the host culture. ML proficiency facilitates contacts with the ethnic group members and aids psychological adaptation of immigrants (Ward, 1996). Parents' attitudes towards ML survival, language of communication among family members, and language of the media for children, are some of the factors that are associated with ML survival in minority group families. In this study, we compare ML retention in a native French-Canadian group to a South-Asian (SA) immigrant group in an English-speaking region of Canada.

French and English were recognized as the official languages of Canada in 1982 with the adoption of Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which provided constitutional guarantee

for language equality and ML education (McRae, 1998). Within the framework of official bilingualism, Canada has a policy of official multiculturalism, which encourages ethnic groups to maintain their culture and develop as distinct groups and discourages assimilation. The government of Canada (1971) emphasized the importance of languages in achieving the objective of a multicultural society through its commitment to preserve the use of languages other than French and English, and to strengthen the status and use of official languages of Canada (Noels & Clément, 1998). Research has shown that there is acceptance of multiculturalism and high tolerance for diverse cultural groups among the Canadian population as a whole (see Berry & Kalin, 1995; Kalin & Berry, 1995). As a general rule, studies done with immigrant families have shown that parents hold positive attitudes toward maintaining their ML (Arnberg, 1987; Lao, 2004; Stoessel, 2002; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2003). While parents in immigrant families realize the need to learn the majority language by their children in order to adapt and succeed in the society, they also have positive affect towards their ethnic language which they want to pass on to their children (Stoessel, 2002; Wyatt-Brown, 1995).

Despite government policies that support the preservation of non-official languages, general positive attitudes towards multiculturalism in the population and positive attitudes for ML survival among parents in minority group families, most immigrant groups show a decline in the use of their ethnic language in the second and third generation (Castonguay, 1998; O'Bryan, Reitz, & Kuplowska, 1976).

Language shift

Language shift has been defined as a shift from the habitual use of one language to another language and includes both intergenerational and intragenerational shift (DeVries, 1994). Immigrant groups in North America have typically followed a three-generation model of Anglicization that was formulated by Joshua Fishman (1972) and Calvin Veltman (1983). According to this model, first generation immigrants learn English but prefer to use their ML at home; second generation immigrants grow up as bilinguals, but they become more fluent in English and prefer to use English at home with their parents (Lopez, 1996). As English becomes the main language spoken at home, third generation immigrants only have a fragmentary knowledge of their mother tongue (Fishman, 1972; Veltman, 1983; Glenn & DeJong, 1996). ML's are rapidly disappearing in subsequent generations in the immigrant groups in the USA (Fishman, 1991; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Alba, Logan, Lutz & Stults, 2002; Wong-Fillmore, 1991) and Europe (Extra & Verhoeven, 1999) and a similar trend has been shown for ML's spoken by immigrant groups in Canada (Castonguay, 1998).

Language shift is not inevitable and can be buffered by a number of factors in the environment. The language behavior of people can be placed on a continuum from exclusive use of the ML to an exclusive use of English, where most people lie in between (Stoessel, 2002). In the absence of adequate interaction opportunities in ML in the host culture, parents in immigrant families play a critical role in ML learning of their children (Lao, 2004; Li, 1999). Speaking the ML to their children at home, providing ML media (Flege, Yeni-Komshain & Liu, 1999), providing access to institutions that use ML, and enrolling children in ML programs are just some of the ways in which parents can prevent the language shift to English (Kondo, 1998; Portes & Hao, 1998; Tse, 2001). Having opportunities to interact in the ML with family members, relatives and other

people in the outside community can reduce language shift in immigrant communities (Hulsen, De bot, & Weltans, 2002; Portes & Hao, 1998). Fewer opportunities for ML interaction and lack of media in ML have been shown to bring about rapid language shift (e.g. the Dutch in New Zealand) (Hulsen, De bot, & Weltans, 2002). Community organizations like churches, clubs, and other ethnic group associations also play a significant role in language maintenance by motivating people to use the ML in various contexts (Hinton, 1999; Pak, 2003).

