Lost Language: Exploring heritage language loss among children of Ghanaian immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

by

Georgette Animwaa Quarmyne

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Abstract

Anecdotally speaking, heritage language (HL) loss among immigrant children of Ghanaian immigrants seems to be on the rise. This research seeks to contribute to the field of HL loss and maintenance by carrying out empirical research that had not been done before among children of Ghanaian immigrant families living in Calgary, Alberta. Using the exploratory case study approach, this qualitative study examined the reasons for HL loss among these children. Two qualitative data collection strategies, interviews and observations, were employed to obtain a comprehensive overview of the participants' experiences. Findings showed that the children's interest in learning the heritage language was closely tied to the cultural heritage pride of their parents; HL stereotypes and inferiority that the participants attached to the HL; their language socialization, and the international appeal and economic value attached to the English language. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the field of HL loss and maintenance by filling the gap in the dearth of empirical work available on HL loss among Ghanaian immigrants.

Keywords: *Language socialization, heritage language, bilingualism, language stereotypes*

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Chapter I

Introduction

No nation can survive without passing its heritage, language and, yes faith to the next generation…- Cal Thomas

Among the many characteristics and traits that differentiate people from different cultures all over the world is their heritage language (HL). According to Montrul (2015), the term "heritage language" was first coined in Canada in the 1970s to refer to minority languages (p. 13). The HL is defined by Cho (2000) "as the language associated with one's cultural background" (p. 369). As Ghanaians, the preservation of our HL from one generation to another has only been made possible through a conscious effort to use the HL regardless of the part of the world one finds him or herself. Evans (2015) alludes to this fact by pointing out that "the individual cannot be extricated from language and in fact the individual's identity is, at least to some extent, contained within language" (p. 16), which is a view largely shared by other HL advocates such as Barkhuizen (2006).

However, the individual is being extricated from their language as the use of the HL as a language of communication in the Ghanaian society is on a gradual decline. A few studies have weighed the role that the colonial European languages which now act as the official languages in most African countries have played on the continent's indigenous vernacular languages (Mufwene & Vigouroux, 2008) in the gradual loss of the HL.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that English is now the language of interaction among most Ghanaian migrant families in Calgary, with a few taking pride in the fact that even though their children cannot speak the HL, they take consolation in knowing that they do understand it. This

phenomenon is not new as existing literature available on HL loss among African migrant families suggests that within the family, parents' attitudes towards bilingualism, their beliefs about how children acquire language, their role in this process, and the value they place on language and cultural values all influence the linguistic choices made by family members (Barkhuizen, 2006).

Background

Rationale for the Research

This research is necessitated by the fact that there is presently very limited literature to explain the gradual loss of the HL among immigrant Ghanaian families living in Calgary. Also given that the majority of the existing literature available on HL loss provides reasons for this phenomenon but does so largely from the viewpoint of other ethnicities, and not the Ghanaian perspective, my research will add to the body of knowledge in the HL field by drawing on the Ghanaian immigrant experience.

I migrated to Calgary, Alberta seven years ago from my motherland, Ghana in West Africa, and I looked forward to meeting and interacting with fellow Ghanaian immigrant families but was shocked to find out that our HL was not the language of choice when Ghanaian immigrants gathered. This also piqued my interest in finding out the reasons that account for this gradual decline in the use of the Ghanaian HL among immigrant families living in Calgary. The literature review conducted gave varied reasons that account for this rather colonial mentality about the Ghanaian HL, notable amongst them was Obeng (1997, p. 72) who explains "that in Africa the English language is seen as a personal asset, as an instrument to promote one's personal career, as

a stepping stone to getting a job and as a social status marker," and this perception is certainly not limited to only Ghanaians living abroad but is deep seated and much worse in Ghana.

There is anecdotal evidence to back Obeng's assertion as one can point to the perception among middle class families living in Calgary where one's frequent usage of the HL is tied to their inability to fluently express themselves in the English language and as such belonging to a lower societal class. This perception that those who frequently interact in their HL are of a lower class could possibly be one of the reasons why the HL which was once upon a time a source of cultural heritage pride for many immigrants, is now a language that has been relegated to the background. It is worth noting however, that various studies have long recognized that maintaining one's heritage language, in addition to English is beneficial and has cognitive, social and cultural benefits as well (Cho, 2000).

With this gradual decline of the HL use among immigrant Ghanaian families in Calgary, comes a passion to conduct this research to find out the underlying reasons for this recent change in language behavior, and hopefully share and discuss my findings with the Ghanaian community on the need for us to preserve our cultural heritage through our HL, and explore possible next steps to reverse this trend.

Research Questions

Research questions serve as the linchpin of any study and provide a researcher with the focus needed to answer the research problem. According to Merrigan, Huston and Johnston (2012, p. 15), "research questions are interrogative statements that investigate processes or the relationships between variables." As such the research questions chosen in my study were focused, specific and formed the basis for my data collection. For research questions to be answerable,

narrowing and defining the scope of my research question was a process that involved the 'who', 'what' and 'how" which Booth, Sutton and Papaioannou (2016) believe to be an essential step in defining the scope of one's research questions which includes explicit and specific information about a topic that will allow the researcher to focus on the research question (p. 84).

In defining the scope of my research questions, the three elements that shaped my scope were the

WHO-who the research was about (immigrant parents and their children)

WHAT- what I needed to find out to answer my research questions

HOW-the method used for the research

It was also important that my research questions informed the purpose of my study and had the potential of adding to the existing literature by bridging the gap in knowledge and literature available on the subject of HL among Ghanaian immigrant families living in Calgary, Alberta.

Yin (2003, p. 7) is of the view that "defining the research questions is probably the most important step to be taken in a research study" and as such the process should be pursued with patience and diligence. With the above considerations in mind, the following questions were explored to enable me focus and comprehend the issue within the stated scope:

- What are the primary reasons why children of Ghanaian immigrants living in Calgary tend not to speak their HL?

- What role do immigrant parents play in the development and maintenance of their HL?

- What are the beliefs and attitudes of these children regarding the learning of their HL?

Review of pertinent literature

An analysis of the trends in my literature review revealed historical biases and prejudices that caused immigrant parents to prefer the use of the dominant language (English, Dutch, French) of their new society, to the detriment and loss of their HL. Lee, Brown and Yeung (2012), as well as Evans (2015), broadly discuss the political, cultural and socio-economic capital of the English language, and provide reasons why immigrant parents prefer their children to focus solely on English as their first language to the detriment of their HL. Aside the historical stereotypes mentioned, the perspectives of other authors reviewed largely revealed that, perceived advantages/disadvantages of *early bilingualism, heritage language stereotypes,* and *family language policy* were factors that determined whether children of immigrants will adopt their HL or not.

Study Limitations

This is a qualitative study, and therefore a hypothesis is not needed to carry out the research. However, the guiding hypothesis of the research is that social dynamics play a role in language acquisition by children. As such it is important to note that several factors could be responsible for this loss of HL among Ghanaian immigrant families, however for the purposes of this study, the objectives will be limited to the extent to which parents of children, as well as their wider social network contribute to HL loss among these children. Also, qualitative research is generally interested in an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon, and as such does not need a large sample size, hence my reason for choosing a small sample size as I believe the two families will be able to

provide the information that I need that will be much richer and deeper. In terms of generalizability, the research will connect with the existing literature on heritage language loss and maintenance to extend the conclusion of the research beyond its scope.

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Chapter II

Literature Review

Overview

Role of Parents

The literature also revealed the challenges surrounding the learning of heritage languages especially from a multilinguistic family, where both parents have different heritage languages. A study of Chinese-Australian families by Liang (2012) on how they nurture bilingualism in early childhood draws attention to the factors that affect language acquisition but focuses largely on the role that parents play in surmounting this language hurdle. Imagination during play time is touted as a tool in early childhood to encourage children towards early bilingualism. Parents are deemed to have the unique position to influence their child's language ability and steer it towards bilingualism using imaginative play. Learning through playing is deemed as an important part of childhood development, and findings from this study position parents to be the best facilitators for this mode of bilingual acquisition. The findings point to the fact that, "In home contexts, parents are in a position to draw upon their native language to assist their children's bilingual heritage language development in Australian society" (p. 150).

Another study by Wang (2008) is of the view that racial compositions in families have led to families choosing the easier option; adoption of a language, in many cases English that the larger family and society are comfortable with. This is especially so for parents with children in educational systems where English is the focus, and the need to excel in it surpasses all others. The essence of instituting a HL policy at home for children to grow into, is seen by this author as a way to nurture interest from the infant years.

