LITERACY AND LANGUAGE USE IN CLASSROOM AND COMMUNITY: THE EXPERIENCE OF VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANTS

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ABSTRACT

Immigrants to Canada often face a number of difficult adjustments, particularly if they come from linguistic, educational and cultural backgrounds which are in a minority in Canadian society. People in this situation do not fit readily into existing employment or educational structures. Even adult education programs which offer retraining in language, academic or employment skills are frequent arenas of failure for immigrants with low English and literacy skills. This study addresses this problem through investigating the place of language and literacy in immigrants' lives in Canada.

This study used a sociolinguistic approach that considers how people use language in various domains. It was conducted in Vancouver, and focusses on Vietnamese newcomers. Two features of many Vietnamese immigrants are their relatively low levels of education and their traumatic experiences as refugees. These factors can have a detrimental effect on immigrant adjustment to an urban North American community. In this study I have incorporated information about my informants' past learning, working, and refugee experiences to indicate how these elements influence their present experiences of language use and learning.

The results of the investigation indicate that Vietnamese use a mixture of first and second oral and written languages in the different domains in which they operate. The informants also described strategies they employed which helped them manage the language demands they encountered. However, problems occurred in the language classroom and the workplace,

where these strategies could not be fully used. A result of these problems was a compounding of the sense of deficiency these immigrants had acquired through their early education and through their refugee experiences.

For the people in this study language use was a matter of strategies employed to meet different demands. Language learning and the related goal of employability however, were sources of stress and failure. The practices and perceptions of these immigrants indicate that, while they can meet many of the language demands of Canadian society, they are hampered by their own attitudes and by real barriers in certain domains.

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CHAPTER ONE--INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

In recent years, the arrival in North America of large numbers of Southeast Asian immigrants with low English ability and limited educational backgrounds has raised complex social issues. Over two thirds of the refugees who arrived in the United States between 1975 and 1983 were from Southeast Asia (Penfield, 1986). Between 1980 and 1986, approximately 96,000 Vietnamese, Kampuchean and Laotian immigrants came to Canada (Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, 1986). Generally, these newcomers have had limited schooling, and are low-literate in any language (Penfield, 1986). Illiteracy is currently a matter of public concern in Canada; frequent claims are made that illiteracy impedes social progress. If such claims are true, then this influx of semi- or illiterate immigrants may well aggravate social problems by adding to the numbers of illiterate people who already live in this country. Specifically, concern exists about immigrant illiteracy because these newcomers are seen as lacking the skills to fit into prevalent employment structures. The increasingly technological orientation of North American business and industry means that employers demand a technically-skilled workforce, so immigrants with low levels of literacy and/or education may have difficulty meeting any but entry-level job prerequisites (Neuwirth, 1981). Therefore, they are perceived by governments, employers and educators to need, first functional literacy, and

then specific skill training in order to adapt successfully to North American working conditions. One difficulty with planning remedial education is that "being functionally literate" is a condition that is ill-understood, so it is not clear exactly what should be included in training, or how it should be implemented.

Literacy is a difficult term to define, since it encompasses the psychomotor skills needed for encoding text, the cognitive processes for decoding, and the sociocultural knowledge needed to interpret text in socially acceptable ways. Notwithstanding the difficulty of assessing exactly what literacy is and how it helps those who have it, educators and other public leaders often assert that the achievement of a certain level of literacy benefits both the individual and society. On the other hand, these leaders consider the absence or deficiency of literacy to constitute a social crisis. For immigrants, acquisition of oral and literate ability in English is promoted by resettlement agencies as necessary for successful adaptation to North American life. "Success" is further specified as the ability to maintain a job and perform consumer activities. Hence language and literacy training for immigrants is often skill-focussed, and concentrates on the student's functioning as a consumer and an employee.

Little explicit attention has been given to the question of what social goals immigrant language/literacy education should promote. The literature frequently acknowledges the failure of established training programs to help low-literate refugees (Weinstein, 1984; Penfield, 1986; d'Anglejan, 1984). Refugees who are unfamiliar with classroom learning do not fit into traditional English as a Second Language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education

(ABE) programs. Research explores why they have difficulty operating in North American classrooms, and offers pedagogical suggestions to make the learning experience more relevant to refugees (d'Anglejan, 1984; Hvitfeldt, 1986). One result of such suggestions has been the development of curriculum components such as ESL literacy and pre-vocational ESL. Specialized methodologies for these areas are the subject of ongoing teacher training.

Other solutions to the problem of training low-literate ESL refugees are offered in alternative program designs. Some institutions offer programs where students are given language or content instruction in a bilingual setting. The practical problem with this is that only a few language groups are sufficiently well-represented in any one geographical area to make up a class. Furthermore, the number of teachers qualified to provide literacy or technical instruction in a language other than English is also limited to the larger ethnic groups. Still another solution has been to move from the traditional classroom to settings more realistic to refugees; for example, the home and the workplace. In such environments, the teaching can focus on situational language and concrete vocabulary related to everyday life and to the work settings and tasks the learner has to perform. The intention of such programs is to provide language structures, functions and vocabulary appropriate to the domain in which the student needs to use the language.

The curriculum and program alternatives offered in much current ESL literature define language learning goals in terms of what skills and knowledge students are supposed to need to adapt to various North American institutions and values. For example, d'Anglejan (1984) discusses

the benefits of second language training in the workplace, whereby learners acquire pre-vocational and occupational language skills. While offering alternatives to traditional program types is probably beneficial to immigrants, the value of the learning goals such programs promote needs careful examination. Program planners and policy makers assume that students need language and skills to fulfill roles determined by established educational and employment structures. So far, little research attention is paid to the actual social uses and needs immigrants may have for oral and written English.

In language learning programs which serve immigrants, the institution offering the course usually determines students' needs and measures progress in skill acquisition. Evaluation usually takes place both formally and informally. Teachers often judge informally that the student has done well in certain areas and is having difficulty in others; teachers also decide whether the student is ready to move up to another level of the program. Formal assessment, usually in the shape of standardized tests, gives some indication of "school skills" (ability to perform prescribed, decontextualized tasks under formalized conditions). Students who perform poorly in these assessments are considered low-literate, or just dull, and are not expected to be successful language learners. The generalizability of these assessments to the actual conditions in which immigrants use language is seldom part of the evaluative process. Specifically, what is not done is any investigation of what use the students will be able to make of the language they are expected to acquire through the program; furthermore, little time is spent asking learners their perceptions about their learning and how they will

use it (Baylis, 1988). Indeed, immigrant students may have had sufficient experience of passive involvement with North American institutions to be confused by, and unresponsive to, a person in authority who asks them what they would like to learn.

To summarize, this section has introduced three significant aspects to the difficulty posed by the resettlement of low-education, non-English speaking refugees. First, they lack language, literacy, and technical ability to meet the entry requirements of any but the most basic level of employment and education institutions. Once in these institutions, they often make little progress, for a variety of reasons, and are considered to have low potential. Second, established remedial programs have had limited success in retraining these immigrants, so pedagogical, curriculum and program alternatives are being developed. Third, the problem with many of the alternatives is that the learning goals they propose are dictated by the requirements of employment and education institutions. Learning goals in formal programs are seldom based on investigation of the conditions of immigrants' lives in their communities. This study addresses the question of immigrant language learning needs through investigation of the roles written and oral modes of language have in the daily lives of an immigrant group within a host community.

The investigation undertaken in this study is sociolinguistic in orientation. It incorporates the characteristics of the participants--their background and past experiences, and the abilities, perceptions and attitudes they have developed over their lives; and also the characteristics of the language domains they enter and the interactions that take place within those

places. This study uses the principles and methodology of ethnographic investigation. However, it does not attempt to provide the comprehensive description of full-scale ethnography. Instead, it is an ethnographic-style exploration of a limited set of the interactions of a small group of immigrants within certain domains.

In the rest of this chapter, I provide background information about my interest in immigrant language learning, about the particular group under study, the fields of inquiry which are related to this investigation, and about the methodology used. This information introduces both the content and the structure of the chapters following. At the end of this chapter I present the plan of this discussion.

1.2. Investigator's Rationale

As a teacher of adult refugee immigrants in a government-sponsored English language training program, I met students who were experiencing difficulties with language learning in the classroom and with their lives in general. In several cases these difficulties resulted in failure--the students failed to progress through the program, and the program did not help the students to learn. A variety of reasons could be offered for these failures. For one thing, it seemed that the less familiar students were with North American culture and with formal schooling practices, the more difficulty they experienced in a classroom-centred language training program. Illiteracy therefore was a problem for students insofar as they did not have knowledge or skills appropriate to the classroom. Furthermore, students' performances were also affected by their personal histories. How long students had been in Canada, whether they were alone or with family, what difficulties the family was having, whether or not they had to worry about relatives in the home country, whether they had had devastating experiences as refugees--all these factors affected the students' learning. With so many variables to consider, it was often difficult and an inadequate response to offer pedagogical solutions to the students' learning problems.

As a teacher, I tried a wide variety of techniques, activities, and materials to assist student learning. When students apparently failed to learn it was simplest to regard the failure as a result of some deficiency on their part, and to prescribe remedial help. Eventually, however, it became apparent that the learning problems some students were experiencing had to be placed

within a larger context. Account needed to be taken of what cultural and personal background they brought to the learning situation; and of how the language they were studying fit into the patterns of language use they had developed in other areas of their lives.

My experience with adult refugees in low-level ESL classes led me to the conclusion that varying techniques, activities, content and materials was insufficient to ensure student success. Instead, it seemed that if program designers and implementers had more complete and accurate knowledge of the contexts of students' language activity, and the ways they used language in those contexts, a more coherent, student-centred learning plan would result. Thus the present study arose from an interest in influencing the design of language programs for adult immigrants so that their experience of life in Canada could be more fully reflected in the classrooms they entered. The next section outlines the context of the investigation.

1.3. Context of the Investigation

This study examines the language patterns of a small group of adult Vietnamese refugees who had participated in various language training programs in Vancouver and other locations. The city is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic environment, in which Vietnamese form a recently-established but substantial group. In 1986 alone, 6,622 Vietnamese resettled in Canada; Vancouver was the destination of 543 of these (Canada Employment and Immigration, 1986). The immigration figure for 1986 reflects a sharp decrease after previous years; the influx of nearly 70,000 Vietnamese to Canada over

the years 1980 to 1985, added to the arrivals of the late 1970's, has led to the development of a Vietnamese community in all the country's major centres.