One notable exception to the general rule of language shift is French in English-majority parts of Canada, such as the Prairies. Across Canada, the French speaking population is concentrated in Quebec, parts of Ontario and New Brunswick, whereas most of the other regions in Canada are primarily comprised of English-speaking population (Statistics Canada, 2006). In Anglophone regions in Canada, a large proportion of children in French speaking families are bilingual in French and English and French is the language commonly spoken in families (Aunger, 1999). French has survived in the Prairies for well over 100 years, due to the existence of French-language institutions, a strong francophone identity and preference for bilingualism (Aunger, 1999).

While studies have reported parents' positive attitudes about maintaining their ML in subsequent generations, there is little research about what parents do to maintain their ML. Information about the language-use and behaviors in families can provide insight into what role the family plays in language maintenance in ML groups. The purpose of this study was to compare French-speaking parents living in Canada, with parents who immigrated from a South Asian country to Canada. We are interested in their attitudes towards maintaining their ML, use of ML at home as well as exposure to ML media at home. Before turning to the specific research questions, we briefly describe the linguistic context of the community in which the study was carried out.

The study

This study was carried out in the city of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, a city in the Canadian Prairies. Edmonton is primarily an English-speaking region in Canada where the mother tongue of 78% people is English, but 99% of the population can speak English. French is the second most common language and is spoken by 7.7% people and 2.3% have French as their mother tongue. Of the total population of Edmonton, 1.9% are of South Asian origin and are likely to have a South Asian language as their mother tongue. Due to many languages spoken in South Asia, census data puts South Asian languages in the category of 'other languages'; but 1.3% of people in Edmonton reported Punjabi (language spoken in parts of India and Pakistan) as their mother tongue (all population statistics taken from Statistics Canada, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, French is an official language in Canada, and occupies a higher status than other MLs. Various provisions facilitate learning French outside of home. There are five elementary schools and two high school programs in Edmonton aimed at teaching native French-speaking children. In addition, Edmonton has several French immersion programs, aimed at immersing English-speaking children in French. More than 15 schools in Edmonton offer French immersion programs (http://districtsite.epsb.ca/root/ShowProgramProfile.cfm?Program_ID=5).

In the English language schools, French is often taught as a core subject for one period in a day or for several hours in a week. There are also facilities for preschool children in French (one day-care centre and several French day-homes; as well as several part-time preschool programs). The University of Alberta also houses the Campus St. Jean, a French language university program (offering both undergraduate and graduate degrees). Edmonton is the capital of Alberta and many federal level departments are located in Edmonton. Federal programs often require functional bilingualism in French and English.

Immigrants from South Asia do not necessarily share a single common language. Some of the languages include Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Telugu and Marathi. There are no schools or preschools in South Asian languages that we know about. However, due to a high number of immigrants from South Asia in Edmonton, there is some support for learning South Asian languages in the community. The public library stocks children's books in Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, and Punjabi (<http://www.epl.ca/EPLMaster.cfm?ID=BILINGUALCHI0001>). There are at least two ML Saturday schools for learning SA languages managed by South Asian community organizations. In addition, there are some informal activity classes for children where they can learn about their culture, traditions and religion and these are available in both English and South Asian languages. Bilingualism is a part of life in South Asia and South Asians are likely to hold positive views about bilingualism, however there are not many obvious economic benefits of knowing SA languages, compared to French in Canada.

Due to the distinctly different histories and status of French and South Asian languages in Canada, the benefits and thus the expectations for maintaining ML's might be different. However, previous research has shown that parents in most immigrant groups expect and strive to maintain their ML in the next generation.

Research questions

In this study, we will ask parents about language use in the day-to-day family interactions and exposure to ML media for children at their homes. We compare two groups – French and SA immigrant groups in Canada, in order to understand some of the reasons for the success of French groups (relative to South Asians) in language maintenance in Canada. Because there are French immersion schools but there are no schools for SA languages in Edmonton, we assumed that there would be differences in language attitudes and usage in families with school-aged children. For this reason, we focused on the parents of preschoolers, between 2 and 5 years of age.