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The role of 'language facilitators' as parents is also prominent in most of the literature on HL loss and maintenance. Various reasons accounted for the level of fluency among adults who narrated their experiences with their heritage language as children in several studies. Among the reasons detailed by Thomas (2012) that affected their level of fluency and language maintenance were the fact that their parents interacted with them in their heritage language from as young as three months old, consistency in the language of interaction at home, making the process of language acquisition more fun, so that the child does not see it as a chore among others.

The importance of quality family communication and allocating time for heritage language learning are underscored by Thomas (2012) who believes that parents should make a conscious effort to include that in their daily interactions with their children. Although a quick disclaimer is issued about the universal applicability of her analysis, this book gives tremendous insights about the merits of maintaining one's heritage language. However, it is also important to mention studies such as that of Tokuhama-Espinosa (2001), who opined that in order not to overburden children unnecessarily, parents are to work with educators to assess the strengths of their children in ascertaining whether the child has the aptitude and interest in learning another language as some children by their very nature are accustomed to adventure.

Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of a language learner will inform parents and educators of the right time to introduce a language if that child was not brought up with it. The study points to the resentment that certain adults who were made to attend weekend heritage language schools carried with them from childhood to adulthood because some of these factors were not considered by their parents. However, starting the language development process at an early age may cause them to retain their language in their adult years.

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Language Policy

Barron-Hauwaert (2004) argues that establishing linguistic boundaries creates an enabling language environment for the child. The importance of having a heritage language policy is brought to the fore in a study on HL shift among San Lucas families in Los Angeles by Pérez (2013) stresses the importance of having a family language policy when parents are committed to imparting the heritage language knowledge. The findings of the study attribute the language shift to the desire to fit in with their new environment, and its language expectations, and, "explained the dominance that effectors of language intervention external to the family have on children's language choices." (p. 43) As such, the establishment of a HL policy at home to balance the dominant language of the society in which they live is highly encouraged.

Similarly, Dopke (1992) in a case study of six bilingual German-English families in Australia revealed that creating an environment in which a consistent language policy was developed proved crucial in the children's fluency and language habits in the first three years of language development and usage.

The case studies cited above underscore the need for parents to give maximum exposure to the language at home and consistently use it. More importantly, the studies emphasize the non-equivocal role that a parent's consistency in communicating with their child in their heritage language has on the loss or maintenance of the language.

Also, the degree of contact with a wider heritage speaking community in an immigrant's new home and how that impacts the maintenance of the HL among children are discussed in a study by Oriyama (2012). The importance of having a social network outside the family that encourages the use of the HL backed by parental support were the highlights of the findings in this study on the language maintenance of Japanese-English who came into contact with a wider

Japanese community through weekend schools and other networking avenues in Sydney, Australia.

The findings revealed that, "while family (individual context) and community (sociocultural context) both play important roles in HL literacy development, it is community that makes a greater contribution" (p. 178), hence the need for children to have avenues such as social networking events where they will be able to practise their HL and develop their cultural identity through their language.

Language Stereotypes

The literature reviewed also explored how intercultural competence, and critical cultural awareness affect HL use among minority groups. Houghton, Li, Lebedko and Furumura (2013) are of the view that since stereotypes are human normal cognitive processes reinforced by social factors, creating awareness on its importance among minority groups should be encouraged, as a study conducted by Stopar (2015) confirmed that language insensitivity is a real issue and not a perceived one. Lee, Brown and Yeung (2012) also highlight the multicultural and multilingual challenges that immigrant students from Asian countries and the Pacific Islands in New Zealand face. Issues surrounding the cultural and economic capital of English are outlined as reasons why immigrant students choose to focus solely on making English their first language to the detriment of their HL. The study also outlines the 'inferiority' that these students feel when they are not able to interact with the larger community in the predominant language of the society, leading to a neglect of their HL. A different study by Evans (2015), also points out the emotional drawbacks of focusing on another language just to lose one's heritage language due to the stereotypes associated with it. The issue of language perception is real as Africans have also suffered from

some cultural insensitivity due to the poor coverage of the continent as "the dark continent," causing some Africans, and for that matter Ghanaians to view their culture including their language as inferior to other languages.

This is especially important as the author identifies cultural insensitivity to language use as one of the reasons accounting for second-generation children's reluctance to communicate in their heritage language especially when they have their peers around. Dragojevic, Giles, Beck and Tatum (2017) appear to agree in a study involving Punjabi and Mandarin speakers of the English language in America. Negative stereotypes surrounding immigrants are readily expressed by the participants in this study as "foreign-accented speakers themselves frequently report that their accent causes them to experience significant communicative difficulties in their everyday lives" (p. 389), and as such could be one of the derailing factors that stifle the efforts of the heritage language policy in this regard. The recent surge in attacks on predominantly speakers of Spanish and Latin in the United States of America could well explain reasons why immigrant children may want to neglect their HL as detailed in a Washington Post report by Rosenberg and Eltagouri on May 17, 2018 on the verbal abuse, discrimination and harassment that Spanish speakers have been subjected to for speaking their HL.

Language Complexity

The literature also revealed that complexities in second language acquisition can account for a child's reluctance to learn a language that is not the dominant language of their existing society leading to a loss of the HL. Proponents are of the belief that persistent deviation by learners of a language are symbolic of the individual's disinterest in learning the language and may not be the influence of external factors. Complexity of such nature, according to Kortmann and

Szmrecsanyi (2012), "can be determined based on whether a structure is acquired early or late" in the life of a child (p. 197), as language acquisition at an early age can be maintained and developed, compared to learning the language at a later age.

Given that authors such as Baker (2014), have attributed HL attrition to the fears of some immigrant parents about their children's inability to be fully competent in the dominant language of their society due to the complexity of learning two languages at an early age, a study by Oller and Eilers (2002) clearly debunk this fear. The authors in this study of immigrant children in Miami observed the usage of Spanish in a monolingual English school attended by mostly children with a Spanish background. "Almost 100% of utterances observed were in English in all four interlocutor categories; Teacher to Class, Teacher to Student, Student to Teacher, and Student to Student" (p. 52), going to debunk the notion that heritage language development at home may distract from the sole use of the dominant language of society in academic institutions.

Even though the author notes that "the research reported here cannot, of course, answer with finality the fundamental questions about the ultimate effects of bilingualism" (p. 281), the strengths of this study indicate that bilingual children are able to compartmentalize and use the appropriate language in the right setting. This position contradicts the assertions of Houghton, Li, Lebedko and Furumura (2013) who opine that negative attitudes towards HL account for its gradual loss and not its complexities. Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi (2012) also make note of other factors that account for the complexity of maintaining one's heritage language such as the frequency, functional value, and the regularity at which the child comes into contact with speakers of their heritage language. As complex as some may find learning the HL with the dominant language of their society, the amount of interaction that second-generation dwellers also have with

HL speakers within their ethnic community could compel children to learn the language as they may not want to be considered social misfits during gatherings.

Language Maintenance and Identity

The literature also highlights the perceptions and attitudes surrounding the use and maintenance of HL, and a study by Hatoss (2013) brings to the fore the experiences of Sudanese immigrants who moved to Australia as refugees. Social acceptance in their new communities, proved to be one of the primary reasons that the refugees attributed to the relegation of their HL to the background in search of a more powerful linguistic ability that will ensure that they are accepted into their new communities. Even though the author agrees that the lack of superior English abilities may lead to the inability of the immigrants to successfully integrate into the mainstream society, the point is also made about how the "mastery of their heritage language can provide them with a continued recourse for self-worth and index their cultural authenticity and pride" (p. 132).

The findings in this study are in line with Isurin and Riehl (2017) which also found out that parents' reluctance to communicate in their heritage language for fear of them failing in the dominant language of the society which happens to be the German language in this instance is posited as being a valid but misplaced fear. Parents are deemed to be largely responsible for HL being lost in transmission among immigrant households and hold the view that "the family unit is generally considered to be one of the most important sites for heritage language maintenance efforts, since it forms an essential part of the child's linguistic environment" (p. 226). The study is quick to point out that further "analysis of the qualitative aspects of parental input and their effect

on bilingual children's output should preferably include data on both (or all) languages that the children and parents speak" and not limited to the parents' role in language socialization (p. 261).

This desire to fit into host societies by adopting the existing language of the society, to the detriment of their heritage language is not exclusive to the study above. The socio-economic downsides that immigrants who are unable to speak the language of their new society, as well as the stereotype of being viewed as illiterate in the English language are a few of the reasons cited for this development.