Both historical and sociolinguistic aspects of this group are important. Over the last decade, the past experiences and resettlement difficulties of Southeast Asian refugees have received considerable popular and research attention in North America. Of all the Southeast Asian groups resettled in Canada, those from Vietnam have been the most thoroughly investigated (Indra, 1987). Frequent statements have been made about the difficulty Vietnamese experience in learning one or other of Canada's majority languages, and about the importance of language ability to resettlement success (Neuwirth, 1987), yet the actual language learning and use of Vietnamese refugees has been little examined. Dorais (1987) suggests that the sociolinguistic condition of Vietnamese refugees is one of "diglossia"--a situation in which a group "must use two or more languages in order to accomplish tasks important for its survival and the languages have unequal status, the native language being subordinate to the host language" (Dorais, 1987:58). Dorais states that this situation creates tension within the immigrant group, who feel obligation and external pressure from the host society to learn a majority language in order to facilitate their economic adjustment, yet also have a strong desire to preserve their native identity. The research context therefore includes both the multi-ethnic character of the city and the subordinate position of Vietnamese as minority language users In the next section some more specific characteristics of the ethnic group under study are described.

1.3.1. The Participants

Among the shared features of the participants of this study are their ethnic background, their level of formal schooling, their adulthood and their refugee status. In Chapter Three the participants are described in greater detail. This section gives an overview of general factors relevant to the group I interviewed.

Of Vietnamese immigrants to Canada, approximately 80% are actually ethnic Chinese (Neuwirth, 1987). Thus, while numbers of immigrants from Vietnam are substantial, only a small minority are ethnically Vietnamese, which suggests that some immigrants may have more difficulty than others in establishing a support network. The larger proportion, ethnic Chinese, have the advantage of being able to make use of the services provided by Vancouver's well-established Chinese community. The smaller group, Vietnamese, may have limited access to social networks that could assist them in adapting to the community and obtaining jobs. Since fewer services exist in Vietnamese language, ethnic Vietnamese may feel more pressure than their Chinese compatriots to learn English and adapt to mainstream North American modes. However, the limited size of their community may also increase the significance maintaining cultural traditions has for them. This means that they may be hampered in learning a new language because it poses a threat to their cultural identity. In these respects ethnic Vietnamese may be disadvantaged relative to ethnic Chinese from Vietnam.

Level of formal schooling is a significant factor among Vietnamese from various ethnic backgrounds. Neuwirth, in a report on the socieconomic adjustment of Southeast Asian refugees, (1987) states that the educational levels of these immigrants are generally low. Out of a total of 531 Vietnamese respondents of South Vietnamese, Chinese, and North Vietnamese ethnicity, 121, approximately 23%, were found to have had primary education only. A further 209, 39%, reported some secondary education (Neuwirth, 1987:328). Thus, about 62% of Vietnamese immigrants who answered the questionnaire had less than secondary school completion. These figures have negative implications for Vietnamese in formal language learning environments. Language learning literature indicates that those who have limited education in their own language are more likely to have difficulty in a language training program (Weinstein, 1984; d'Anglejan, 1984; Penfield, 1986).

The fact that this group consists of refugee adults is also significant. Adults have a substantial history of prior experiences which shape the ways they use language and the ways they learn. Furthermore, most adults have many responsibilities that demand time and energy, which can mean that little attention is left for language learning. Finally, motivation will crucially affect adult ability to learn. In many cases, refugees find their prior experiences of loss and suffering inhibit their subsequent learning and adaptation. These factors, when combined with the individual complexities of adult life, suggest that refugee adults, particularly those with little prior schooling, may not be in a position to receive substantial benefit from further formal education (Klassen, 1987).

This section has given a brief overview of relevant features of the context and the participants of this study. The next section will offer an introduction to areas of the research literature that are related to immigrant language learning, which will be expanded upon in Chapter Two.

1.4. Related Literature: An Overview

Three major strands of research literature are relevant to this study. The first pertains to the study of literacy, both theoretical and practical aspects of that field. The second concerns social science research on the experience of refugees in their flight and adaptation to North American life. Finally, literature concerning current theories and practices of learning and teaching second languages to adults is relevant to this study. Literacy research and commentary provides a philosophical basis for adult language teaching programs, curricula and materials. Since the meanings and goals of literacy are determined within a particular social framework, it is necessary to investigate perceptions about literacy held in North American society and in communities from which refugees originate if the process of their becoming literate is to be fully understood. The second area of literature, refugee resettlement, describes how the prior experiences of refugees affect their adaptation to a new culture, and gives evidence of the magnitude of the adjustment Vietnamese refugees must make to enter mainstream North American society. Finally, literature on second language learning and teaching provides theoretical background for program structures and teaching-learning methodologies generally espoused in language education

for adult immigrants. What follows is a brief introduction to each of the three research areas. In later sections the major theoretical and research problems in each field which have bearing to this study will be discussed.

1.4.1. Literacy: Social Expectations

Many writers (Coe, 1986; Graff, 1986; Kozol,1985) have commented on the alleged positive correlation between widespread literacy and social benefit that is a major assumption of twentieth century popular thought. These writers point out that literacy is popularly supposed to affect positively both cognitive awareness of the world and ability to function successfully within it. According to this conceptual framework, people who do not possess literacy are both intellectually and socially handicapped. Marginalization is doubly acute for people who lack literacy and who cannot speak the language of the majority of the population: they are both illiterate and language deficient, so their participation in society is sharply limited. Immigrants in this position experience great pressure to learn appropriate language skills in order to adapt (Dorais, 1987; Neuwirth, 1987).

Literacy commentators further note the popular conflation of literacy and formal schooling, which is apparent in many definitions of literacy (Kozol, 1980). The Canadian Adult Education Association, for example, holds that completing nine years of formal education identifies a person as "literate" (de Castell, Luke, and MacLennan, 1986). Grade-level attainment is an oft-used normative standard; many adult training courses offered by public institutions specify grade levels as program prerequisites, and often

employers also require grade levels. Hence, for immigrants seeking to adapt to new economic conditions by retraining in skills appropriate to the North American labour market, literacy, in terms of grade achievement, is a prime concern.

In Canada government-sponsored programs in literacy and language training are widely offered for refugees. Much current literature points out the importance of investigating and taking into account the language needs of refugees in program planning (Indra, 1987; Dorais, 1987). Less attention is given to the normative, socializing goals of adult language programs. Insofar as language training is predicated on certain understandings about the nature of literacy and its importance to social participation, it is important to analyse views of literacy prevalent in this society, views which frequently serve as an unexamined basis of program goals, and to offer insight into some attitudes to, and ways of using, literacy that immigrants bring with them to their new setting.

1.4.2. The Refugee Experience

This study is particularly concerned with refugees. Resettlement literature (Indra, 1987) suggests that refugees can experience severe difficulty adapting to a new environment. The extensive material on the history and circumstances of Indochinese refugees in North America, for example, is frequently a disturbing chronicle of individual suffering and systemic failure. Generally, the research suggests that Indochinese refugees have experienced traumatic treatment in both their native country and the nation of first

asylum, while countries of eventual resettlement have often dealt with refugee immigrants ineffectively. The refugees themselves struggle with the dilemma of integrating to the mainstream while preserving a cultural identity which is very different from a North American one. The integration of refugees is smoother if they are from middle-class,urban, educated, professional backgrounds than if they are of working-class or rural origin, with limited education. In the successive waves of Indochinese migration, it appears that more recent arrivals have included larger proportions of the latter group. For example, Neuwirth (1987) reports that, from a sampling of 1645 Southeast Asian immigrants, fully two thirds had completed either only primary or some secondary education. Researchers (d'Anglejan, 1984; Penfield, 1986; Weinstein, 1984; Indra, 1987) generally agree that the systems established in host countries to handle Southeast Asian refugees have had problems coping with the new set of adjustment difficulties this second group brings.

1.4.3. Language Learning

Ability in either one or both of the official languages as a central feature of resettlement success is an important part of Canada's overall language policy. That this is so is apparent in the variety of immigrant language education programs provided by all levels of government. To attempt to assess the effect of these programs on the adaptation process, it is important to examine both their goals and those of immigrants who have participated in them. Language learning theory suggests that the amount and type of language students learn is related to their perceptions about the language, the language culture, and their own cultural identity, and also to the uses they are able to make of their learning. Research on teaching languages to immigrants indicates that learning experiences are often covertly shaped so that immigrants come to see themselves as limited in the social roles they are able to fill in their new country. This study comments on the classroom language learning experiences of the participants, and relates them to the roles people played in their family networks.

This section has introduced three research areas related to this study: literacy, refugee resettlement, and language learning. The literature will be described in further detail in Chapter Two. The next section gives an overview the methodological basis of this research, which will be more fully described in Chapter Three.

1.5. Research Theme and Methodology

Few studies have been conducted on the language use patterns of minority language immigrants in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual context such as that presented by Vancouver. One study of this nature was carried out with Hispanic immigrants in the city of Toronto (Klassen, 1987). Klassen investigated the operation of written language in the everyday lives of low-education, non-English speaking adults. His interest was in the ongoing roles of both majority and minority language in the lives of his informants. His purpose was to shed light on what roles minority language continues to play in the lives of immigrants, and what consideration of the role of minority language needs to be taken when educators plan for the language needs of immigrants (p.4). Klassen's rationale is essentially the same as that of the present investigation; this study is also concerned with immigrants' uses of both English and their native language, and with how policy makers' awareness of these uses might affect immigrant language education. Therefore, this.study has been planned as a replication of his work, albeit with a different ethnic group in a different social context. Klassen's study is described below.

To collect information Klassen focussed on a small group of Hispanic adults who were living in the Toronto area. He conducted a series of open-ended interviews about people's language and literacy use habits in various spheres of operation in their native countries and in Toronto. His findings

are organized in terms of the language domains[1] his participants entered, and the strategies they developed for managing the language they encountered in their daily lives. He found that a) different domains call for different mixes of oral and writing tasks in both first and second languages; b) that the low-literate, non-English speaker is not helpless in the face of the demands of literate society, but develops various means of operating in the different domains; and c) that the situation of the non-English speaker in an English-dominant society is similar to that of the non-literate in a literate society--the strategies the person develops allow him/her to function in many spheres of daily activity. However, in certain areas of society, notably school and the workplace, literacy/language barriers exist which block both the non-literate and the non-English speaker from full participation in these institutions.

As with Klassen's research, this study considers the sociolinguistic situation of minority language users within a host community. This theme was chosen for this study because of my interest, similar to Klassen's, in relating the language learning needs of immigrants to the actual use they make of language, both majority and minority, in their everyday operations. The interest of my research can be stated as follows:

1. What is the role of written and oral languages in the lives of low-education, non-English speaking Vietnamese immigrants in Vancouver?

2. What is the non-English speaking immigrant's experience of language learning?

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[1]In the field of sociolinguistics domains are defined as "institutionalised social situations typically constrained by by a common set of behavioral rules" (Crystal, 1980: 121). Klassen stresses that the social factors of any given setting are to be included in an examination of the language use which takes place there.