The research questions for the study are as follows:

- Do parents in French and South Asian families consider it important for their children to speak the language as adults and pass it on to their children? Based on the results of previous studies, we expect that parents in both groups will want to retain their ML in subsequent generations.
- Do parents in French and South Asian families use, and encourage their children to use their ML at home when interacting with other family members? Our sample comprises of 2-5 year old children and so their language choices might be less affected by the outside

community. In the absence of influence of the outside community in children's language choices, we will expect that parents from both groups will encourage the use of ML in the day-to-day family interactions. Since most South Asians reported to be fluent in their ML, we expect that they will use their ML as the main language of communication at home.

- Is there a difference in French and South Asian groups in the choice of language of media, like TV, books and videos for children? More exposure to ML at home is related to higher rate of ML survival in minority groups (Flege, Yeni-Komshian & Liu, 1999; Patterson, 2002) and one of the reasons for the failure of SA parents to maintain their ML could be the lack of exposure to ML media at home.

Methods

Participants

The sample comprised of parents of 2-5 years old children from 34 French speaking and 31 South Asian immigrant families. Most questionnaires were completed by the mothers with the exception of 5 questionnaires that were completed by fathers in our French sample and 3 that were completed by fathers in our SA sample. In the French group there were 18 boys and 17 girls and the average age of the children was 3.5 years ($SD = 0.8$ years), and the average age of parents was 35.5 years ($SD = 4.0$ years). All except for two mothers in the French sample were married and they were living with their spouses. All French participants were Canadian citizens and were born in Canada. For the French group, the mother tongue of participants was either French or English, but only 45.5% of parents had the same mother tongue as their spouse. However, at least one of them had French as his/her mother tongue. In the French group 60.0 % of mothers and 36.4% of fathers were fluent in French, 14.3% of mothers and 51.5 % of fathers were more fluent in English and the remaining were fluent in both English and French. More mothers (56%) than fathers (32.3%) used French more frequently and 38.2% of mothers and 67.7% of fathers reported to use English more frequently for their daily interactions.

The South Asian group was comprised of immigrants from India (25 participants) and from Pakistan (6 participants). In the SA immigrant group there were 13 boys and 18 girls, the average age of children was 4.3 years ($SD = 0.9$ years) and the average age of parents was 32.5 years ($SD = 2.6$ years). All except one mother in the SA sample were married and living with their spouses. In the SA sample most participants were Canadian citizens (62.3%) (though not born in Canada) or permanent residents (35.5%). Only one participant was in Canada on a student visa. On average, mothers had been living in Canada for 6.0 years ($SD = 2.5$ years) and fathers had been living in Canada for 6.6 years ($SD = 3.1$ years). The SA participants reported 7 different languages as their mother tongue and none of them reported English as his/her mother tongue. All parents in the SA sample had the same mother tongue as their spouse. Most South Asian parents reported to be more fluent in their ML (77.4 % of mothers and 64.5% of fathers) and the remaining SA participants reported to be fluent in both English and their ML. Most SA participants (77.4% of mothers and 64.5% of fathers) reported to use their ML more frequently than English and only 3.2% of mothers and 16.1% of fathers said that they used English more frequently.

Participants were contacted through daycares and also through snowball sampling. We gave the questionnaires, with clear instructions about how to answer the questions, and a consent form (with our contact information) to parents. We also provided a prestamped envelope addressed to the researcher so that parents could return the completed questionnaire through mail. Parents received a five dollar honorarium for completing the questionnaire. We estimated that it would take approximately half an hour for parents to complete the questionnaire. For the French participants, the questionnaires were available in French as well as in English, but for South Asian participants the questionnaires were available in English only. We did not prepare questionnaires in ML for the South Asian groups as the participants speak many different languages and it would have been difficult to construct questionnaires in all the different South Asian languages. Furthermore, most participants in the SA immigrant group can easily understand, read, and write in English.