Theoretical Framework

According to Guardado, "language socialization as a theory of language learning rests comfortably on the key assumption that language and culture are intrinsically connected" (2018, p. 35). During the data collection and data analysis stages of my study, the emerging themes revealed how the language socialization of my study participants (parents and children) alike affected their HL. In light of this, the selection of a theoretical framework which Bloomberg and Volpe posit to be "the structure that can hold or support a theory of research study" (2016, p. 262) was largely influenced by the codes and categories, and eventually the themes generated during the data gathering stage (interviews and observations), as well as the various studies that used language socialization during the literature review process. Not only did these factors influence my choice in theoretical framework, but also a review of my research questions and an analysis of my findings confirmed that language socialization suited the context in which my theoretical framework could be best understood. More importantly, it was also evident during the data gathering stage that the language socialization of my study participants was a huge factor in their choice of language use. Among the many perspectives on language socialization reviewed were

the works of two leading authorities who are widely acknowledged as the pioneers of language socialization as a theory; Schieffelin and Ochs (1987) who propelled language socialization as a theory to the forefront stress on the importance of language use as a key tool in conveying sociocultural knowledge, which critically evaluates how an individual's use of a language constructs their language use and interaction in a society.

Guardado defines language socialization as the "process by which people are socialized both to use the language of their community and to become members of that community" (2018, p. 48). This definition highlights the language practice of my study participants and why the children speak only English at home and within the community. Obeng attributes the shift in language socialization preference for English to the widely held belief among most educated Ghanaians that the English language is seen as a prestigious one, that gives speakers economic advantages, and as such its adoption as the language of instruction in Ghanaian academic curriculum has consequently led to the relegation of the Ghanaian HL to the background (1997).

This negative attitude towards the learning of the HL has led to many families adopting a cursory knowledge of the HL. It is however worth mentioning that the cursory knowledge or understanding of a language impacts language socialization, as such Kramsch (2002) makes an important distinction in language socialization where children and novices learn to use language meaningfully, appropriately, and effectively which was largely absent in the early years of my child participants when it comes to their HL socialization.

Limitations

Being cognizant of the statement that "a literature review is only useful where a significant body of literature is already known to exist" (Booth et al, 2016, p. 13), I had to rely extensively on

journals that recounted the experiences of mostly Asian immigrants and the use of their heritage language in a North American context. This notwithstanding the issues that confront Asian immigrant families when it comes to the use of their heritage language could be extended to the Ghanaian context as they share some commonalities, paving the way for my research. As such, even though most of the literature reviewed provided an exposition into attitudes, experiences and perceptions surrounding the use of the heritage language, it was mostly from populations in Europe and the United States of America.

The literature revealed one limitation of "self-reporting" as a data gathering strategy when using the stories of children. Oh and Fuligini (2010) assert that "although self-reports have been found to be strongly correlated with objective assessments of language proficiency, the accuracy of adolescents' reports may vary from individual to individual, and so it would be useful to conduct independent assessments of language ability in order to corroborate self-reports" (p. 20).

Also, finding a bullseye article that explained heritage language loss from the viewpoint of Ghanaian immigrants proved to be a challenge. Having to rely on grey literature was the next option for me but my inclusion criteria for sources did not include those types of sources for the purpose of this literature review due to validity and reliability reasons. However, this gap in the literature actually provides compelling reasons why my research will provide the building blocks for further research into HL language use among children of Ghanaian immigrants living in Alberta.

Summary

An extensive review of the literature revealed that heritage language development and maintenance clearly has its merits, and studies such as that of Thomas (2012) who conducted forty in-depth interviews with adult participants about growing up as multilingual children had adults

expressing various sentiments from subtle regrets for not taking their language development seriously, to resentment for pushy parents that forced them to attend heritage language schools, as such parents need to be partners and not 'dictators" in heritage language development.

Also, some of the literature reviewed acknowledged that certain factors such as the language knowledge and skill, socio-economic factors and socio-psychological factors, such as people's age, intelligence, self-perceived identity, motivation, and their educational level affect how language is learned. For instance, Rebuschat (2015) addresses the subject of language and how society's attitude towards that language affects its use in language development and maintenance.

In touting the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, Oller and Eilers (2002), as well as (Harris, 2012) suggests that bilingual children are able to compartmentalize and use the appropriate language in the right setting, and as such debunk the notion that heritage language development at home may distract from the sole use of the dominant language of society in academic institutions, a reason Baker (2014) has attributed to heritage language attrition as a result of the fears among some immigrant parents. Intensive exposure of a target language to develop and maintain it is encouraged and reference is made to intensive English learning programs in Quebec, its success and the benefits to those who fast tracked their English language acquisition. According to the findings gathered, "the more intensive and extensive the exposure to the target language is, the greater the opportunities for learners to experience a qualitative change in their learning history" Munoz (2012, p. 154).

In summary, the literature recognizes that parents are largely responsible for heritage languages being lost in transmission among immigrant households and Isurin and Riehl (2017) strengthen this position by asserting that "the family unit is generally considered to be one of the

most important sites for heritage language maintenance efforts, since it forms an essential part of

the child's linguistic environment" (p. 226).

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Chapter III

Research Methodology

Overview

In comparison to quantitative research, which studies cause and effect among other questions, the decision to choose a qualitative research approach was better suited to my research needs as Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) are of the view that qualitative research promotes a deep understanding of a social setting from the perspective of the research participants which was my focus and goal from the onset of my research. It should be noted that even though description, analysis and interpretation are at the heart of qualitative research, it is by no means a lesser research method than quantitative study. Widely held beliefs about the flexible nature and structure of qualitative research has led to the assumption that it is a less rigorous research method. However, the depth of data richness that can be obtained by the use of qualitative inquiry makes it a sound choice when a researcher seeks to understand and describe a phenomenon. Yin (2011) outlines a few characteristics of qualitative research that makes it better suited for my study including its ability to study people under real-world conditions by representing their views and offering insights into existing or emerging concepts using multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone. Among the various philosophical paradigms that qualitative research is situated in is the ontological (nature of reality) standpoint under which the social constructivist framework falls. Bloomberg and Volpe write that "the central assumption of this paradigm is that reality is socially constructed, that individuals develop subjective meanings of their own personal experience, and that this gives way to multiple meanings" (2016, p. 128).

For this reason, it was important that I chose a research method that would permit me to conduct my interviews in the natural setting of my participants, produce reliable and valid findings

with a relatively small sample size, and afford me the chance to delve into the lives of my research participants for rich data as it unfolds, which the use of a case study does. One feature of qualitative studies that makes this approach distinctive is that the researcher is viewed as a key research instrument. Data collection and gathering in qualitative research is done by the researcher, who later uses inductive data analysis to build patterns and themes to generate emerging themes. The inductive process according to Creswell (2007, p. 38) "involves researchers working back and forth between the themes and the database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes." The elements that will be covered in this chapter will include my sampling strategy and study participants, research method, data collection methods, data analysis method, ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness associated with qualitative research, as well as limitations associated with my study.

Research Method-Case Study Approach

Deciding on the specific qualitative approach to employ in my research was an important step that involved reviewing comparing studies on HL loss and maintenance. After a thorough examination of my research questions, and what method was most suited for my research, the case study approach was selected. Creswell (2007, p. 73) describes a case study as a "qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes." During the planning of my methodology, and more importantly the selection of the case study approach as my research method, due consideration was given to my research questions, theoretical framework, data gathering, sampling

method and data analysis method and how these elements will complement my chosen research method to make my study reliable and valid. I settled on the case study approach as a research method in the study of my participants because of its ability to "investigate a phenomenon in its real-life context rather than in theoretical terms or in a laboratory setting" (Merrigan et al, 2012, p. 144). Also, the literature review included a good number of studies that were conducted using this approach.

For instance, in reviewing the literature, Steiner and Hayes (2009) employed the use of the single-family case study approach to provide real-life accounts and insights of their family's personal journey to bilingualism by offering practical insights on raising children to attain fluency in both languages. Using the case study approach in carrying out research is not only touted by Steiner and Hayes, but other scholars such as (Wang, 2008, 2015), who underscore the merits of the case study approach in research by offering those on the outside a first-hand account of practical and evidence-based advice on how to achieve bilingualism. The multiple sources of evidence gathered through my interviews and observations of my research participants also warranted that an exploratory case study approach would be the best method for my research.

Yazan notes that, "Case study is one of the most frequently used qualitative research methodologies. However, it still does not have a legitimate status as a social science research strategy because it does not have well-defined and well-structured protocols" (2015, p. 134). Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, this qualitative approach fits within my inquiry as it affords me the chance to draw on multiple sources of information such as documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts (Creswell, 2007), which makes data collection in case studies more comprehensive and revealing.