3. How can the social uses immigrants have for various forms of language be taken into account in planning language learning?

(adapted from Klassen, 1987:2-4)

To collect data I observed language classes and conducted interviews, adapting Klassen's (1987) interview framework, with a small group of adult Vietnamese immigrants. The information gathered is qualitative, dealing with the places people reported going and the language practices they used. The findings bear general resemblance to Klassen's, yet differences occur, due to the distinct population and setting, and to the somewhat different focus of the research questions. Since the informants' language learning experiences are an additional area of concern to this study, more attention is given here to their past and present involvement with language classes, their own and their teachers' views of language teaching/learning.

1.6. Summary

In this chapter the main concerns of the study have been introduced. I began with an explanation of the study's focus on low-literate, low-education, non-English speaking refugee immigrants, and my own interest in their language learning experiences. I then described the sociolinguistic orientation of the investigation; the study is an ethnographic-style description of the language practices of adult Vietnamese in Vancouver. Following this, I outlined three areas of research literature--literacy, refugee resettlement, and second language learning--to introduce the study's theoretical concerns. Finally, a previous study on the literacy and language uses of a minority

group in Canada is summarized--its methodology and results are similar to those of the present study, and so will be discussed throughout the following chapters.

The discussion over the next five chapters is organized as follows. Chapter Two first reviews the theoretical basis of the ethnographic methodology used in the investigation, and then offers comments from the fields of literacy, refugee resettlement, and language learning research on the issues raised by this study. Chapter Three describes the format and process of the investigation, and introduces the six informants I interviewed. Chapter Four presents the investigation results, which are organized according to the language domains people entered and the language practices they used there. Chapter Five summarizes the findings, relates them to the research literature, notes their pedagogical implications, and makes recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO--AN OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter elaborates on the issues mentioned in the previous chapter. The first section outlines methodological concerns in current anthropological research and presents procedures and techniques of ethnographic study. The next section discusses the practical and theoretical issues surrounding literacy. The third section reviews refugee resettlement literature, particularly that concerning Southeast Asians, and their adaptation to North America. The final section presents material drawn from research on second language learning and teaching. All the literature reviewed in this chapter provides a broad theoretical and historical context within which I will place the information collected from the people I interviewed. This information will be presented in Chapters Three and Four.

2.2. Ethnography

Ethnography, the art and science of cultural description, is the primary means by which anthropologists historically have gathered and preserved information about social groups. Generally, the goal of ethnographic research is to produce a complete picture of a given cultural unit--the social processes

that operate, and the meanings assigned to these by the native inhabitants of that setting. I chose an ethnographic approach for this study because it allows for investigation of the contexts of language use and the perceptions people have about their language, in a way that more quantitative types of research do not. In this section I present the general principles of ethnography, then discuss ethnographic methodology, and finally describe ethnographic interviewing.

2.2.1 Principles of Ethnography

In order to establish ethnography as a discipline, anthropologists are concerned with defining the nature of ethnographic enquiry and developing a systematic account of procedures and processes. The historical process of building coherent anthropological theory and research methodology is examined by Marvin Harris in his book, The Rise of Anthropological Theory. For Harris, a key feature of modern ethnography can be characterized in terms of the emic/etic distinction first established by Pike (1954, cited in Harris, 1968). According to Harris, in ethnographic methodology this distinction refers to the difference between information internal to a particular setting--that is, the processes and their significance as they are understood by participants in the culture--and data gathered by outsiders to the culture which may lead to interpretations of events that are different from those offered by natives. Harris defines an emic approach as follows.

> Emic statements refer to logico-empirical systems whose phenomenal distinctions or "things" are built up out of contrasts and discriminations significant, meaningful, real, accurate, or in

> some other fashion regarded as appropriate by the actors themselves. An emic statement can be falsified if it can be shown that it contradicts the cognitive calculus by which relevant actors judge that entities are similar or different, real, meaningful, significant, or in some other sense "appropriate" or "acceptable" (1968; 571).

Etic statements, on the other hand

> a. depend on phenomenal distinctions judged appropriate by the community of scientific observers;
> b. cannot be falsified if they do not conform to the actor's notion of what is significant, real, meaningful, appropriate;
> c. are verified when independent observers using similar operations agree that a given event has occurred (1968; 571).

The value of the emic/etic distinction for ethnography is that a rigourous description of a given culture incorporates both emic information and etic data. It is possible that emic and etic perspectives will produce contradictory descriptions of cultural activities. Where contradiction occurs, it needs to be addressed within the context of anthropological research tradition in order that the source of the contradiction can be located.

Harris criticizes modern anthropological research for its emphasis on emic concerns and neglect of etic material. He attributes this preoccupation to the influence of the work of Franz Boas and his followers. He notes that a central theme of the Boasian research program is to approach a setting without predetermined hypotheses, and to record data objectively. The Boasian school would also hold that each culture must be examined entirely within its own context and that comparative analyses of aspects of different cultures are not logically possible. The problem Harris finds with these

principles is that they render Boasian methodology incapable of producing meaningful, generalizable information about human culture. In order to enable the articulation of general principles of culture--a task which Harris asserts is the goal of cultural description--idealized statements about the culture collected from its natives must be balanced by external evidence about the operations of the various cultural systems within the unit under study.

Harris' emphasis on the importance of the etic viewpoint is reflected in other writing on ethnography. Subsequent commentators have sought to establish principles for ethnographic research that allow for the incorporation of both etic and emic perspectives. Heath (1982) for example, asserts that events, processes, and attitudes identified through investigation should not be considered in isolation. Rather, they should be integrated with what else is known about the culture, and about similar elements in other cultures. This statement suggests three general principles of ethnographic inquiry which can incorporate both etic and emic viewpoints. First, the research program is observational rather than experimental: data are gathered through listening, observing, and asking questions. Second, to conduct research the investigator takes as much as possible the position of an insider of the community: that is, she spends time with the natives, learns the language, and participates in community activities. This position means that the researcher herself is part of the research process and so must take into account her own views of the setting under investigation. Third, the researcher must not accept uncritically the information she gathers but must verify it through other sources and further study of the culture, and of similar practices in other cultures. Thus the challenge to the ethnographer is to gain access to emic information, and

then to check its validity through external sources. Following these three principles, ethnographic investigation aims to achieve an etic-emic balance in the information gathered.

2.2.2. Ethnographic Methodology

The general principles of ethnography outlined above have been elaborated into systematic research programs which seek to operationalize the emic/etic perspective. Sevigny (1981), Hymes (1982), and Heath (1982) describe methodologies of investigation. Sevigny (1981) notes that, since the given unit observed typically existed prior to the investigation period, and furthermore since not all its features are likely to be apparent to the investigator, ethnographic observation needs to be augmented by triangulation procedures. Sevigny defines triangulation as the comparison of several participants or groups over different points in time. Accomplishing this comparison suggests that investigation should be located in several different areas of the unit of study, and should be longitudinally designed. Basically, triangulation is the process of achieving accuracy by checking descriptions at different points in time and incorporating different points of view.

Hymes (1982) offers a model that elaborates the triangulation process into successive stages of investigation; at each step different kinds of investigation take place and different sorts of data are amassed. The first stage he mentions is contrastive insight on the part of the researcher. This means that the researcher begins by contrasting as fully as possible elements in the

new culture with other known cultures. Once something is known about the culture, the second step involves a search for specific information about what has been observed--the ethnographic process becomes topic-oriented. The third stage of ethnography investigates hypotheses about cultural activities observed and incorporates the information gained into a general interpretation of the culture.

Spradley (1979) refers to the process of cultural interpretation as the "translation" stage--where the information is translated by the researcher in such a way that the culture is accessible to the investigator's audience. Harris [1968], however, notes that a social unit described by an ethnographer may or may not be recognizable to the members of that unit. Thus an ethnographic investigation may uncover apparent inconsistencies, due to differences between insiders' and outsiders' views of events. Ethnographers attempt to explain putative contradictions by employing procedures to incorporate insider and outsider views within a braober framework. Heath (1982) offers broader
one such set of procedures.

In Heath's (1982) guidelines for ethnographic research, she notes first that ethnographic investigation should include several research fronts. These are a clear definition of what is actually being studied (the unit of study); the ethnohistory of the social group; microethnographic work on selected aspects of a whole setting; linguistic investigations, and analysis of artifacts. However, she says that where full description of a community is not possible, selected activities or settings should be described as fully as possible. She notes that selective ethnographic investigation should not be confused with proper ethnography, but she maintains that concentrated work done on one

or two aspects of a social unit can be a valuable precursor to subsequent in-depth investigation.. Finally, she states that information gained from such investigation should be related to existing knowledge about the culture and to information known about practices in other cultures (1982; 35).

The methodological suggestions offered by the above writers can be arranged in a three-point research program: 1.) definition and collection of background information on the social unit; 2.) intensive study of selected aspects of the social unit; and 3.) consideration of the new information in the light of previous theory and research on similar social phenomena. The methodology used in this study follows this program. The next section gives further information about the methods used to collect information from the participants.

2.2.3. Ethnographic Interviewing

In his set of criteria for ethnography, Spindler (1982) identifies techniques of investigation. He proposes the use of techniques which permit contextualized observations, open-ended inquiry, discovery of the insider view of a given setting, and the collection of naturalistic, non-predetermined data. Spindler highlights observation and interview as the chief information-collecting methods. Spradley (1979) and Heath (1982) are also convinced of the efficacy of interviewing as an investigative tool, noting that ethnographic interviews involve distinct methodology.

Spindler (1982) and Spradley (1979) discuss general procedures of interviewing. Spindler states that an ethnographic interview "must not predetermine responses by the kinds of questions asked. The conversational management of the interview ... must be so carried out as to promote the unfolding of emic (insider) cultural knowledge in its most heuristic 'natural' form" (p.7). Spradley provides a framework for ethnographic questioning: he identifies descriptive, structural and contrast questions (p.223). Descriptive questions are the most straightforward and are used to elicit an extended sample of the informant's language. Descriptive questions can be both grand-tour (macro) and mini-tour (micro), dealing with overall processes or with more limited foci. Structural questions, on the other hand, serve mainly to verify and classify the descriptive information already given. Finally, contrast questions elicit from the informant the meaning and dimensions of the terms he/she uses.

Concomitant with asking questions, Spradley addresses the need for naturalistic elements in the conversation, such as taking turns, expressing interest or ignorance, repeating or restating terms, asking friendly questions, and creating hypothetical situations. He says these tactics are for the purpose of creating a comfortable atmosphere in the conversation. However, he points out that these tactics and question types are used differently in an ethnographic interview than they would be in a typical friendly conversation because the interviewer has an explicit purpose. Thus an ethnographic interview is not a casual encounter; it is carefully guided by techniques such as Spradley notes.