Questionnaire

In the questionnaires, we collected information about each parents' mother tongue, the frequency and fluency of ML use (or English) as well as the number of years they have lived in Canada. To gain information about parents' expectations and hopes that their ML would be maintained in subsequent generations, we asked parents what language they would want their children to use with their children and which language they thought their children would use with their children. We also asked what language parents thought that their children would use as adults. For questions about language use in the family, we asked the respondents to fill out a chart detailing which language is used by each family member to each one of the other family members. We provided parents with a list of activities for children and asked parents to report which activities their children were involved in as well as the language used for each activity. In order to fully understand children's exposure to media in the ML, we asked parents about the proportion of ML use in some common activities such as books, TV programs, and videotapes (see Appendix for the questionnaire).

Results

Expectations

We compared the expectations about language maintenance in the two groups using Chi-square tests. The results are presented in percentages to make it easier to compare the two groups. Both groups of parents answered similarly in response to the question concerning which language they would like their children to speak with their children: neither group chose 'only English'. A higher number of French parents than SA parents wanted their children to speak both languages to their children, which shows a preference for bilingualism in the French group, but the difference was not significant ($p = .13$). There was, however, a noticeable difference in the parents' answers to which language they thought their children would speak. French-speaking parents were more likely to respond both French and English while SA immigrant parents were likely to respond English ($p < .01$). None of the SA parents and only few of the French parents were hopeful that their children would speak mainly ML as adults. However, most French parents thought that their children would speak both French and English while most SA parents thought that their children would speak only English (Table 1).

Table 1

Parents expectations about language use of children as adults

| | French | | | South Asian | | | Chi Square | P |
|--------------------------|--------|------|------|-------------|------|------|------------|-------|
| | ML | Eng | Both | ML | Eng | Both | | |
| Language they would like | 37.5 | 0 | 56.3 | 55.2 | 0 | 31.0 | 4.1 | .13 |
| Language they think | 17.9 | 3.6 | 78.6 | 10.0 | 60.0 | 30.0 | 21.11 | .00* |
| Speak as adults | 2.9 | 17.6 | 79.4 | 0 | 60.0 | 40.0 | 12.56 | .002* |

NOTE: For the language they would like their children to speak, the percentages do not add up to 100% as a few of the parents in both groups said that it is not important for them what language their children speak to their children.

Language use at home

We asked parents what language they use to speak to their parents and in what language their children speak to them. If more than one child was in the house, we asked parents about which language they used to talk to each child and also about which language children used to talk to each other. We found that relatively more parents in French, than in SA families spoke to their children in English. However, across both groups, the trend was similar and most parents spoke to their children in their ML. There was a difference in parents' choice of language while speaking with their spouse in the two groups (Chi square = 26.12, $p < .001$). While all SA parents spoke to each other in their ML, many parents in French families spoke to each other in English or both in French and English equally (Table 2).

Table 2

Language choice of parents with their children

| | French | | | South Asian | | | Chi Square | P |
|---------|--------|---------|------|-------------|---------|------|------------|------|
| | ML | English | Both | ML | English | Both | | |
| Mother | 72.7 | 15.2 | 12.1 | 64.5 | 9.7 | 25.8 | 2.14 | .33 |
| Father | 54.8 | 22.6 | 22.6 | 63.3 | 6.7 | 30.0 | 3.12 | .19 |
| Parents | 26.7 | 50.0 | 23.3 | 89.7 | 0 | 10.3 | 26.12 | .00* |

A similar trend was found for SA families. Children in both groups reported to use more ML than English to communicate with their parents. However, when asked about the choice of language for communicating with siblings, most French children communicated to their siblings in French while SA children communicated to their siblings in English (Chi square = 10.87; $p < .001$) (Table 3). Children in SA families used more English with their parents, than their parents used for communicating with them (Table 2 and 3). Thus, children from SA families had started to use English to communicate with their parents even though parents were using English to a lesser extent in their interactions.