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Study Participants and Sampling Strategy

The nature of my research required that I used a non-random selection strategy in choosing my participants, as using random selection may be impractical in this instance. Purposeful sampling, which means to intentionally focus on a target group to the exclusion of others, was settled on for this study (Merrigan et al, 2012). My inclusion criteria consisted of purposefully sampling two Ghanaian families comprising of parents, and children who are in the upper primary class and high school. The birth place of the children was not an important factor, but only child participants that did not speak any Ghanaian heritage language were considered. The reason behind the choice of two families is because this study is a qualitative one, and therefore I do not need a big sample size to interrogate the issue, as my goal is to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of those who experience it; consequently, representativeness was not a primary consideration. The purposeful selection of these participants was to ensure that I have participants who will provide the needed lens to enable me to understand my research problem and question (Creswell, 2014). It is important to state that generalization is not at the heart of qualitative research, and therefore presenting a large sample size of Ghanaian immigrant families that meet my criteria was secondary. Creswell (2007, p. 126) notes this by pointing out that "the intent in qualitative research is not to generalize the information (except in some forms of case study research), but to elucidate the particular, the specific." The parents interviewed in both families spoke the heritage language fluently and all the children were born in Ghana.

My decision to interview and observe children in the upper primary class and high school was largely due to their ability to articulate themselves better and provide me with the information needed to answer my research questions. As stated by Bloomberg and Volpe (2016,

p. 300), "the logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases, with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation."

After the eligible study participants were identified by a third-party intermediary from my church community, their contact information was passed to me, and I contacted them with the participants' informed consent for release of contact information, and my contact details as well if further clarification was needed on the research topic. For the purposes of this study, I will be using 'Family A' and 'Family O' to describe my research participants.

Profiles of Participating Families:

Participants	Year of Immigration	Children's Age	Gender of Children	Occupation of Parents
Family A	2016	First Child (FC)-14 Second Child (SC)-12	Males	Mother-Human Resources Practitioner
Family O	2015	First Child (FC)-13 Second Child (SC)-11	Females	Mother-Banker Father-Doctoral student

Out of the five families that were generous enough to accept my offer to be interviewed, these two families were selected because they met my criteria and I also believed that they had the ability to purposefully inform the subject of HL loss.

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Data Gathering Strategies

Before the data collection process began, informed consent was sought from all adults with decision-making capacity, and an assent form with the language reading level of a grade four pupil was made available to children aged between 7- 14. Due to the asymmetrical power relations between parents and their children in the Ghanaian culture, most children are quick to follow their parent's leading whether they want to or not, as such I made it very clear to the child participants that participation was strictly voluntary before I started my interview. I also assured them that their identities would be protected, and that I would be employing the use of pseudonyms during and after the research. In this section, I discuss the data collection methods that I employed in the study; interviews and direct observations that took place between May 24, 2018 and June 3, 2018.

Interviews: The case study approach warrants that the data collected is rich, extensive and in-depth, as such collecting data took place in the natural setting of my participants (home). Creswell (2014, p. 185) alludes to this by highlighting the fact that "up-close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research." Before my interviews, I developed an interview protocol, as well as an interview guide with different sets of questions for the adults and children respectively. I used the same sets of questions for the two families, and the questions centered around my findings from my literature review replicated in the Ghanaian HL context, and the major areas of my research questions. The questions mostly touched on the issue of family language policy, HL perceptions and influences, and HL attrition. I proceeded to conduct a semi structured interview with my predetermined questions which I audio taped on two different devices while taking notes of pertinent verbal cues that I found interesting. On the average all four

interviews lasted between 20-35 minutes, the child participants were interviewed separately to prevent any undue influence from their parents and to allow them to express themselves freely.

Using Yin's (2011)guidelines on conducting a successful conversational interview, which includes listening more, being non-directive and allowing the interviewee to express their voice, staying neutral by not making your biases and personal beliefs known, maintaining a warm but professional rapport, and having an established interview protocol that will guide the conversation, I was able to establish the needed rapport and obtain the information needed to answer my research questions

More importantly, the use of an interview protocol allowed me to probe my interviewees and follow up with relevant topics which were not necessarily part of my main set of questions when an interviewee made interesting revelations concerning their views on HL loss. The probing nature of open-ended semi-structured interviews and the richness of data collected using this method is also expressed in the literature by Hatoss (2013) who posits that unstructured interviews especially provide a revealing account into the experiences of one's subject compared to other data gathering methods. Also, my rationale for using this data gathering stems from the fact that the use of semi structured interviews as a data gathering strategy was dominant in about two thirds of the literature that used the case study approach in my literature review.

Direct observation: Description lies at the heart of qualitative interviews and being able to observe the body language and behavior of my participants in another setting besides their home proved to be quite insightful. Before entering my place of observation, I created an observational protocol on my cell phone into which I entered my reflections and experiences. Yin (2011) opines

that having this protocol in hand will help with capturing salient moments that are integral to the study such as the interactions and actions of the people. The opportunity to observe the verbal and non-verbal cues of the child participants during their interaction with their wider community at a house warming party that I was invited to was enlightening and revealing. Ensuring that I was unobtrusive so that my presence does not influence the behavior of my participants culminated in taking detailed notes on my cell phone to disguise my role as a researcher. Observing what the dominant language was in such group settings was essential to understanding why the children do not speak their language. The extensive use of English within a gathering where the majority of the guests were Ghanaians that did not speak English with a Canadian accent was very revealing as well. This helped me to have a greater understanding of the HL attrition of my participant children and the influence that their wider community has on their HL development. Cho (2000) makes note of this reality by asserting that frequent interactions with other HL speakers enhances their language development and gives them a reason to maintain their HL.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis according to Merriam is "the process used to answer your research questions" (2014, p. 176) which involves interpreting the data obtained, coding and categorizing it after a thorough reading to develop relevant themes. An accurate interpretation of the data collected from the participants was essential to their voices being heard meaningfully in the codes and patterns that the themes emerged from. This was made possible by the flexible nature of thematic analysis, which allowed me to inductively draw out meaning from texts to patterns and themes, hence the primary reason why I selected thematic analysis as my data analysis tool. Thematic analysis according to Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012. p. 9) "move[s] beyond

counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes."

After a thorough reading of the raw data transcribed, I systematically highlighted and assigned labels to relevant chunks of my raw data that represent the same phenomenon which is an essential part of the coding process in data analysis. Coding is described by Merriam (2014, p. 173) as "assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data," which requires much rigor, thoroughness and clarity to obtain valid and reliable information. Distilling the data and assigning codes proved to be a daunting task; therefore I took notes (memoing) as I went along as the use of an exploratory case study approach demanded that similarities and differences between the two families in my interviews needed to be noted for my findings to be both valid and reliable. It is important to acknowledge that my data analysis process ran concurrently with my data collection, which made the analysis stage less tedious in the long run. Creswell (2007, p. 150) asserts that "the process of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process- they are interrelated and often go simultaneously in a research project."

Thus, my initial coding strategy involved identifying the "unit of analysis" which (Merrigan et al, 2012, p. 135) described as consisting of words, sentences, paragraphs or thematically coherent phrases that would be relevant to answering the research questions. The frequency at which my participants mentioned certain statements that were of relevance to my research questions were noted and coded as well. Analytical ideas that fell within my research questions were highlighted and coded immediately, and then placed under a category. As coding is an iterative process, further groupings were done, and codes that seemed repetitive were eliminated while others were regrouped and placed into different categories that fit within my

research questions. The various codes gathered were later categorized from which themes emerged that were in direct relation to my research questions. Categorization of codes was based on statements that had different or similar meanings but fell under one subject area, or the similarity in issues discussed by my participants.

Also, the frequency at which statements that were relevant to my research questions or appeared in my literature review findings were duly coded and categorized. Out of this rigorous process emerged four themes that were common but highly different in participant opinion; *Cultural pride, International appeal of the English language, Language Socialization, and Language Stereotypes.* The importance of theming in data analysis is underscored by (Merrigan et al, 2012), who opine that thematic distinctions divide texts into units based on the topics addressed in the data and as such, offer rich descriptions of textual data. Before these themes were developed, about fifty initial codes were placed under their respective categories which are the sub-themes that make up my four thematic areas. Codes that were found to be repetitive or overlapping were removed from certain categories. Key codes that were highlighted but fit into two or more categories, were merged and placed into one category. This step is particularly critical to a successful data analysis, and Creswell (2007) writes that reducing data into meaningful segments, assigning names to segments, combining the codes into broader categories or themes, displaying and making comparisons in the data are the core elements of qualitative data analysis. Guided by these steps, I was able to come up with the themes/sub-themes below.

Under Cultural pride emerged the following sub-themes; Heritage language pride, Parents' role, and Community engagement. International appeal of the English language had sub- themes such as English language superiority, English as official language of instruction in Ghana, and Heritage Language Stereotypes which could potentially explain one of my research questions; "the

beliefs and attitudes that immigrant children have about learning the HL." Language socialization had language policy at home, competitive advantage of the English language as well as peer influence as sub-themes. It is important to state that some categories fell under overlapping thematic areas which presented a challenge to me in my final sub-theme placement. More importantly, the themes, and sub-themes generated sought to significantly address my research questions and potentially fill in certain gaps in my initial literature review.