2.2.4. Summary

This section has defined ethnography as a methodology for description and comparison of cultural practices, attitudes and understandings. General principles about the behavior of cultural groups are discovered through comparative analysis of social units, using different techniques at different times and in different locations. The present study seeks qualitative information about one particular group within a multicultural setting. It should be noted that, while this investigation is grounded in ethnographic methodology, it is not a comprehensive description of the unit under study. Limitations of time and access to the community have narrowed the scope of the study so that it is exploratory rather than exhaustive in nature. The rest of this chapter relates findings from theory and research on literacy, refugees, and langauge learning, in order to provide a knowledge base on which to assess the information reported by the participants. The discussion begins with the philosophical issues raised in current literacy theory.

theoretical framework

2.3. Literacy: Theory and Practice

Chapter One mentioned that the significance of literacy has been the subject of substantial anthropological, psychological and historical research. Much of this research has found that in different societies at different times, literate ability has been differentially measured and valued. Exploration of the current social values assigned to literate abilities, values which this study

argues tend to shape the kind of language training that is offered to immigrants, may help uncover a possible mismatch between mainstream North American societal values, and the values which Southeast Asian refugees bring to language education. This section will overview current literacy theory, and then summarize how these theories are applied in the practice of literacy education.

2.3.1. Definition

Literacy is difficult to characterise since it involves both psychomotor skills and socially sanctioned knowledge (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). Graff (1986) points out that in different historical periods literacy use and dissemination have been controlled by various social institutions for their own purposes. Heath (1986) argues that not only in different historical periods, but also among different cultures and ethnic groups, literacy has different uses and values. This section discusses literacy from the point of view of different social science theories and research.

The significance of reading and writing processes can be regarded according to two distinct orientations: one that considers the cognitive or knowledge aspect of literacy and one that assesses its social/functional uses. Theorists such as Ong (1982) and Hirsch (1986) claim that the acquisition of literacy is a sign of socio-evolutionary/intellectual progress. As Daniell (1986) summarizes, this argument asserts that the technology of encoding and decoding brings about an enhancement of consciousness, so that the acquirers of these skills are able to understand the world in a more profound way, and

are thus more "civilised" than those who lack these techniques. On the other hand the social orientation to literacy is concerned with the uses of literate technologies in different societies. Researchers such as Heath (1982, 1983, 1986), and Scribner and Cole (in Klassen, 1987) have demonstrated that different societies, ethnic groups, and communities have different patterns of literacy use. The real issue of literacy, according to Daniell(1986), de Castell and Luke (1986) and Graff(1986) is how social conditions determine "what counts as literacy, who has access to literacy, and what uses and functions literacy can be put to" (Daniell 1986:7).

Psychological, anthropological and historical investigations of the uses of literacy indicate that perceptions of literacy and its benefits vary according to social conditions. The work of Scribner and Cole among the Vai people of Liberia (summarised in Klassen, 1987; and Weinstein, 1984), resulted in no clear evidence that "individuals in literate societies...process information about the world differently from those in societies without literacy."(Klassen, 1987, p.9) They found instead that the effects of literacy are limited to specific activities in specific contexts. Klassen and several other commentators (Heath, 1986a, 1986b; Graff, 1986) emphasize that Scribner and Cole's work differentiated effects of literacy from effects of formal schooling. Klassen notes that previous research tended to assume that modes of writing practised in classrooms were generalizable to literate tasks in other settings. Scribner and Cole's findings, however, suggest that the classroom is simply one social setting, and the literacy practices acquired there do not necessarily lead to general cognitive benefits.

The importance of the social contexts of literacy is also upheld in the anthropological work of Shirley Brice Heath. From her research on patterns of language use within three communities in the Southeastern United States, she makes two general observations (summarised in Klassen, 1987) First, she notes that language use parallels all the other activities and social realities of the group under study and therefore must be described within such contexts. Second, she asserts that language learning takes place as part of the socialization processes which operate in any given community; hence the uses learned for reading and writing depend heavily on the other roles adopted within that community. If, as Heath is saying, there is interaction between the literate activities engaged in by individuals and the social dynamics of the community in which they operate, then the acquisition and use of literacy will only benefit an individual as his or her social role permits the exercise of such abilities. Heath's research calls into question the applicability of middle-class schooling practices to children from working-class communities. Whether the same question of applicability can be raised with regard to the literacy and language education of adult Vietnamese immigrants is one concern of this study.

Historical evidence for the significance of the social contexts of literacy is offered in the research of Harvey Graff (1986; also summarised in Klassen, 1987). Graff (1986) argues that a causal link between literacy, development, growth, and progress has not been demonstrated historically; that in fact, major economic and technical advances have taken place under conditions of low mass literacy, and that increased literacy has not led to modern economic developments. Rather, Graff says, it is educational levels and socioeconomic

power of a few persons in key positions, not increments in the degree of popular literacy, that precipitate such advances. His thesis is that history demonstrates that literacy by itself is not an effective agent of change. Literacy only becomes powerful in conjunction with other factors, such as the goals of the institutions, church, state, and commerce, which use it and inculcate it.

The findings of psychological, anthropological and historical research suggest that literate abilities have a relative value rather than the absolute value postulated by cognitive benefit theorists. Literacy as an intellectual condition cannot be divorced from actual literate activities, their purposes, and the contexts in which they take place. Furthermore, literacy by itself is insufficient to engineer individual or social evolution; it only becomes powerful when controlled by prevailing social institutions. In North America literacy standards are currently controlled by education and employment institutions. The stated goal of much adult basic education programming is to offer retraining so that adults can meet the criteria of these institutions. As a preparation to more specialized types of training, adults are usually expected to demonstrate functional competence in certain types of literate and other tasks. The next section reviews definitions and critiques of "functional" literacy.

2.3.2. Functional Literacy

Functionalism has become an important notion in education in recent years. Based on behaviorism, various aspects of functionality--functional literacy, functional language, functional competence--all have to do with

practical activity for the purpose of successful operation in life situations. Many definitions of functional literacy leave unanswered such philosophical questions as how and by whom successful operation shall be determined. Instead, functionalism frequently carries covert expectations about the importance of certain abilities over other ones. In this section some definitions of functional literacy will be considered and a critique of conventional functionalism will be offered.

The term "functional literacy" was first adopted by the United States Army, which defined it as "the ability to understand written instructions necessary for conducting basic military functions and tasks" (de Castell, Luke, and MacLennan 1986). Subsequent definitions of functional literacy have applied the same task orientation evident in the Army's version to more general life functions. For example, the National Reading Council of the United States (NRC) sees literacy as the ability to "respond to practical tasks of daily life" (Heath 1986a). Other definitions are more explicit about the contexts of literate activity. The UNESCO definition, for instance, states "A person is literate when (she/he) has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable (him/her) to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in (his/her) group or community."(in de Castell, Luke, and MacLennan 1986). All these definitions hold that literacy is a basic set of abilities necessary to functioning in life, but they do not explain what is included in this set of abilities, nor what it means to "function" in life.

Detailed information about what is required for functioning is provided by the 1975 Adult Performance Level study (summarized in

Lankshear 1986). The APL uses a set of 65 objectives--areas of competence which were associated with the study's definition of "adult success"--to measure literacy. It assesses both the content and the skills of literacy. Content is summarized as a five-point taxonomy of human knowledge needs: consumer economics; occupationally-related knowledge; community resources; health; and government and law. Skill needs are divided into four areas: communication skills; computation skills; problem solving skills; and interpersonal relations skills. For each general area, an overall goal is established, then for each goal, a list of objectives is given. The final step is the formation of specific tasks for each objective (Lankshear 1986). The tasks include behaviors like filling out a cheque, addressing an envelope, and calculating change from purchases. The focus on tasks like these make it clear that in many respects operational definitions of functional literacy are socio-culturally bound.

Functional literacy as defined above has been criticised on a number of counts. Lankshear (1986) asserts that the goal "ability to function" promotes only minimum or survival competence, thus reinforcing in the learner a negative and passive attitude to his or her abilities and options. Moreover, Wallace and Kelley (1985) hold that the concept of needs analysis, central to functional literacy training, is misleading. They say that the needs addressed in literacy training are not necessarily the needs of students but the needs of employment structures. The real need the students are left with is the need to "identify the needs of bureaucratic capitalism as their own needs" (Wallace and Kelley 1985 p.52). Ultimately, these critics would argue that conventional functionalism is dysfunctional for those who are disadvantaged in the social

order, since it holds out the promise of a minimal state of existence, and in doing so hinders the possibility of acting to change social circumstances (Lankshear 1986). Their critique underscores the link between literate skills and the social conditions in which they are exercised.

2.3.3. Literacy and Social Change

Theorists such as Kozol (1985) and Lankshear (1986) link the acquisition of literacy with the process of social and personal change. The principles both writers propose are inspired in part by the work of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. Freire understands the development of literacy as a heightening of social and political awareness rather than as the acquiring of a set of functional skills. He begins by saying that ignorance is a result of both illiteracy (the mechanics of coding skills) and lack of experience at participating and intervening in the historical process. Freire sees an illiterate group as an oppressed group which possesses a naive or "magic" consciousness--one which sees information as being controlled by a superior power to which an inferior group must submit (Freire, 1983:44). For him, the goal of an adult literacy program would be to transform this attitude of passive submission to a critical awareness of social conditions (Freire, 1983:44). Freire asserts then, that acquiring literacy involves more than having mechanical and psychological control of reading and writing techniques. These techniques are to be used to gain social consciousness. Consciousness raising in a Freirean style literacy program takes place through the investigation of "generative themes" (Millard, 1986); that is, issues which are

central to the life of the student. In study of these themes, the illiterate reflects on social conditions and, where necessary, acts to change them. Literate skills are the tools used to enable this process of reflection and action.

Freire's model of literacy training was developed under social conditions prevailing in certain Latin American countries. Attempts have been made to introduce Freirean principles to North American second language literacy teaching contexts (Millard, 1986). However, Klassen (1987) points out that while Freire addresses the situation of a minority group within a dominant culture, he fails to consider the additional variables of multi-ethnic and multi-lingual situations. From a careful analysis of Freire's thought, Millard (1986) suggests that Freire himself would admit using generative theme investigation in second language literacy training would be virtually impossible without prior ability in the target language.

This section has reviewed two approaches to literacy: the cognitive and the social. It has been suggested that there is little clear historical or psychological evidence for the proposition that literacy enhances intellectual and social evolution. Historical and anthropological research on literacy indicates instead that the uses and values attached to literacy are socially determined and differ at different times and in different places. Distinction between the effects of literacy and those of schooling have been identified, but are not generally yet recognized, since achievement of grade level is still a common measure of literacy. Further, functional literacy is to be understood as a social artifact; the functional competence movement--which influences a great deal of adult basic education programming throughout North America--while advertised as value-free (De Castell and Luke, 1986), is in fact covertly

structured to maintain the existing social order. In short, the acquisition of mass literacy, in particular literacy for functional competence, has been widely proclaimed as a necessary means of social progress. However, evidence suggests that literacy is not a guarantor of individual or social benefit. Instead, literacy training is often used as a means of social control.