Table 3

Language choice of children in family communication

| | French | | | South Asian | | | F | P |
|----------|--------|---------|------|-------------|---------|------|-------|------|
| | ML | English | Both | ML | English | Both | | |
| Mother | 72.7 | 12.1 | 15.2 | 45.2 | 29.0 | 25.8 | 5.12 | .08 |
| Father | 54.8 | 32.3 | 12.9 | 41.9 | 32.3 | 25.8 | 1.88 | .39 |
| Siblings | 72.2 | 5.6 | 22.2 | 36.4 | 54.5 | 9.1 | 10.87 | .00* |

When parents were asked about the reasons for their choice of language of communication with their children the two most common reasons given were: concern of maintaining the ML (72.2% SA and 73.3% French) and comfort (39% SA and 33.3% French). Only a few French parents said that they wanted their children to be bilingual and that is the reason for encouraging them to speak in French in addition to speaking in English.

Language of media for children at home

We collected information about some of the activities at home that children engage in SA and French families. We asked parents about the language of the media present at home for children such as books, TV, videotapes, computer games and rhymes told to children. After comparing the responses of participants from the two groups, using chi-square analysis, we found that children in both groups engaged frequently in these activities but there was a difference in the language of these activities in the two groups. In French families, most of these activities were either in French or in both English and French. In contrast, most of these activities were in English in SA families. Some activities like computer games are not available in SA languages and so none of the SA families in which children played computer games had these games in a SA language. We also asked parents about the percentage of books, videotapes and DVD's for children that were in English. There was a big difference in the language choice for these activities in French and SA families. For books, 87% SA parents and only 26% French parents

said that more than half of the books for children at their home were in English. A similar trend was found for videotapes and DVD's and 73% SA and only 23% French parents reported to have more than half of the videotapes and DVD's for children in English (Table 4). These findings are particularly striking as these activities are easily available in the ML and for themselves, parents in both groups, had these activities in both English and the ML. In fact more French parents, than SA parents, had these activities only in English for themselves (Table 5).

Table 4

Language of media for children

| | French | | | South Asian | | | F value | P |
|------------|--------|---------|------|-------------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | ML | English | Both | ML | English | Both | | |
| TV | 20.7 | 6.9 | 72.4 | 0 | 44.8 | 55.2 | 14.74 | .00* |
| Videotapes | 30.3 | 3.0 | 66.7 | 3.3 | 33.3 | 63.3 | 14.84 | .00* |
| Books | 32.4 | 0 | 67.6 | 0 | 70.0 | 30.0 | 38.02 | .00* |
| Rhymes | 56.7 | 3.3 | 40.0 | 0 | 64.0 | 36.0 | 30.46 | .00* |

Table 5:

Language of the media for adults

| | French | | | South Asian | | | F value | P |
|------------|--------|---------|------|-------------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | ML | English | Both | ML | English | Both | | |
| TV | 0 | 35.5 | 64.5 | 0 | 3.4 | 96.6 | 9.6 | .00* |
| Videotapes | 3.1 | 46.9 | 50.0 | 10.7 | 0 | 89.3 | 17.79 | .00* |
| Books | 14.7 | 17.6 | 67.6 | 4.2 | 41.7 | 54.2 | 4.87 | .09 |

Language of activities outside home

We collected information about children's language use in activities outside their homes. We found that, French children were involved in more activities outside of home than SA children. This was despite the fact that the average age of SA children is slightly higher than that of the French children in this sample. When asked about the language choice for these activities, for SA

families (except for a few classes and sports activities), the activities were in English. A few parents in SA families reported that their child participated in sports and classes with their ML friends. Besides the reported activities mentioned in this study the SA kids were not involved in any other activity in ML. Most of the French children, on the other hand were involved in one or more activities in French outside of home.

Discussion

This study compared the motivation for and efforts made towards maintaining ML in both French and SA immigrant families in Canada. We investigated attitudes towards maintaining ML by studying parents' choice of language for communication and choice of language of media for children. The results showed that while both groups held positive attitudes about teaching their ML to their children, and wanted it to survive even in the next generation, South Asians were less hopeful than French Canadians of their success in maintaining their ML. We also found that despite their positive attitudes towards ML maintenance, SA parents provided less ML exposure to their children through media and activities outside of home, compared to their French counterparts. We discuss some of the probable reasons for the above results based on previous research findings and the relative status and utility of learning French and SA languages in Canada.