Reliability and Validity

To reduce researcher bias, I made a conscious attempt to practice reflexivity throughout my study, but more importantly during the data collection and data analysis stages as I was constantly aware that my background could possibly be an influence. Reflexivity simply means being cognizant of certain preconceived ideas or biases that a researcher may have. (Booth et al, 2016) describe reflexivity as deciding to reveal pre-existing biases and discussing how those biases affect the study. As an instrument in this research, being aware of my prejudices was crucial to the voices and experiences of my research participants being wholly represented to ensure my interpretation and analysis of data remained valid, reliable and trustworthy. One way of ensuring this during my interview sessions with the participants was to be non-directive and leading with my questions so that their viewpoints were clearly represented. I also provided copies of my transcribed data to my participants for confirmation that their experiences and thoughts had been duly represented, and not misconstrued to ensure that the data extracted will be reliable (consistent) if another interviewer was to interview them on the same topic, all other things being equal.

Another way of establishing validity was to immediately take notes on my cell phone during observations to fully document what was taking place without relying on my memory or

my feelings at that time. These steps were taken because Yin posits validity to be the "correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (2011, p. 79), and as such I wanted to guarantee that my data collection methods could be trusted. Since I was operating in the constructivist paradigm, I also made sure that everything that was examined would pass the validity and reliability test in regard to the selection of study participants, data gathering and analysis strategy. The significance of these steps in qualitative research are extensively documented in a scrutiny of the works of three leading case study authorities; Yin, Marriam and Stake, by Yazan who writes that "Case study researchers need to guarantee construct validity (through the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence, chains of evidence, and member checking), internal validity (through the use of established analytic techniques such as pattern matching), external validity (through analytic generalization), and reliability (through case study protocols and databases" (2015, p. 146).

Ethical Considerations

Following the guidelines provided by the University of Alberta, Research Ethics Board and bearing in mind that my participants included children, the informed consent and assent of the adult and child participants respectively was sought before the onset of my interviews and observations. I was also respectful of their person, in my dealings with them by taking their welfare to heart (Merrigan et al, 2012). The reasons for the research were thoroughly explained to my participants and the necessary steps taken to ensure that their identities were hidden for privacy and confidentiality reasons. I explained how my study could benefit the Ghanaian community and the role that the findings of this study will play in laying the foundation for further research to be done in this area. Recruitment and participation forms were made available to seek their informed

consent, and also spell out their rights as participants, and their rights to withdrawal as participation was strictly voluntary. Participants' confidentiality was maintained by protecting their names and residential locations. In ensuring that their identities were protected and anonymized, I employed the use of pseudonyms during and after the research. 'Family A' and 'Family O' were used for the different families respectively, and I also assigned identifiers for the children as well.

Study Limitations

It is important to note that several factors could be responsible for the gradual loss of HL among Ghanaian immigrant families, however for the purposes of this study, narrowing the scope to explore the research questions posed will be the focus. The number of my study participants could be an issue in data representativeness, but the use of the case study method in qualitative research is generally interested in an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon, and as such does not need a large sample size; hence, my reason for choosing a small sample size as I believe the two families will be able to provide the information that I require.

My role as a research instrument in this study admittedly comes unconsciously with some element of bias, however, being cognizant of this and practising reflexivity reduced the prevalence of this. Also, the flexible nature of thematic analysis may subject it to criticism, but much effort was directed at making sure that the data analysis process was painstakingly conducted to generate relevant and meaningful themes through a rigorous interpretation process.

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Chapter IV

Findings

In this chapter, I will objectively present significant and meaningful findings pertinent to this study. To reduce the prevalence of research bias, the statements of my study participants will be extensively quoted in these findings to ensure that their views are clearly represented. After going through the rigorous process of data analysis, the emerged categories were Cultural pride, International appeal of the English language, Heritage Language Stereotypes and Language Socialization. These findings will seek to capture the differences and similarities in opinions regarding the Ghanaian HL from the perspectives of my two families, 'Family A' and 'Family O'.

For the purpose of these findings, 'SC' stands for second child and 'FC' for first child in both families. Also, Twi, Ga and Ewe are three of the most widely spoken HL in Ghana. The responses of the two families will be compared when they have different opinions on a subject, and similarities in opinions will be noted as well.

Category	Sub-category
Cultural Pride	1. Heritage Language Pride 2. Parents' attitude and beliefs
International Appeal of the English language	3. English language superiority 4. English as official language of instruction in Ghanaian schools
Heritage Language Stereotypes	5. Beliefs and attitudes of immigrant children towards HL 6. Language discomfort

Language Socialization	7. Language policy
	8. English Language Enhancement
	9. Competitive advantage of the English language

Cultural Pride

Heritage language pride: Cultural affinity to a heritage language and how that informs one's identity was a recurring theme in a cross-section of the literature reviewed and considered as one of the motivations behind HL use. When asked about the perceived benefits, either socio-economic or cultural to their children knowing their HL, the following responses were given by the parent participants. It is also worth mentioning that the father in Family O, during my observation was in his rich Ghanaian outfit, the family recreational area also had a poster size Ghanaian flag in the center of the room, which he later mentioned was a vivid daily reminder of who he is, and where he is coming from.

Father Family O: From the cultural angle, when you lose your language, you basically lose your heritage, you lose your identity and who you are. When a language goes, who are you as an individual? You don't even know where you are coming from. Your language is one strong link to your past. It determines who you are, it is your identity. It is you basically. If you lose your language, then you've lost everything.

Mother Family O: I agree with what he said, it is very important that you learn your mother language because that is how you also identify. If you can't really speak, like these girls, if they go back to Ghana they will be very lost, even with their peers when they are speaking Twi, so it is important that they learn the language.

However, the mother in Family A pointed out that she did not believe that the ability to speak one's HL was the only thing that identified her as a Ghanaian

Interviewer: I do not want to put words into your mouth, but what you are saying is that you do not think one's identity as a Ghanaian is tied to their knowledge of their heritage language?

Mother Family A: I don't think that (HL) is the only thing

Mother Family A: The name, when you mention your name they will know this is where you come from

Parents' attitude and beliefs: The literature also revealed that often, the beliefs of immigrant parents may influence their motivation to use or not use their HL. The contrasting views of the two families are documented in the responses below. The mother in Family A believed that her children will pick up the language in their adult years and so there was no need to panic. However, the father in Family O thought the issue of HL attrition was an urgent one and so a conscious effort needs to be made in language use through actions and consistent reinforcement.

Father Family O: When we came here then we realized, other minority groups, Asians speaking their local language with their kids on the train and the bus and then you ask yourself what were we doing back home? It is only when you come here, that you realize most of these people speak two languages but for us our kids speak only one language.

Father Family O: The importance came to the fore when I came into this country. I did not find it important when I was back home in Ghana. But when I came to live in this new environment then I realized that it was more of an asset if you are able to communicate with your kids in your HL. If you want to pass something across and you don't want to speak English, the best way is to say it in your local language. So, I actually found out how important it was to have a second language when I came to Canada, but in Ghana it was not a big deal at all. It never crosses your mind.

The mother in Family A was of the opinion that as her 14 and 12-year-old sons grow, they would pick up the HL as her nieces in Ontario could not speak the HL as children but picked it up in their adult years. The parents in Family A speak the HL with each other and interact with their children in English; the children, however, stated that even if they could speak the HL, they will respond in English if their parents spoke the HL to them.

Mother Family A: What I believe also is that with age they will be able to speak, because as I gave you an example of my nieces when they were young they were just like them, when you speak the local language with them, they answer you in English, but now they've grown up and they are able to speak the local language, so I believe they will be able to speak it.

International appeal of the English language

English language superiority: The perceived economic value and superiority that most Ghanaians attach to the English language was evident in the responses of my child participant from Family A, and the parents in Family O as seen below. The older child in Family A expressed no interest in learning the language, while the younger brother expressed a vague interest in doing so

when asked about the potential benefits of learning the HL for communication purposes should he return to Ghana one day for a visit.

FC Family A: I think they should learn English because it is international, and it helps them better than learning the Twi or Ga.

FC Family A: Because if you apply for a job and one person can speak two international languages and you only speak English and Twi, the person who can speak two international languages is more likely to get the job

SC Family A: *It will also not help me, because like it might help you if you are in Ghana but it won't help you if you are in Canada*

Mother Family O: *It has always been English, I think it is an unconscious thing that we do back home because the thinking is that if the child is in Ghana the child will pick up the local language from school by default, so you just want to speak the English language because you want the child to be able to speak good English and be able to communicate with others very well.*

English as official language of instruction in Ghanaian schools: It was also evident that the effect of colonial rule which led to the acknowledgement and acceptance of English as the official language of instruction was partly responsible for the HL attrition in these children as espoused by the parents in this study. On this subject both families agreed that this was a contributory factor to their children's inability to speak their HL.