As the next two sections indicate, parallel relationships exist between prevailing notions about literacy and those about the language needs/language training of immigrants. As literacy is presumed to confer benefits, so acquisition of the majority language of a host country is supposed to provide immigrants with access to social power and options they could not gain otherwise. As social science research indicates that possession of literacy is not the crucial factor in social development, the research thus far conducted on immigrant language use suggests that similar conclusions might be drawn about acquisition of a majority language. Graff (1979) states that literacy/illiteracy mediates, but does not determine, social circumstances; the same may be true about the relationship of immigrants and majority languages. The next section provides background to this issue through discussion of refugee resettlement in North America.

2.4. Refugee Resettlement

In keeping with the principles of ethnographic investigation discussed above, this section presents background information on this study's participants. The people I interviewed came to Canada as refugees, as did most Vietnamese now living here. Research done on refugees indicates that

adjusting to a new environment presents significant difficulties for some groups, and that the refugee experience tends to hinder the adaptation process. This section will first clarify what is meant by the term "refugee", then overview the history of the Vietnamese refugee movement and the conditions of flight and camp life, and finally discuss problems of resettlement in North America generally, and Canada specifically.

2.4.1. Definition of Refugee

Most literature on refugees begins by addressing the problems of definition. The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol adopted by the United Nations both refer to refugees as "persons who are outside their country because of a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." (cited in Khan and Talal 1986.) The United Nations definition is widely accepted[2] but most writers acknowledge that the refugee issue is more complex than the definition suggests. One problem has to do with determining whether population outflow is for political or economic reasons. For the purpose of controlling intake, asylum countries have attempted to distinguish between "refugees"--those forced out of their homes by political persecution--and other kinds of migrants--presumably those who leave voluntarily, in search of better economic conditions. Of course, in individual cases the distinction is frequently difficult to establish. Nonetheless, outlining

[2]Khan and Talal (1986) note that nearly 100 nations have ratified the Convention and Protocol; Wain (1981) points out that at least some states, while not formally agreed on it, do informally adhere to the principles laid down in the Convention.

the two categories is helpful since it illustrates the factors which motivate migration.

Migration has been classed as either voluntary or involuntary (Khan and Talal 1986:14). The distinction between these two types is in terms of the amount of planning possible before the move takes place; the reasons for the move; and the choice of ultimate destination. Involuntary migrants are likely to have to move suddenly, without much preparation, due to a natural disaster or an economic, political, or social upheaval, and their concern is with fleeing bad conditions rather than seeking optimal new conditions. Voluntary migrants, on the other hand, are more likely to have positive reasons for moving, more time to plan where they will go and a better idea of what kind of life they will establish in the new place. In practice, the distinction between these two categories can become blurred, since migrants may have both negative (they are experiencing political oppression) and positive (they desire reunion with family members) reasons for relocating.

Reasons for and conditions of moving notwithstanding, a number of constants remain among migrants The overriding factor in the situation of refugees is loss: loss of status, livelihood, identity and established way of life (Khan and Talal 1986:15). Ex (1966) reports that the lack of cultural and community roots causes refugees unease within the host culture. Bousquet (1987) and Lacey (1987) suggest that the sense of loss is more profound for low-status, working-class and peasant groups because they are less attractive to asylum countries, and even if they do get accepted for resettlement, they have a more difficult time adapting than middle-class refugees do.

2.4.2. Southeast Asian Refugees: Historical Overview

Vietnamese refugees first arrived in North America in 1975, brought to the U.S. by American troops withdrawing from South Vietnam. From that time until mid-1979, when the Vietnamese government acted to curb emigration (Wain 1981), a massive exodus of Vietnamese took place. In his history of Indochinese refugees, Wain (1981) makes several interesting points about this exodus. First, he notes that the Vietnamese government covertly aided and profited from the emigration of large numbers of its citizens. Furthermore, it applied particular pressure to citizens of Chinese extraction to ensure that they left. Wain also points out that people fled for a variety of reasons, not all of them directly political. Indeed, some had been involved with the south Vietnamese military or other American-backed institutions prior to 1975 and either could not tolerate Vietnamese socialism, or were persecuted under the new government. However, others feared getting into trouble for their Catholic faith (Bousquet 1987). Still others fled the harsh conditions of the New Economic Zones or other rural areas, many of which had been hurt by crop failure in 1976 and 1977 (Wain, 1981).

Wain (1981) states that the sheer numbers of refugees, the difficulties their arrivals posed for the asylum countries around Vietnam, and the moral obligation of Western countries to find solutions to a problem they had helped to create brought unprecedented world attention to Vietnam. It is important to remember, however, that the post-1975 refugee movement was only an extreme example of upheaval that had been taking place in Vietnam

over many past decades. The history of 20th century Vietnam has been massively chronicled elsewhere (see Doyle, Lipsman, Weiss, 1981; Nguyen, 1975; and Murray, 1965). The important point to note about Vietnamese history is that the aggression of various foreign powers, as well as internal power struggles, have meant that for many citizens jobs, education, home and family life have been disrupted over many years. For many Vietnamese then, flight was the culmination of long periods of difficult living conditions.

2.4.3. Effects of Flight and Camp Life

For refugees who spend time in camps the sense of loss is compounded by the transitory nature of camp life. Bousquet (1987), in a study of a refugee camp in Hong Kong, details the impermanence which characterises daily routines and relationships formed. Refugees described their lives as "suspended", or without real purpose; camp staff complained that refugees had little interest in working to improve living conditions in the camp. Bousquet suggests that working to improve the camp would mean accepting the life there as permanent, which refugees did not want to do. She also reports that inmates viewed their present lives negatively because they felt the difficulties they experienced in Vietnam continued in the camp. All felt "endangered in some way and expelled from normal existence (p.49)." They reported having had their lives in Vietnam disrupted by the persecution of the government, and they saw the camp as a further interlude which delayed their return to any kind of normality. Perversely enough, resettlement was not necessarily a universal benefit. The resettlement of any resident broke

down whatever structures that person had participated in during his/her time in the camp. Thus not only was the resettler separated from what friends and routines he/she had established, but also those left behind lost that person's presence and had no guarantee of seeing him/her again.

My goal in summarizing information about refugees, the psychological effects of camp life, and events which led to the ongoing exodus of Vietnamese from their country is to establish a psychohistorical background for the participants of this study. It is an obvious statement that the past lives of Vietnamese refugees has a significant impact on their ability to construct new ways of functioning in a new socioeconomic/cultural system. In considering their adjustment to a new society it is important to assess in greater detail how past events may condition their responses to what they encounter in North American life.

2.4.4. Indochinese Resettlement in North America

The loss incurred by flight and the insecurity resulting from camp life carry over into resettlement. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) finds that experience in refugee camps has a negative impact upon people and their ability to adapt to a new society (Bousquet 1987:51). Studies on refugee resettlement in the United States (Gold, 1987; Schein, 1987) describe the problems that result from the clash of refugees' prior experiences with the expectations the host country has for them.

In a study of the Hmong people in the United States, Schein demonstrates that the passivity and dependence learned in camp life prepare refugees for further compliance with control by others, not for active participation in shaping a new life. She says that a majority of Hmong (approximately 95%) continue to depend on public assistance, even after several years in the country (Schein, 1987:89). She suggests that the history of the Hmong has taught them to regard themselves as an inferior people, dependent on a superior group. She confirms that this relationship continues to exist in the United States: "American hosts derived from the presence of Hmong supplicants a special vitality and experience of identity", while Hmong "emphasize their dependence and innocence to obtain help and at the same time resent the terms on which help is forthcoming" (p.96). This finding may be applicable to other Southeast Asian refugee groups who, like the Hmong, have learned passivity and dependence from their refugee experience.

Schein also describes resettlement difficulties stemming from different definitions of resettlement success. American hosts view economic self-sufficiency as the standard of success, so resettlement agencies see the Hmong as regressing from rather than progressing in society(1987:89). Meanwhile the Hmong apparently place more value on community reunification and cultural development. This value is evidently shared by other ethnic groups; Schein cites a study of Vietnamese refugees which found that strong community ties provided greater resettlement satisfaction than did language and economic achievement (Piscarowicz and Tosher, 1982; in Schein, 1987:101).

Gold (1987), in a study of Vietnamese and Soviet Jewish resettlement, finds conflict arising between refugee clients and resettlement agencies on reversed grounds. These refugees desired material assistance in finding good jobs and large apartments, the availability of which is usually subject to large-scale economic forces and thus was often beyond the agency's power to provide. Instead, agencies, staffed mostly by social workers, offered less concrete support services which refugee clients reportedly did not value (p. 114). Among these services were job referral, job training, counseling and therapy. Gold points out that most refugees have had little prior experience with these kind of services, are distrustful of officials, and are disillusioned when their material needs are not immediately met. Refugees find their own community networks more helpful, or at least more accessible, sources of information and assistance (Gold, 1987; Ex ,1966).

Schein's research among the Hmong and Gold's work with Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese refugees raise three broad questions: a) what are desirable, feasible goals for resettlement, b) who should be responsible for determining these goals, and c) what kind of aid will assist their achievement? Throughout North America, refugees have been dealt with primarily as individuals or nuclear families, not as ethnic communities, and their success has been measured by how well they achieve independent economic survival. The history of individual sponsorships which took place in the United States and Canada is a testament to the western value of individualism, and the confusion caused among aid organizations by refugees migrating into community groups demonstrates a lack of intercultural understanding. Desbarats (1987) makes the point that the doctrine of the

benefits of dispersal, espoused by Ex (1966), which is that immigrants will more quickly assimilate to the host culture if they do not remain together, is not valid for Indochinese refugees. She suggests that not only is the communal tendency of immigrant groups a well-established feature in the history of North American immigration, but also Indochinese refugees have particular reasons for increased emotional dependence on community/kinship networks. These reasons have to do with the cultural and historical experience, and also with the nature of the social system the immigrants enter. As immigrant characteristics she cites the psychological stress engendered by the refugee experience and the fact that Indochinese cultures tend to have close-knit familial and social systems. She also notes the temporary downward occupational and social mobility that is a common feature of immigration, as immigrants are typically expected to take on the least desirable socioeconomic roles (Tollefson, 1986). These factors provide ample motivation for these migrants to seek community networks.