As for the finding regarding parents' expectations about ML survival, we found that similar to previous research in the area of language maintenance (Tse, 2000; Park & Sarkar, 2007), parents in both groups wanted their children to learn their ML. Most of them said that they wanted their children to pass on the language to subsequent generations and speak to their own children in their ML in future. Similar to other findings in this area (Stoessel, 2002), participants in this study also mentioned the benefits of speaking ML for maintaining contact with relatives in their home country as an important motivator for maintaining their ML. French parents also held positive views about maintaining their ML in subsequent generations. However, the two groups differed in their expectations about whether or not their children would be able to successfully learn their ML and whether it would be maintained in subsequent generations. Most French parents in our study were hopeful that their children would be proficient French speakers as adults and would use French for communicating with their children. On the other hand, the SA parents thought that their children would mainly speak English as adults and would communicate primarily in English to their children, when they became parents in future. SA parents' expectations are in tune with the finding that ML is typically lost in subsequent generations (Fishman, 1972; Veltman, 1983). Since our sample comprised of parents of pre-school children, parents would not have experienced the language shift to English when children start to attend English language schools (Stoessel, 2002) and therefore this expectation is due to other factors.

One reason for SA parents' pessimistic view on ML maintenance in their children can be that these parents have witnessed the shift to the majority language that occurs in other children. This language shift is particularly seen when these children attend school and as a result engage in more activities outside of home. Even when the parents did not have any school-aged child, they are in contact with other ML families who are experiencing this phenomenon of language shift. A second reason can be found in the lack of language support programs for children in

Edmonton. The French participants, on the other hand are hopeful that they will be able to maintain their ML with support of learning resources provided in the outside community.

The two groups differ in their efforts provided for maintaining the ML in their children. Parents in both groups generally talk to their children in the ML, which corresponds with their motivation to teach their ML to their children. However, many parents in both groups use English to communicate with their children. French participants use English to communicate with their spouse, either because their spouse doesn't speak French or because he/she is more proficient in English than in French. All SA participants, on the other hand, had a ML as their mother tongue and this was the common language for the mother and the father and all of them used the ML to communicate with each other. This demonstrates that many parents in SA families are making an effort to switch to English when communicating with their children even though they prefer to talk in their ML, as they would with their spouse even when they are fluent English speakers. On the contrary, many French parents are making an effort to switch to French, even when it is not the language they choose when talking to their spouse. The trend towards language shift in SA families is also obvious in the choice of language children use when talking to their siblings, which is usually English. Children in French families seem to be retaining the ML and choose to talk in French to their siblings. Thus despite a great amount of ML exposure in both French and SA families, a subtle indication of the expected language shift in SA families can be found in children's language preference in their interactions with family members. Parents give in to their language choice and further bring about this language shift by speaking in English to them.

Besides differences in the choice of language of communication in French and SA families, we also found differences in the two groups in the exposure to ML media such as T.V., books, rhymes, and videotapes. Parents in SA families select English language books, videotapes etc. even though they are available in SA languages in Edmonton. Even for simple activities such as nursery rhymes, which are available in the ML, most parents in SA families still use English. However, for themselves, SA parents use more ML media (such as videotapes, T.V.), which reiterates the fact that the choice of English language media for children is not because of the lack of availability of ML media. French parents provide ML media to their children much more than the SA families. The use of English alongside their ML is understandable, due to the easier access to English language media, but the effort to provide exposure to ML media in French families marks a clear difference in the strategy to retain the ML in the two groups.