Mother Family A: Back in Ghana when they go to school, it is English that they use, so I think it is also part of it, they don't use local languages in the school.

Father Family O: It just gives them a competitive advantage when they go to school since they are educated in the English language

Father Family O: Honestly, even for me when I was a kid I spoke English with my parents, I don't even know when I started to speak the local language. I used to communicate in English when I was a kid, so I am just saying that it may be a spin off from how I was brought up and I kind of transferred that to my kids

Heritage Language Stereotypes

Beliefs and attitudes of immigrant children towards the HL: The children in Family A had no interest whatsoever about learning the HL when asked about it, but the children in Family O expressed some desire to be fluent in the HL. The children in Family O during an observation made a conscious effort to interact with other Ghanaians at a housewarming party but replied in English when asked a question in the HL.

Interviewer: Have you ever been interested in learning Twi and Ga?

FC Family A: No

Interviewer: And why is that so, why have you never had the interest to learn the language?

FC Family A: Because I don't think it is important

The children in Family O however were receptive to learning the HL.

Interviewer: Have you ever been interested in learning your heritage language?

FC Family O: Yes

Interviewer: You have, that's good. how do you feel about it? Do you speak it right now?

SC Family O: Not as fluent as mummy and grandma, but we are getting there and sometimes mum and grandma will make some actions, so we understand what they are saying

Language discomfort: The language attitude of my child participants towards their HL is brought to the fore in this exchange. Hypothetical questions centred around what their comfort level will be if they could speak the HL around their Canadian friends, and how they will respond if their parents were to interact with them in their HL in the presence of their friends.

FC Family A: She can speak Twi and I will respond in English

SC Family A: I won't feel comfortable speaking to them (parents) in the HL

SC Family A: If she wants me to speak it, I will go somewhere by myself and talk to her

SC Family A: Because I wouldn't feel comfortable talking to them in Twi or Ga or any of those languages[i]

SC Family A: No, I'm not shy

Interviewer: So why don't you want them to hear you speaking, why don't you want your friends to hear you speaking Twi?

SC Family A: I don't know

Versus

Interviewer: Are you self conscious about speaking the language in public

SC Family O: No

Interviewer: Do you think there any advantages to you learning your mother tongue?

SC Family O: Yes, when we are doing something in we are in public, we can say something in Ewe without anyone knowing what we are talking about

As seen above, the children in Family A expressed no desire in speaking the language if they could do so for reasons they could not explain; on the other hand, the children in Family O were confident learners and expressed a strong desire to learn their HL.

Language Socialization

Language policy: The following statements represent the views of my parent participants on the use of the HL as the language of socialization at home. Questions were asked about what the parents believe to be the underlying reasons why their children do not speak the HL at home?

Mother Family A: Its basically because we speak more English than the local language than speaking Twi and Ga

Mother Family A: It just comes, English comes first than you think about the other languages

Mother Family A: No, actually my dad was also speaking English with us when we were young. So its kind of normal to me that is why it came naturally for us to speak English.

Father Family O: Coming from our home country I think it was an unconscious thing, we started speaking English with our kids, I don't think there was any particular reason why we might have done that, but that has been the form of communication since they were kids. I don't know if the

mother has anything to say about it, I didn't give any thought to it, its something that came naturally, to speak English with them than to speak the local language there might be an underlying reason but maybe as the questions come something might come up

Mother Family O: It has always been English, I think it is an unconscious thing that we do back home because the thinking is that if the child is in Ghana the child will pick up the local language from school by default, so you just want to speak the English language because you want the child to be able to speak good English and be able to communicate with others very well.

Interviewer: But the issue is that even with our schools in Ghana, they don't speak the heritage language in schools

Mother Family O: Even back home in Ghana although the local Language is not spoken in schools, you communicate with your friends in Twi and Ga when you are home.

English language enhancement: The children in Family A also indicated that their desire to enhance their English language as one of the reasons why they do not want to learn the HL. Questions were asked about what their attitudes would be if their parents were to establish an HL only policy at home. Below are a few of their responses

FC Family A: If they speak Twi to me, I will respond in English

FC Family A: It won't be good because like I want to enhance my English

Competitive advantage of the English language: Throughout the interview both parents and children pointed at the many benefits that come with the good command of the English language as one of the reasons why English is the preferred language of communication at home.

Father Family O: It just gives them a competitive advantage when they go to school since they are educated in the English language

Father Family O: Honestly, even for me when I was a kid I spoke English with my parents, I don't even know when I started to speak the local language. I used to communicate in English when I was a kid, so I am just saying that it may be a spin off from how I was brought up and I kind of transferred that to my kids

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Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusion

The previous chapter covered an objective overview of my data analysis from the viewpoint of my study participants. In this chapter, insights and meanings gleaned from the findings that are relevant to my research questions and fall within the scope of relevant literature on HL will be looked at. The findings suggest that 1) parents' cultural pride; 2) the international appeal of the English language; 3) HL stereotypes; 4) the language socialization of children among other things consequently determine HL loss among children of Ghanaian immigrants.

Cultural Pride

Positive Reinforcement: The subject of cultural pride which is very much connected to one's HL pride was a recurring theme in my findings. Guardado and Becker (2014) throw more light on this topic by drawing on the subject of familism and how that motivates HL speakers to develop language strategies that give them some sort of affinity to their families when they return to their home countries. Thus, positive reinforcement about the use of the HL can possibly encourage children of Ghanaian immigrants to bond with their family and friends back home while in Calgary. Admittedly, the mother in Family O asserted that her daughters' ability to stay connected linguistically through the HL with her relatives back home was of paramount importance to her. In her opinion, without an understanding and use of their HL, her daughters would literally be lost if they should return to Ghana and could not communicate with those who speak the HL.

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It was also interesting to observe how the cultural heritage pride of the parents especially the father in Family O was a contributory factor as to why the children had a positive attitude towards learning their HL. Cultural heritage pride and the need to pass on an aspect of their culture (HL), which the father believed to be the most important cultural identity as a Ghanaian, supports Guardado's assertion that "cultural identity plays a key role in HL socialization, development, and maintenance" (2018, p. 48) which should be an ideal that immigrant parents should cultivate.

Conversely, the nonchalant attitude of the children in Family A regarding the learning and use of the HL could possibly mean that no amount of positive reinforcement in the form of interaction with "surrogate extended family members" in the diaspora which Guardado and Becker posit to be one of the key support systems in learning and using the HL in their study would be of benefit in this instance (2014, p. 164). However, I would not place the blame entirely on the children in Family A as the mother was of the view that other traits such as the Ghanaian names could identify her children as Ghanaians for now until they are able to learn and speak the HL in their adult years. This apparent lack of concern in the children's inability to speak the HL could possibly be a contributory factor in their disinterest in the HL. Consequently, these two scenarios correctly depict how one's heritage pride affect the development and maintenance of their HL.

Attitudinal change in parents: The findings also brought to the fore the role that immigrant parents play in the HL development of their children which was evident in their past attitude and beliefs regarding the use of the HL in the early years of their children's language socialization in Ghana. In spite of the landmark revelations by Peal and Lambert in 1962 and subsequent studies that have touted the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, Portes and Schauffler (1994) assert that English continues to displace HL for minority groups when they live in dominant

English societies. Nevertheless, several studies suggest that when parents such as those in Family O, have a positive disposition towards the transmission of their HL to their children, all things being equal, the children are most likely to receive it positively. For instance, Espinosa recommends "stronger family engagement practices as a way to support home language maintenance" (2015, p. 49) as these come with cognitive advantages and positive dispositions towards the language.

The fears of the parents in both families A and O should not be side stepped, as anecdotal evidence suggests that the need for their children to excel at school since the academic curriculum in Ghana is English-intensive, has led to the decline in the use of the HL in Ghana. It is also important to state that these fears are not largely unfounded as Harris touched on previous research that pointed to the fact that "long term bilingual students are more likely to fall behind their peers in high school" (2012, p. 58). On the other hand, there is overwhelming research evidence to suggest that the use of one's HL concurrently with the dominant language of a given society has many benefits as espoused by proponents of bilingualism such as Cho (2000) and Baker (2014). It was evident however that after moving to Canada, the parents in Family O had an epiphany regarding HL use, as their observations of bilingual Asian families caused them to regret not introducing the HL to their children at an early age.