Desbarats' research suggests that it may be inefficient if not misguided for North American resettlement agencies working with Vietnamese refugees to concentrate on the individual to the neglect of the group. In terms of answering the broad questions about resettlement, Schein's, Gold's, and Desbarat's findings imply that goals for resettlement depend greatly on who is setting them; that the host culture may have one set of criteria while refugees have another. It may be suggested that resettlement success would be achieved most readily by interaction in goal-setting As for what kind of aid will facilitate the process; this also probably could be determined best through cooperation among refugee ethnic groups and resettlement agencies.

To summarize, potential problems in resettlement come from three major causes. First, the trauma of flight and camp life may impair the refugee's ability to adapt psychologically to new conditions. Second, prior experience of being compliant with a supposedly superior culture, as Schein proposes is the case with the Hmong, and as is suggested by Wain (1981) to be the case with those Vietnamese who worked with Americans in Vietnam, may lead the immigrant group to seek a certain type of relationship with the host culture which the host does not understand. Then, the mismatch of expectations between immigrants (who want and cannot get certain types of help, and do not value the help they are offered) and the host culture (which is not structured to be able to give immigrants the kind of help they want, and instead offers the kind of help its own culture values, but immigrants do not) can lead to frustration on both sides. It is possible that addressing the issues of refugee resettlement on a cooperative, community-oriented basis may provide some solutions to the problems described.

This section has dealt with general concerns of refugee resettlement in North America; much of it is based on research done in the United States. Socio-anthropological research on refugee adaptation does not exist on this scale in Canada, so for the present research this study will make the assumption that many conclusions drawn by the United States research hold true for Canada. The next subsection will overview research on Southeast Asian refugees in Canada, and highlight concerns particular to that context.

2.4.5. Vietnamese Resettlement in Canada

The research on Vietnamese settlement in Canada is of recent origin and has been focussed mainly on only a few aspects of the adaptation process. In a review of the current research, Indra (1987a; 1987b) summarizes what kinds of studies have been done, and lists some generalizations that can be drawn from the body of knowledge thus far established. Indra says that many of the studies done on Indochinese refugees are small-scale and deal with such issues as physical health needs, mental health and family problems. Indra's summary of research indicates that refugees have been considered largely in terms of various social service needs they may have, not in terms of how they are becoming established as a community. In other words, it appears that Canadian research has been conducted largely from the viewpoint of institutions that service refuges, such as government-funded health care programs or remedial training centres--and a research goal has been to maximize the cost-benefit ratio of services provided. In turn, the generalizations Indra draws from the body of research on the sociocultural adaptation of Southeast Asians seem to reflect the needs and expectations of institutions which provide services rather than the actual circumstances of refugee immigrants' lives. For example, the prime problem Indra notes is that severe language difficulties hinder the acculturation process. Although research indicates that refugees as well as resettlement agencies state language learning is a problem, the main reason offered as to why it is a problem is that language learning is linked to employment. Indra's second generalization is that considerable cultural adaptation (and, one assumes, language adaptation) is achieved through economic adaptation, because none of the ethnic

communities is large enough that a majority of its people can get jobs within its own community. Finally, she states that facility in one of Canada's two official languages has a strong determinant effect on economic adaptation. These findings give central importance to economic adaptation, and suggest that language ability is both a cause and a result of economic success. The emphasis on economic adaptation, which can be understood as independence from government financial aid, may well be important to immigrants, but since much of the research Indra reports is fuelled by institutional concern with program expenditures, its focus is clearly on the needs of institutions, and the needs of refugees as they participate in those institutions. As Chapter One pointed out, little attention has been given to refugees within their own subcultural contexts.

Indra (1987a) does note gaps in the sociocultural research on Indochinese refugee groups. She says that almost no work has been done to link immigrants with their source countries. Further, there is little understanding of the structures of Indochinese communities that have developed here. Specifically, oral and community history have been almost totally ignored--there is a paucity of anthropological, participant observation-based research. Finally, Indra states that language problems remain profound, but they have been given less attention than they merit outside of Quebec. What research exists on the language uses and needs of Vietnamese refugees explore language in terms of its relationship to refugees' economic viability. Most of the research done is based on the assumption that economic independence is the only significant measure of immigrant success. Obviously, this standard is useful to governments interested in controlling

the costs of resettlement programs; whether it is equally important to refugees is open to question.

Research on Southeast Asian immigrant language needs is oriented to the concerns of educational and employment institutions--specifically, it discusses the relationship of language training, employment, and economic success. Neuwirth (1987) finds that language training together with vocational training early in resettlement leads to increased earnings in subsequent years. Lanphier's (1987) findings also suggest language training is more beneficial when linked to employment training. He describes the experience of Southeast Asian refugees in language programs offered by the Quebec government. He says that in these programs, cultural orientation rather than employment was the central focus. He found that even though refugees began language training immediately after arrival, high unemployment continued after the training period. This lack of employment was attributed both to ongoing language difficulties and to a dearth of job opportunities in the Quebec economy. What both Neuwirth's and Lanphier's findings suggest is that language ability per se is not what guarantees successful adaptation, but is secondary to employment and employment training opportunities. From Lanphier's and Neuwirth's findings therefore, the value of immigrant language training programs with regard to economic self-sufficiency is not entirely clear.

Another conclusion of immigrant language learning research is that students may have problems with the way the training is delivered. In a study of immigrants in provincially-sponsored language programs in Quebec, similar to those in Lanphier's study, d'Anglejan (1984) details the difficulties

immigrants encounter in formalized language learning situations. She notes that students with low levels of schooling and literacy, and with high levels of anxiety, tended to be less successful in the classroom. She further says that many of these students had rural backgrounds, were unaccustomed to city living, and had little contact with native speakers of the language they were trying to learn; hence they were not able optimally to use their environment as a language learning arena. This meant, she contends, these students were highly dependent on the classroom as a learning source. However, in the classrooms observed the language was presented formally, outside of realistic social contexts and thus less accessible to students unfamiliar with the decontextualized nature of formal learning. d'Anglejan concludes that for certain kinds of immigrants successful language learning is more likely to take place in a specifically oriented program such as vocational or job training than in a program providing language training with generalized goals. It is interesting to note that the problems d'Anglejan associates with this type of student have much more to do with lack of school experience than with lack of literacy. It may be, as Hvitfeldt's (1986) work with Hmong students suggests, that immigrants' unfamiliarity of North American schooling practices, and schools' lack of awareness of the learning styles of other cultural groups, are more conclusive factors in student failure than is student lack of literacy.

In summary, most of the research thus far conducted on the language needs of Vietnamese refugees in Canada is predicated on the primacy of economic independence, which may or may not be an actual goal for immigrants, but is a goal assigned to them by supporting agencies. This

research finds that acquisition of language appropriate to job training and the workplace is crucially related to economic success, and that providing employment-oriented language training is likely to be the most effective way of facilitating language learning. Lanphier (1987), however, qualifies these conclusions by pointing out that they depend on certain assumptions about the ongoing health of the Canadian economy. He asserts that

> While the occupational structure has been the most universal and effective mode of immigrant absorption into mainstream social structure in industrialized countries during the twentieth century, its current failure to provide this function even for its native-born in lower occupational ranks leaves no confidence that it can fulfill that crucial and traditional function (1987:308).

In effect, he is saying that it may no longer be sufficient to rely on economic growth to ensure assimilation, that the current dominant value of economic independence as the primary measure of immigrant success may have to shift. He recommends instead that more attention be given to enabling immigrants to establish their own community networks, which could then provide support and assist the adaptation of further intakes of refugees from the same ethnic groups.

While research on the language needs of Vietnamese refugees in Canada exists (see Chan and Indra, 1987 for an extensive bibliography of current Canadian research), its focus is almost entirely on language and employability. Its findings on the relationship of language facility and economic adaptation beg two deeper questions. The first question is whether the presumed link between language ability and resettlement success is really valid, or whether other factors need to be considered. The assumption of this

research is that language facility enhances employment opportunities, employment ensures economic adaptation, and economic adaptation is a relevant measure (indeed the only one stated) of success. This assumption leads to the second question, posed by Lanphier (1987), as to whether economic adaptation should continue to be used as the primary standard of immigrant success. This criterion is relied upon by researchers and by institutions funding research and offering programs related to resettling immigrants. It is interesting that literature on refugee resettlement in the U.S. contains some indications that immigrants themselves do not value success in the same way their sponsors do, preferring community reunification to economic independence (Schein, 1987).

One possible result of the preoccupation with the language needs and uses of Indochinese immigrants in terms of their employability is that other aspects of the Southeast Asian community's language use have been neglected. The available evidence on the language learning of adult Indochinese (d'Anglejan, 1984) indicates that traditional classrooms are places of failure for low-education, low-literate immigrants. Some psychosocial explanations are offered for this failure, and the conclusion is that refugees unsuccessful in a traditional program need specialized types of training. Another way to approach the problem of language learning would be to consider the language needs and uses of low-literate, low-education immigrants in a broader sociocultural context. In order to frame such an analysis the next section discusses current understandings of the nature of literacy and its relationship to second language learning.

2.5. Second Language Learning

The field of second language learning shares some theoretical ground with that of literacy. In both areas researchers and theorists have examined the presumed value of functionality in light of the actual uses of a second language in which groups are able to engage. This section will outline the social dimensions of second language learning and then review research on immigrant language learning/teaching.

2.5.1. Theoretical Considerations

Sociolinguistic research has influenced theoretical developments in the study of language learning. Hymes (1971) proposed that language proficiency be assessed in terms of the level of communicative competence acquired rather than just the amount of linguistic knowledge gained. "Communicative competence" has been amply defined in the literature (Munby, 1978; Savignon, 1983). Savignon (1983: 8) holds that it refers to a language user's ability to express, interpret and negotiate meaning, in either written or oral mode, appropriate to the social context in which he or she is engaged. The expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning involves using language for specific purposes; these purposes are known as language functions. Language functions are used in and moderated by the dynamics of the sociocultural contexts in which language users operate. Hence two fundamental concerns of communicative theory are the functions of language and the contexts of language use. These concerns of function and

context have been incorporated into a model (Sampson, 1982) of language acquisition with important sociological implications for the language learning of low-education adult refugee immigrants.

Sampson (1982) presents language learning as a dialectic of form and function in which the learner internalises linguistic forms as they pertain to the functions he or she is engaged in. Two ramifications of this model are pertinent to this discussion. For one, the model predicts a relationship between the acquisition of a second language and the maintenance of established social roles. Sampson (1982:21) states "(adults learning a second language), because of their social roles, would necessarily be confronted with manifold functions (within the variety of language domains they encounter). For certain (domains the first language) will play a continued and undiminishing role . . . there is simply no role for (the second language) to play". Thus the second language will be learned to the extent that it is functional for the learner, while the first language will be maintained for other functions. The second point Sampson (1982) makes is complementary. She suggests that fossilization, the failure to reach fluency in a second language, is related to the fact that learners either do not want to engage in or are denied access to some functions in the target language environment (p. 82).