Community and social networks affect language choices in ML families (Milroy, 1987; Stoessel, 2002). Language retention can be an arduous task for families when there is the absence of community support for learning a language. There is formidable community support for learning French for children in Edmonton and most parents in this study presented opportunities to their children for exposure to activities in French outside of home. The choice of English for outdoor activities by SA families is understandable due to lack of availability of outdoor activities in SA languages. From these data we are unable to answer the question whether SA parents will select English even if these activities are available in SA languages. We are also not aware of whether parents in SA families are making efforts to provide facility for learning ML in schools in Alberta as there are provisions in place whereby school boards can contract a person or agency for ML education as is needed in the community (Canadian Educational Association, 1991). It is

likely that if there is enough interest for providing learning in SA languages outside of home, community resources for this purpose can be generated. We also collected data on a few Chinese families. Chinese is the largest minority group in Edmonton and the number of Chinese speakers in Edmonton is twice that of native French speakers. There are three Chinese and five elementary schools in Edmonton. Similar to SA participants we found that most Chinese parents expected to send their children to English schools and were less hopeful that they would be able to prevent language shift in subsequent generations.

The results from this study show that despite positive attitudes towards language maintenance, the SA families exert less effort, compared to their French counterparts to pass the ML to their children. One reason which gives French an edge over other ML in Canada is the utility of French as a result of its official status in the country. On the other hand, due to high linguistic diversity in South Asia, any South Asian language provides facility to communicate only with a select group of people, who are likely to be bilingual in English. With the spread of English in South Asia and the lessening of contact with the home country in subsequent generations for immigrants, parents might perceive learning a SA language for their children as something that is not as useful. However, we would expect that the lack of incentive for learning a ML would influence the motivation of parents to pass it on to their children, which was not the case for the SA parents in our study. Perhaps the responses are influenced by the value of maintaining one's ML but the motivation of parents to help their children adjust and succeed in the majority culture becomes a primary concern for parents in SA immigrant families (Grosjean, 1982). As parents expect their children to become successfully adjusted adults in an English speaking society, they are less confident that their child will be able to retain the ML as an adult. French parents on the other hand, see the value of bilingualism in French and English for success in the majority culture even within a primarily English speaking region in Canada and thus are confident of retention of French by their children (Aunger, 1999).

The findings from this study indicate that one of the reasons for a higher rate of language shift in SA families, compared to French families, can be due to the day-to-day language behaviors at home. While both groups held positive attitudes about ML retention, French parents made efforts to retain their language by providing ML media. This study highlights the need to collect information about the day-to-day behaviors in addition to information about attitudes related to ML maintenance since attitudes might not be clearly reflected in language behaviors and language choices. While efforts to provide community support for ML learning are required to ensure opportunities for learning language outside of home, a useful first step would be to create awareness among parents about the benefits of bilingualism for their children.

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Appendix

Language, Culture and Self Image Questionnaire

Background Information

Age (in years) _____

Gender: Male ___ Female ___

Marital status (check one):

Immigration status in Canada (check one):

___ Single

___ Canadian citizen

___ Married

___ Landed immigrant

___ Common-law

___ Visa student

___ Divorced

___ Refugee

___ Widowed

___ Other

Please write down the ages and check off the gender of your children:

Age: _____ Male ___ Female ___

Age: _____ Male ___ Female ___

Age: _____ Male ___ Female ___

Age: _____ Male _____ Female _____

Age: _____ Male _____ Female _____

Age: _____ Male _____ Female _____

If your spouse has regular contact with your children, please answer the following questions for both you and your spouse. If he/she does not, please answer the questions only for yourself.

| What is/are the mother tongue(s)? | You | Your spouse |
|---|-----|-------------|
| What other languages are spoken? | | |
| What is the most fluent language? | | |
| What language do you use most often? | | |
| What is the country of birth? | | |
| If you were born outside of Canada, how long have you lived in Canada? | | |
| If you were born outside of Canada, how long have you lived outside of your country of birth? | | |
| Where was your mother born? | | |
| How long has your mother lived in Canada? | | |
| Where was your father born? | | |
| How long has your father lived in Canada? | | |

Please check off all the people who live in the same house with you:

____ Your spouse or spousal equivalent

____ All of your children

____ Some of your children

____ Your mother or stepmother

____ Your father or stepfather

____ Your maternal aunt or aunts

____ Your paternal aunt or aunts

___ Your maternal uncle or uncles

___ Your paternal uncle or uncles

___ Your maternal grandmother

___ Your paternal grandmother

___ Your maternal grandfather

___ Your paternal grandfather

___ Your sister(s), half-sister(s) or stepsister(s)

___ Your brother(s), half-brother(s) or stepbrother(s)

For each person who lives in the house, please fill up the table about the choice of language in the table.