International appeal of the English language

Projecting the value in HL development: In light of these revelations, it is imperative that a positive image of the HL is fostered and promoted within families in the Ghanaian community in Calgary. Even though it was evident that the dominance of English as a global

language, judging from the opinions of the children in Family A, was also largely responsible for the HL loss of my child participants, migrating to Canada has also caused a further shift in language preference for English which is the dominant language of their new society. The length of stay as pointed out by Barkhuizen (2006) has a direct effect on preference for English and the attrition of the HL. Interestingly, Family A moved to Calgary from Ghana in 2016, so two years will not be considered as a long time for such a remarkable language shift to take place. Nevertheless, acknowledging how this could have potentially affected their language choice in Canada during the acculturation process over the years is important as both families have a combined number of six years of being in Canada between them. However, in this instance the children in both families did not have any knowledge of the HL before moving to Calgary and so such comparisons cannot be made as their preference for English was well established before migrating to Canada. Admittedly, the children in Family A expressed that they had and have no desire whatsoever to learn the HL as they believed it held no economic or professional value for them. This notwithstanding, these children can still be encouraged to see the value in being bilingual.

Early Bilingualism: It is worth noting that the HL loss of my child participants was not a recent development as the parents explained that the academic curriculum in Ghana was also responsible for the HL attrition of their children. Owu-Ewie and Eshun (2015) discuss the effects of instituting a nation-wide policy of using English as the official language of instruction from primary four (grade four) to the high school level and its consequent effects. The consequences of this English policy are that most Ghanaian children especially those from middle class homes are not bilingual. To that end, the child participants in my study have only been exposed to the use of English as a medium of instruction their entire lives as they attended private and not public schools

in Ghana where the use of English-only was highly encouraged and also synonymous with one's social status even at a tender age.

Obeng (1997) also contends that colonial missionary schools played a role in HL loss, as the establishment of English as the official language in Ghanaian schools resulted in the widespread use of English among middle class families in Ghanaian homes. In comparing this to the Asian context and how most Chinese parents are very much involved in ensuring that their children are able to speak their HL (Mandarin, Cantonese or any of the other languages of China), the first child in Family A reminded me that Mandarin and Cantonese are now considered international languages of commerce and as such have some economic value, compared to the Ghanaian HL that will only be useful to him when interacting with other Ghanaians. This negative attitude towards the HL is symptomatic of the negative connotation that some Ghanaians view their HL as outlined by Obeng (1997).

Heritage language stereotypes

Attitudinal change towards the HL: Given that the children in both families were socialized from their infant years with the English language, it was not surprising that the children in Family A especially viewed the HL in a negative manner, compared to the children in Family O who expressed some interest in learning it. This stereotype of the HL as an inferior language calls for an over-all attitudinal change towards the HL. What is more, my child participants in Family A are not in the minority when it comes to the HL stereotype; Montrul argues that "when children realize that their home language is a minority language and it is not spoken beyond the home, they switch to the majority language spoken by their social group" (2015, p. 36). This point

illustrates how perception about one's HL may lead to learners not having an interest to learn it, or speakers to use it. More importantly, the recent verbal attacks and discrimination against HL (Spanish) speakers in the United States of America provides compelling reasons why the children in Family A who migrated to Canada about two years ago, may want to perfect their English as well as Canadian accent in order to fit in and speak like Canadians who were born and bred here. The first child in Family A readily expressed this desire to enhance his English accent as part of his efforts to fit in the broader Canadian society as one reason why he does not want to learn the HL. Similarly, the parents and children in a study by Bayley and Schecter (2003) attribute their shift in language preference from Spanish to English to their interest in becoming American.

HL pride: The issue of language discomfort was a recurring theme which depicted both positive and negative aspects. For instance, the children in Family O in spite of their inability to speak the HL, mentioned that they relied on the actions of their parents and grandmother to learn what certain statements meant and as such were making strides in understanding the language.

On the other hand, both children in Family A expressed discomfort at interacting with their parents in the HL if they could do so. They could not provide reasons as to why they would not want to speak the HL in public if they could, but studies such as that of Wong Fillmore (1991) suggest that in societies like the United States and Canada where linguistic or ethnic diversity are not valued, language minority children encounter the powerful forces of assimilation in schools. This language discomfort on the part of my child participants in Family A is heightened by the recent demonization of HL speakers in the United States especially, where Americans who speak Spanish are marginalized and seen as "aliens" who do not belong. Anecdotal evidence available

suggests that this could possibly be one of the reasons why children of immigrants may want to communicate in the language of the dominant society only.

Language socialization

Parents as primary HL teachers: It was evident from the pushback from the children in Family A that spearheading the benefits of bilingualism will need the unflinching support and dedication of committed parents. Kondo-Brown (2006) alludes to this by asserting that parental or familial attitudes and the degree of home support matters. Consistent reinforcement of positive attitudes towards the HL as well as incentivizing them as practised by the father in Family A could also be explored as a language strategy. Guardado (2018) also speaks to this by suggesting that making a conscious effort to reinforce language habits and having a strong commitment and desire to follow through with language strategies is of much importance if any strides are to be made in HL development and maintenance. In my observation of the two families, I noticed that efforts were being made in this regard, as the parents will every now and then speak to their children in the HL and refuse to translate for them. I believe this to be a step in the right direction towards establishing an HL policy at home that would require the children to interact in the HL only at home for the purposes of developing it.

Language policy enforcement: In showing commitment towards the learning of the HL, it is imperative that the parents in the two families strengthen the language policy of the children. Establishing a language environment at home and strictly adhering to a language policy that will support the use of the HL could be explored. Even though Gharibi and Boers (2017) opine that the age at emigration could make learning the HL challenging given that my child participants are in

their puberty years and HL development and use is more successful in the early years of one's life, Barron-Hauwaert contends that "parents can still exercise some sort of linguistic control over their children's linguistic functioning" (2004, p. 111) and steer them towards developing a positive attitude towards the HL through the establishment of a strict language policy through the time and place strategy. The parents in Family O already had this mechanism in place as their children indicated that their parents often refused to translate the HL for them but would use 'sign language/ actions' to enable them to figure out what they are saying in their HL.

Benefits of bilingualism: Closely related to the absence of an HL policy at home, was the deference that both parents and children gave to English as a language of opportunity. The children in Family A, especially the first child was emphatic on how the HL was only useful in communicating with other Ghanaians, compared to Chinese children taking the learning of either Mandarin or Cantonese seriously because they are considered languages of economic opportunity. Dopke throws more light on this belief by pointing out that "it is only when the status of the two languages is both high and relatively equal, and when both languages are spoken by individuals important to the child that the child rises to the challenge of becoming bilingual" (1992, p. 55). This assertion provides some contextual background that explains the attitudes of the children in Family A and the indifference of the mother towards their HL and how that has impacted the children's HL development. On the contrary in Family O, the father's love of his cultural heritage and the sudden realization that his children had no identity as Ghanaians after moving to Canada was also an important factor in the parent's efforts to ensure that their children become bilingual.

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Acculturation: In understanding why my child participants in Family A felt that the English language afforded them greater economic opportunities, the need to fit in (acculturation) their new home consistently crossed my mind. Kondo-Brown describes an aspect of acculturation where "one perceives the other community as a group whose lifestyle and values the individual wishes to adopt" (2006, p. 91). What I gathered from my interviews and observations of the children in Family A was that they were not confident in who they were as Ghanaians and the need to belong and be accepted in their new society through their linguistic dexterity of the English outweighed learning the HL. This negative attitude towards their HL, and the need to fit into the larger Canadian society and sound more like their Canadian peers can however be understood through the lens of ethnolinguistic vitality, which Kondo-Brown (2006) posits, determines how well a minority language will survive in an environment where a dominant language exists. For the two families interviewed and observed, there is a high possibility that the children in Family O will pick up the HL in Canada even though English is the dominant language, reason being that the children have a positive attitude towards learning the HL, their parents take pride in their cultural heritage and deem it important for them to learn and use the language especially if the children should decide to return to Ghana in future. The children in Family A, however, expressed that their need to enhance their English is of far more importance to them than learning the HL, which explains how their subjective ethnolinguistic vitality has on their language development and use.

In summary, this research offers an in-depth account of the perspectives of Ghanaian immigrant parents, their children and some factors that account for the children's inability to speak their HL. It is important to state that other factors which may also account for the HL attrition among children of Ghanaian immigrants may not have been unearthed in this study. For this

reason, further research will be encouraged to further explore this phenomenon using a different methodology perhaps. Nevertheless, the use of the case study approach provided rich data that resulted in the unravelling of new insights concerning the field of HL, and more importantly within the Ghanaian immigrant community in Calgary reflected in the findings. The findings of this study suggest that it is imperative for immigrant parents to not only instill a sense of cultural pride within their children through the socialization of their HL at an early age, but also ensure that they have a healthy appreciation of the HL as a language of equal importance along side their use of the English language. In the process of acculturation, leveraging on the benefits of bilingualism for their children to appreciate their cultural identity as Ghanaians in addition to their new status as Canadians and permanent residents of Canada is key to generating interest and maintaining the language once these children develop their HL.