Sampson's (1982) form-function model of language learning reflects the importance of the social role of the language user and of the contexts of language use. The language learning of the student is tied to the functions he or she engages in, which are in turn bound to the social contexts within which the learner operates, and the roles he or she plays. This principle has

clear implications for immigrant groups, who may feel pressure not to engage in functions that threaten the roles of the first language. It also has bearing on formalised language learning programs, in which the chief social context of target language use is the classroom. If the classroom is the sole domain in which adult immigrants use the second language, then their opportunities for acquiring a wide range of functional language are limited.

Sampson's (1982) conclusions have two implications for adult low education immigrant language learners. First, students who received little exposure to formal schooling practices in their native language may experience difficulty acquiring a second language through a formal program Even though they are fluent native language speakers, the cognitive proficiency they have gained from learning their native language may not assist them to acquire a second language in school, because their learning was not undertaken in an academic environment. Second, immigrants, particularly refugees, who may feel dislocated from their cultural heritage and thus experience a strong desire to preserve cultural identity, will be hampered in learning a majority language, a process which undermines that identity. In summary, communicative language learning theory suggests that conventional language learning programs may not assist adult immigrants to acquire the functional language they require for fulfilling their chosen social roles in the target language, and furthermore low-education adults may be inhibited by lack of academic background from making use of what language learning opportunities exist in a formal language classroom.

2.5.2. Language Teaching and Learning for refugees

For refugees the process of formal English learning usually begins in camps, and further language training is part of the resettlement assistance provided by the Canadian government. For people with little experience of formal education these language learning programs can be a source of threat because the classroom is an unfamiliar learning environment over which the inexperienced student has little control. Furthermore, refugees are often told that they will not be accepted for resettlement unless they learn English, so the training becomes an obligation which may hamper the psychological process of learning. At the same time there is some indication (Tollefson, 1986; Auerbach and Burgess, 1985) that in language learning programs, refugees undergo covert value training which will specify and limit their social functioning.

In order for refugees to be accepted for resettlement, some ability in the majority language of the country, as demonstrated by attendance of language classes in the camp, is extremely important (Bousquet, 1987). Tollefson (1986) has done a survey of curricula developed for language training programs at three Refugee Processing Centres in Southeast Asia. He notes that the curricula contain both stated and unstated goals for refugee adaptation to life in the United States. Tollefson says that the curricula are functionally-oriented, designed to promote basic lifeskills considered necessary for survival. His chief problem with the curricula lies in the fact that, without a scientifically validated procedure to measure what competencies are needed for proficient functioning (which is usually taken to mean getting an entry-

level job), curricular items are decided by the consensus of the group assigned to produce it, which is of course subject to change in time and in personnel making the decisions. As a result, Tollefson notes, the materials often contain implicit value judgements which reflect the curriculum planners' expectations that refugees will fill menial social roles . Among values Tollefson cites are the centrality of getting a job, and an encouragement to refugees to consider themselves fortunate to get minimum-wage employment. He asserts that in general the curricula developed "attempt to inculcate attitudes and values that will make refugees passive citizens who comply rather than complain, accept rather than resist, and apologize rather than disagree" (p.656).

Another problem Tollefson points out is that there is no documented connection between resettlement success and the adoption of any particular set of values or attitudes. Therefore Tollefson suggests that the attitudes of compliance, acceptance, and apology he finds contained in the curricula are not necessarily included to serve the refugees' interests. It seems more likely that promotion of these attitudes would, as Wallace and Kelley (1985) suggest, primarily benefit the employment structures the refugees are directed to rather than the refugees themselves.

Other research indicates that survival ESL programs in North America in many respects continue to attempt the acculturation process begun in the refugee camps. In a survey of survival ESL texts, Auerbach and Burgess (1985) note three major features, which have a number of implications. First, they say that language in student practice dialogues is simplified at the expense of reality; the situations under study do not reflect the complexities of

immigrants' lives. Likewise, Auerbach and Burgess state that a number of texts do not consider the socioeconomic conditions of newcomers; instead, texts reflect the middle-class values (presumably) of their authors. Auerbach and Burgess point out that, in failing to prepare students for problems they encounter, the texts may assist in promoting the view that students' problems are not widespread, and are a result of their own inadequacies. Thus, they claim that immigrants learn to see resettlement difficulties as their own fault rather than a possible weakness of whatever systems they are participating in. Finally, the researchers find that texts usually prescribe menial roles for students. "Refugees are told they must start at the bottom because they lack language skills, contacts, and credentials...implying that they are somehow inadequate, rather than that the structural demands of the economy . . . restrict their options" (Auerbach and Burgess; 1985:484).

Tollefson (1986) critiques the survival curricula used in refugee camp language training programs for their lack of scientific validity and their implicit promotion of values which render limited English speaking immigrants subservient. Auerbach and Burgess (1985) demonstrate the extension of these values to North American programs. Auerbach and Burgess propose an alternative to passive survival ESL. They suggest that survival skills instead of being taught "as a body of knowledge to be transmitted from the teachers to the students", should be taught "as a function of the single most important skill needed for survival: the ability to think critically" (p.492). If, as Tollefson suggests, refugees are already indoctrinated into accepting subservient roles in the existing socioeconomic system, then establishing conditions for the possibility of critical thinking

within a language training program is doubly challenging, since the students may not be prepared to criticize the social system they are seeking to enter.

In this section it has been argued that functional competence, as Tollefson (1986), and Auerbach and Burgess (1985) have demonstrated its application to the field of ESL, is subject to the same criticisms as traditional functional literacy. That is, it appears that the skills promoted in ESL progams and materials are value-laden and that the values promoted may not be in the best interests of the students. As to what values immigrant students bring to the language class, and what values they acquire from the formal learning experience, little information is available. The next section summarizes the characteristics of non-English speaking, low-education immigrant language learners as they have been presented in ESL literature. Because they are so referred to the literature, this group of learners will be called ESL literacy students.

2.5.3. Characteristics of ESL literacy students

The refugee research literature and language learning theory so far reviewed suggests some characteristics ESL literacy students could be expected to have. Since many of them are working class people fleeing unstable conditions in third world countries, they usually have traumatic personal histories, and ethnic backgrounds and abilities which are quite different from those of mainstream North America. These differences may result in different ways of learning and using language, different motivations for study, and different ways of interpreting a classroom than teachers and

institutions expect. For example, among values heavily promoted in adult basic education in North America are those of independent functioning and economic self-sufficiency. ESL literacy students however, may come from cultural backgrounds where these values are subordinate to those of maintaining family unity and cultural traditons. Students may have difficulty relating to the values contained in their ESL program, and so may experience only limited success according to their evaluators, usually themselves members of the mainstream. Little research has been done to explore the values and expectations refugees bring to the ESL classroom. Instead, refugee language learners have been assessed by North American standards. These standards, while useful for the ESL teacher in a mainstream institution, have the disadvantage of identifying students primarily according to their deficiencies. Non-English speakers who are low-literate are characterized as having deficiencies additional to those which stigmatize the native language illiterate population. Specifically, ESL speakers are regarded as worse off than English-speaking illiterates because they have limited ability to deal with oral English, and also because they lack the appropriate skills in their own language which will enable them to learn English literacy (Bell and Burnaby; 1984). Furthermore, the suggestion is made that native language low-literates are inhibited from formal learning of all aspects of a second language, not just literacy (Weinstein; 1984).

Following the "deficit framework" which pervades literacy theory, various categories by which teachers of adult ESL literacy students can identify their students have been established (Bell and Burnaby, 1984; Haverson and Haynes, 1982). Bell and Burnaby (1984) have distinguished four groups. The

first group, "illiterate", have had less than four years formal schooling in their own language. They may be able to form letters, but they do not demonstrate understanding of sound-symbol correspondence. This group is further divided into non-literates--those whose language exists in a written form which is present in their environment; and pre-literates--those whose language has no written form. The second group is the semi-literate. This group has had up to eight years of formal education and exhibits some understanding of sound-symbol correspondence. However, these students usually lack study skills and tend to avoid situations in which they will be required to read and write. The authors imply that for this group school has not been a successful experience, since the students exhibit learned helplessness in the face of reading and writing tasks.

The third group Bell and Burnaby (1984) delineate is the functionally non-literate. These students do have some literacy abilities in their L1, so they have no difficulty with the basic concepts of literacy. Furthermore, they are familiar with some high-frequency English words and may possess basic competencies necessary for taking messages or filling out simple forms. However, they lack the abilities for more complex versions of the same tasks, and avoid writing and reading for other than instrumental purposes. The final group consists of those whose native language does not use the roman alphabet. Members of this category may also fall into one of the others, but it is expected that they will have additional difficulty from their lack of experience with this alphabet.

Bell and Burnaby (1984) can be critiqued for the criterion of deficiency according to which they have chosen to establish their categories. Each

category--illiterate, semi-literate, functionally non-literate, and non-literate in Roman alphabet--is assigned according to amount of schooling and a limited array of functional abilities. The group into which each learner is placed depends on what he/she cannot do. For example, a learner who apparently does not understand sound-symbol correspondence is labelled illiterate, or someone who demonstrates sound-symbol understanding but lacks study skills is semi-literate. Bell and Burnaby do not specify the conditions in which the learner's activities are to be demonstrated; since the authors' audience is teachers, one assumes that the setting is the classroom. If no recognition is given to the different settings in which literacy tasks may occur, literacy becomes a mere academic construct, an adjunct of schooling. Ultimately, Bell and Burnaby's categories apply only to what students are expected to do in school. They do not give attention to the learners' prior histories of literacy practice, nor the current conditions in which students cope with literacy tasks.

Weinstein (1984) suggests that literacy can be regarded as a way of processing information derived from schooling and socialization practices. Illiteracy then, could be defined as ways of processing information that are not in accordance with those promoted in school systems. Thus, Weinstein says, low-education students are at a clear disadvantage in trying to process information in classrooms, environments to which they have not been socialized. Furthermore, she points out that the functional abilities in which students exhibit incompetence may simply not be tasks the students need to do. Bell and Burnaby's (1984) categories, to be more fully explanatory, should be considered in light of the students' prior experiences with both schooling

and literacy tasks, their social roles, and the ways of processing information they developed from the interaction of these three elements.

Sauvé (1989) suggests that ESL literacy students can be characterized according to current conditions in their lives, rather than their educational attainments. She recommends that assessment of these students be according to their length of time in Canada, their English level, and their native language literacy. Arranged in a matrix, these criteria would appear as follows:

Group 1--Newly arrived; non-English-speaking; non-literate:
Group 2--Newly arrived; non-English-speaking; literate in native language:
Group 3--Resident; non-English-speaking; non-literate:
Group 4--Resident; Non-English-speaking; literate in native language.