Example

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-------------|---------|--------|---|
| S P E A K E R | | Father | Mother | Elder child | Child | Others | - |
| | Father | - | Hindi | Hindi | Hindi | - | |
| | Mother | Hindi | - | Hindi | Hindi | - | |
| | Child | English | English | - | English | - | |
| | Child | English | Hindi | English | - | - | |
| | Others | - | - | - | - | - | |
| | - | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------------|-------|--|---|
| S P E A | | Father | Mother | Elder child | Child | | - |
| | Father | | | | | | |
| | Mother | | | | | | |
| | Child | | | | | | |
| | Child | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| K | | | | | | | |
| E | | | | | | | |
| R | | | | | | | |

Why do your family members speak the language(s) they do with each other?

How do you feel about your family members' language choice?

Children's proficiency

For any questions on this questionnaire involving children, please answer them with respect to your oldest child between the ages of two and five years. That child is _____ years old.

Does your child attend any of the following childcare facilities or activities outside the home? If yes, please give the approximate number of hours per week and the language(s) spoken there.

| | Yes or no? | If yes, approximate number of hours per week | Language(s) spoken |
|--|------------|--|--------------------|
| Daycare | | | |
| Preschool | | | |
| Play group | | | |
| Babysitter | | | |
| Grandparents or other relatives | | | |
| After school care | | | |
| Sports (e.g., soccer team, swimming lessons) | | | |
| Classes (e.g., dancing, art) | | | |
| Other : _____ | | | |

In your opinion, which language does your child speak better?

Hindi _____ English _____ Both about equally well _____

In your opinion, which language does your child understand better?

Hindi _____ English _____ Both about equally well _____

If your child already knows how to read, which language does he/she read better in?

Hindi _____ English _____ Both about equally well _____ Doesn't read yet _____

If your child already knows how to write, which language does he/she write better in?

Hindi _____ English _____ Both about equally well _____ Doesn't write yet _____

When your child is an adult, in your opinion which language do you think he/she will speak better?

Hindi _____ English _____ Both about equally well _____

Language and media

If the following activities take place in your home, what language(s) is/are used?

If the activities do not take place, put an X in the box.

| | Children | Adults |
|-------------------------|----------|--------|
| TV | | |
| Radio | | |
| Books | | |
| Videotapes, DVDs | | |
| Music (cassettes, CDs) | | |
| Songs sung to children | | |
| Nursery rhymes/poetry | | |
| Computer/Nintendo games | | |
| Other media | | |

About how often do you read to your child?

- a. my child already knows how to read
- b. at least once a day

- c. a few times a week
- d. at least once a week
- e. less than once a week

What are three of your child's favourite books? What language are they in?

Book title:

Language:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Out of the children's books in your home, approximately what percentage are written in English?

- a. 0%
- b. 1-25%
- c. 25-50%
- d. 50-75%
- e. 75-99%
- f. 100%
- g. there are no children's books in our home

Do you have rules for your children's television watching?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not relevant (he/she does not watch TV)

If yes, what are the rules?

If your child watches TV, please name his/her 3 favourite TV shows:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What do you think of TV programming available for children in Hindi?

Do you have rules for your children playing computer games?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not relevant (he/she does not play computer games)

If yes, what are the rules?

If your child plays computer games, please name his/her 3 favourite computer games and the language the games are in:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Does your child listen to music?

Yes No Not relevant

If so, what language(s) is the music in?

If your child watches children's videotapes or DVDs, what are three of your child's favourite?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My child does not watch videotapes or DVDs

Out of the children's videotapes or DVDs in your home, approximately what percentage are in English?

- a. 0%
- b. 1-25%
- c. 25-50%
- d. 50-75%
- e. 75-99%
- f. 100%
- g. there are no children's videotapes or DVDs in our home

About the Authors

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