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Heritage Language Loss Among Children of Ghanaian Immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

Appendix A

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Lost Language: Exploring heritage language loss among children of Ghanaian immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

Research Investigator:

Name: Georgette Quarmyne

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB

Email: quarmyne@ualberta.ca

Phone Number: 587-707-6022

Supervisor:

Name: Dr. Martin Guardado

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB

Email: guardado@ualberta.ca

Phone Number: 780-655-2176

Background

This interview is intended to provide further insight on my Capstone Project, as part of my Masters in Communications and Technology program at the University of Alberta Faculty of Extension.

Purpose

To find out why children of Ghanaian immigrants living Calgary, Alberta tend not to speak their heritage language.

Study Procedures

The methodology used will be a face to face interviews, which will be semi-structured, and observations of the two families involved.

Interviews will be conducted in your homes, or at a location of your preference and at your convenience. Interviews will be recorded using an audio recorder.

I will require an hour and 30 minutes of your time per session for three sessions at the most. I will also seek your permission to attend a few family social event of your choice to observe your family's interactions within that environment. I will take field notes only at these events. The entire length of my interviews and observations will not exceed three weeks. If I should require further information, I will seek your consent once again to obtain the additional information.

A copy of the transcription of the interviews will be delivered to you for you to clarify or change any of the information collected. You will have up to two weeks to review to express any questions you may have in terms of how aspects of the interview may be used. If you do not respond to the request to review materials during this time, approval of information will be assumed.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit from participating in this study. It is hoped that this research will provide insights as to the gradual decline of the heritage language. There are also no costs associated with taking part in this interview.

Risks

There may be risks to being in this study that are not known. If we learn of anything during the research that may affect your willingness to continue being in the study, we will inform you.

Heritage Language Loss Among Children of Ghanaian Immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Participation is completely voluntary.

Freedom to Withdraw

You can at any time refuse to answer any question and opt out of this interview without any loss to you. Any data or information collected from you can be withdrawn at any time. Withdrawal from the study requires communicating this intention verbally to the researcher or in writing. All data collected prior to the data analysis stage of this research will be deleted from this study. If withdrawal occurs after data analysis has begun, participants will be informed that their data will continue to be a part of this study.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

Information collected from this interview will be handled with confidentiality and anonymity to protect your privacy. Due care and diligence will be taken to ensure that your name and other personally identifiable information will not be used. This information and data collected during this research may be used in additional presentations or articles. Dr. Martin Guardado and I will be the only ones with access to this information and will be used strictly for the intended purpose.

Data will be stored on a secure computer server (password protected) for five (5) years after the results of the study have been published and will then be destroyed. The use of a password on my personal computer will be in place always. The use of a locked cabinet in my private study at home will be employed always to keep participant information safe at all times. I will be the only person with access to this locked cabinet.

Heritage Language Loss Among Children of Ghanaian Immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

There is the possibility that the aggregated data from the study could be used for journal publications and conference presentations in future, but if we do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Further Information

If you have any further questions, concerns or complaints regarding this interview, please contact:

Investigator: Georgette Quarmyne email: quarmyne@ulberta.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Martin Guardado email: guardado@ualberta.ca

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780)-492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

_____   _____

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature   Date

_____   _____

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

Heritage Language Loss Among Children of Ghanaian Immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

Title of Study: Lost Language: Exploring heritage language loss among children of Ghanaian immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

Principal Investigator(s): Georgette Quarmyne   **Phone Number(s):**587-707-6022

Study Coordinator: Dr. Martin Guardado   **Phone Number(s):** 780-655-2176

I want to tell you about a research study that I am doing. A research study is a way to learn more about something. We would like to find out more about the use of your heritage language in your everyday life. You are being asked to join the study because your feedback will be important to the success of this study in how Ghanaian immigrant families use their heritage language.

If you agree to join this study, you will be asked to tell me your experiences surrounding the use of your heritage language. With your parent's permission as well as yours, I will visit your home or any location that your family chooses to interview your family on three different occasions and join you for a family social event if you agree to participate in the study for observation purposes. Interviews will be recorded using an audio recorder, and I will take field notes during observations.

Heritage Language Loss Among Children of Ghanaian Immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

There is some minimal chance that, in responding to my research questions, some emotional concerns may arise, considering the possible sensitivity around issues of cultural identity. If that happens, I will stop the research at any time without penalty and you may withdraw from the study.

We expect that the study will help you by creating the needed awareness on the added benefits of knowing your heritage language.

This study will help us learn more about the gradual decline in the use of heritage languages among Ghanaian immigrant families living in Calgary.

You do not have to join this study. It is up to you. You can say okay now and change your mind later. All you have to do is tell us you want to stop. No one will be mad at you if you don't want to be in the study or if you join the study and change your mind later and stop.

A copy of the transcription of the interviews will be delivered to you for you to clarify or change any of the information collected. You will have up to two weeks to review to express any questions you may have in terms of how aspects of the interview may be used. If you do not respond to the request to review materials during this time, approval of information will be assumed

Before you say **yes or no** to being in this study, we will answer any questions you have. If you join the study, you can ask questions at any time. Just tell the researcher that you have a question.

Heritage Language Loss Among Children of Ghanaian Immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.

--If you have any questions about this study please feel free to contact me (Georgette Quarmyne) at 587-707-6022

☐   Yes, I will be in this research study.   ☐   No, I don't want to do this.

_____

Child's name   Signature   Date

_____

Person obtaining Assent   Signature   Date

Heritage Language Loss Among Children of Ghanaian Immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

Appendix B

Data gathering instrument

I will be using a voice recorder to record my interview.

Interview Schedule

_Lost Language_____ **INTERVIEWER GUIDE**

_Participant Name: _ _____

_Location _____DATE: __

A. _Interviewer: REVIEW terms of and sign consent form with participant._

B. _Interviewer: RETAIN Consent Form_

C: Interviewer: READ to Participant: **Since this is an unstructured interview, I appreciate your participation. I will ask you a series of questions and record them, then later you will have a two-week window to review the interview transcriptions and edit them for meaning as you like, to offer corrections. Do you have any questions?**

Interviewer: Turn Recorder on. Begin Interview.

Heritage Language Loss Among Children of Ghanaian Immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

Questions for Parents

1) What do you believe to be the underlying reasons why your children cannot speak the Ghanaian heritage language?

2) Do you deem it important for your children to understand and speak the Ghanaian heritage language?

3) Was it a conscious attempt to not communicate with your children in your heritage language?

4) Does your family have a language policy at home?

5) What language do you communicate to your spouse in?

6) Have you ever tried to introduce the heritage language to your children?

7) Have you ever employed any language development strategy that would help with your children's acquisition of the language?

8) Do you have any reasons as to why you do not encourage your children to learn your heritage language?

9) Do you think your children's English will be adversely affected if they develop their heritage language?

10) Do you have any myths about your children learning the Ghanaian heritage language?

11) Do you think there are any benefits (socioeconomic, cultural) to your children knowing their heritage language?

12) What language do you interact in outside of the home when you meet family, friends or acquaintances who are Ghanaians?

13) Do you believe that your children's identity as Ghanaians is tied to their knowledge of their heritage language?

14) Have you ever considered investing in Ghanaian heritage language apps and audio visuals to help with your children's development of the heritage language?

15) Are you proud of your cultural heritage and heritage language as a Ghanaian?

Heritage Language Loss Among Children of Ghanaian Immigrants in Calgary, Alberta

Questions for Children

1) Have you ever been interested in learning your heritage language?

2) Do you think learning your heritage language would affect your English in any way?

3) Are you self conscious about speaking your heritage language in public?

4) Do you know of any stereotypes associated with the speaking of the Ghanaian language?

5) Do you think there are any advantages to learning your heritage language?

6) Do your parents communicate with you in the heritage language?

7) Do your parents encourage you to learn the heritage language?

8) Would you like the heritage language to be the language of communication at home?

9) What language do you interact in outside of the home when you meet extended family, friends or acquaintances who are Ghanaians?

10) Has your inability to speak your heritage language affected your relationship or communication with the larger Ghanaian community?

11) How do you feel when Ghanaians speak to you in the heritage language and you are unable to communicate with them?

12) Are you concerned about the fact that you can't speak or understand your heritage language?

13) Have you ever considered using Ghanaian heritage language apps and audio visuals to learn the language?

14) Are you proud of your cultural heritage and heritage language as a Ghanaian?

15) Would you consider learning the heritage language using Ghanaian language apps?

_____