These categories are general and do not specify how literacy level and English ability are to be determined. However, the distinction Sauvé draws between newly-arrived and long-term resident immigrants (although what constitutes "long-term" is not identified) is illuminating because it suggests that length of time in the host country is likely to shape an immigrant's experience of literacy. It is possible that the experience of residence as a minority-language speaker in a host culture is likely to result in a passive attitude with regard to the majority language. This implies that the English learner, whether native-language literate or not, may be affected negatively by the social conditions in which he/she lives, in such a way that, as social participation is circumscribed and inhibited, both by language deficiency and other factors, so language and literacy learning are limited.

This section has identified specific characteristics of low-literate adult ESL learners. While these learners have been identified as deficient in schooling, language and literacy abilities, it has been suggested that what processing abilities students do possess may be discounted because they do not match the abilities required by the system the students have entered. In the section as a whole, parallels have been drawn between second language learning and literacy. Chiefly, the point has been made that social conditions and resulting social roles have a great deal to do with the amount and kind of language learned by adult immigrants, and these factors also affect how language is presented to low-level immigrant learners in formal ESL programs. Specifically, it has been demonstrated that the functionalism which appears in literacy training is also present in survival language training.

2.6. Summary

This chapter reviewed four strands of research literature which pertain to the language learning of low-education adult refugee immigrants. First, ethnographic research methodology was defined. Next, the concerns raised in this study were rooted in current understandings of literacy, both its cognitive and social aspects. Following this relevant second language learning theory was summarized, and its concerns with the functions and social contexts of language use, concerns shared by literacy researchers, were noted. Functionalism in literacy training and language training was discussed, and critiques of its usage in both fields were presented. Finally, general

information on Southeast Asian refugees was presented--reasons for flight, the difficulties of flight and camp life, resettlement problems in the United States and Canada. It was noted that one of the chief difficulties reported by Vietnamese refugees is language learning.

The purpose of drawing together theory and research from the fields of literacy, second language learning and refugee resettlement is to provide an etic context within which to understand the language learning and language use of low-education adult Vietnamese immigrants. The next chapter will present the methodological tools used in the data collection and introduce the participants of the study. The methodology of this investigation is ethnographic in orientation; the primary research tools are participant observation (of students in ESL classrooms) and ethnographic interviewing, following the procedure outlined by Spradley (1979) and the model proposed by Klassen (1987). Because this study is small-scale and limited in its focus, considerable attention will be given to the process of participant selection, the procedures of the investigation, and the research tools used.

CHAPTER THREE--METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANTS

3.1. Methodology of the study

The present research is modelled after Klassen's (1987) ethnographic-style study of literacy use among Hispanic immigrants in Toronto. Like Klassen's work, this investigation is ethnographic in orientation, without claiming to be a full-scale ethnography; its purpose is to introduce and explore rather than fully document the relationship of language and literacy to the community of one ethnic group. It describes the literacy and language use of the respondents within the social framework of their lives in a Canadian city, in this case Vancouver, and within the historical context of their past life experiences. Time and linguistic constraints, among others, prevented the development of an extensive ethnography of the community. Therefore this work should be considered a selective ethnography, a replication with variations of Klassen's earlier work. Since Klassen's investigation provides a useful model for limited ethnographic investigation of language use, I have adopted his sociological orientation and his data collection method. In Chapter Two literature on ethnography was reviewed and sociolinguistic research from various fields was presented. In this Chapter the research methodology is presented.

The research program used in this study was as follows. First, the criteria for the sample were established, then informants were found, observed in ESL classes, and finally ethnographic interviews were conducted with them. Informants were located through ESL classes and a local immigrant aid agency. The data collection instruments were field notes of class observations and participant interviews. For the interviews a schedule was developed, based on the schedule used by Klassen (1987), and on Spradley's (1979) model of an ethnographic interview. The following sections will describe the sample criteria, the procedures of the investigation, the interviewing process, and the structure of the interview schedule.

3.1.1. Criteria of Sample

A number of criteria were set for the sample in order that the investigation be focussed at the outset. In this section I outline the criteria used, then give rationale for the choice of these factors. It should be noted that due to the realities of data collection these criteria functioned as broad guidelines rather than strict rules for selection. Thus while each of the six informants selected meets some of the criteria, not all the participants conform exactly to the selection standards.

The interest of this study was in examining how immigrants with little English, and literacy and education levels that are considered dysfunctionally low by North American standards use language in their daily lives in Canada. As I indicated in Chapter One, some current thought asserts that individuals

with substandard language and literacy are handicapped in their participation in North American life, but sociolinguistic research on illiterates suggests that literacy per se is not always the stumbling block, but other social factors intervene to disempower the illiterate. Research on refugee second-language learners suggests that this disempowerment may also be the case with them. The study also required that informants be adults who had lived in Canada long enough to have experienced operating in Canadian milieux; over a year's residence was preferred. Another criterion was that informants should be from a single national group, so that among them some consistency of cultural and historical background would result. Vietnamese was the chosen nationality because a significant number of people from Vietnam now live in Canada, and, as indicated in Chapter Two, some research attention has already been given to the resettlement difficulties of Vietnamese. Finally, that respondents have current experience of English language training classes was important so that they could be observed in classes, and also so that their perspectives on formal language learning could be explored. In summary the criteria were as follows:

1. limited education, English language and literacy;
2. adults who had lived in Canada at least one year;
3. Vietnamese nationality or extraction;
4. current experience of ESL classes in Canada.

Some implications of the criteria are discussed below.

The criteria of low literacy, limited English and low education were felt to be significant on a number of counts. These criteria were selected, following Klassen's reasoning, because each of these attributes is generally

regarded as a social handicap and a reason for marginalization, that is, circumscription of social and economic opportunity, within North American society. Moreover, since I had often encountered people with these attributes while teaching government-sponsored ESL classes, I was interested in getting their perspective on the language training system through which they had come and in which they had often been assessed as failures. No formal procedures were instituted for determining level, since it was not significant to the study. Instead of applying my own testing procedures to determine the language level of the students, I chose to work with people who had been tested, interviewed, and placed in low-level English classes by the institutions in which they were enrolled.

The choice of Vietnamese as a research group leads to several considerations. The first is that, as mentioned in the introduction, people from Vietnam generally fall into two ethnic categories: native Vietnamese, and people of Chinese extraction. This fact has been recognized in refugee resettlement literature, but no research attention has been given to whether difference in ethnic or language background affects the resettlement success of Southeast Asians. Since at present the relationship of ethnicity/native language to sociocultural adaptation is not clear, it was not considered essential that all participants share the same mother tongue, but that they still have some common background. On the other hand, research documents the negative relationship of refugee experience and resettlement success (Khan and Talal, 1986). So, the fact that all respondents shared the same experiences of living in a war-torn, politically unstable country, and of fleeing from persecution and economic hardship was considered important.

Six informants were chosen for this study. Their names have been changed, and some details of their lives have been left vague in order to protect their identities. With each informant the length of the interview process and the kind of information conveyed was different. Not all informants went through the entire interview; four completed the process, one stopped halfway through, and the other did not continue after the first session. These two informants will be presented only briefly, since there was insufficient time to get a wealth of information from them. However, what information they gave is relevant and will be discussed in Chapter Four. In each series of interviews different amounts of time were spent on different subjects, as each informant felt freer to talk about varying aspects of his/her life.

Although they are all from Vietnam, the people I interviewed are an ethnic mixture. Four are ethnic Vietnamese, while two are ethnic Chinese. All were once Vietnamese citizens and had similar experiences of life in Vietnam. As far as could be determined from the interviews, everyone came from working/middle class, mercantile background. Occupations reported among family members ranged from civil and military service to running small businesses such as restaurants and fish-selling enterprises. All the informants come from families who were persecuted either because of their ethnic background or because of politically undesirable connections. All experienced economic hardship in unstable financial and employment conditions. In the decision to leave their country to seek better conditions all the participants faced risks, uncertainty and anxiety. In the actual leaving some of these people faced more difficulty than others: the sample includes

"boat people", government-sponsored refugees, and privately-sponsored immigrants. Not everyone in the sample has lived in a refugee camp, and not all have official refugee status. However, all can be considered refugees in the general sense discussed in Chapter Two. Because this study seeks to be ethnographic in orientation, it was considered important to incorporate information on the refugee experience and a description of its psychological effects on resettlers.

The final criterion was that participants should be enrolled in ESL classes during the time of data collection. One theme of the study was to observe students' activities and language use in ESL classes, then to ask them about their perceptions of the classes. The original research goal was to observe extensively one low-level ESL class in each of three different adult education institutions in the city, and to interview three Vietnamese students from each class. The intention behind working through separate institutions was to introduce a cross-sectional aspect into the study. Specifically, it was expected that three observation situations distinguished by different institutions, programs, curricula, teachers and students would result in data about language teaching/learning situations more widely applicable than could be gained from observation of a single situation.

To find participants who filled the requirements outlined above, the researcher contacted a variety of adult education institutions in Vancouver. Locating appropriate informants proved surprisingly difficult. The chief problem involved finding people who met all other criteria, who also were participating in ESL classes during the period of the investigation. The reason for this difficulty may have to do with the structure of the refugee support

system in Canada. Refugees regarded as needing language training are eligible for a government-sponsored language training program. Many refugees take this program within their first year in Canada while they are financially supported by the government and receive day-care allowances for their children as long as they are enrolled in the program. The course is at no cost to the students and provides many with a welcome daily structure as they begin the adjustment process. On completion, students are generally encouraged to get jobs and/or continue to study English. Most other language training programs, even though still subsidized by various levels of government, require some payment from the students. It is likely that course fees inhibit potential students who are not strongly motivated, and since people with low literacy are likely to have experienced little success in the initial program, they may be less motivated to study. In addition, their lives may now be filled with other responsibilities which inhibit time and desire to enter more language programs. For example, two of the participants in this study reported leaving government-sponsored language programs before their completion so that they could take jobs. So, such factors as lack of early success, low motivation and desire to work, even at an entry-level job, may explain why it is difficult to find substantial numbers of low-literate ESL students persisting beyond the first program they enter.

The difficulty of locating informants through ESL classes meant that sample criteria were less firmly adhered to than originally planned. Eventually, three different classes with Vietnamese students were located. Two of these classes were operated by the same institution, but through two separate departments. The third class, sponsored by a different institution,

was actually a lifeskills training class for Vietnamese women, conducted in Vietnamese, rather than an ESL class. Of the two women selected from this class, one had been through a government English training program, and both met the sample criteria in other respects. Thus their perspective on language learning and use was considered relevant to the study even though they did not have current experience of an ESL class and their performance in such a class could not be observed. In summary, extensive observation, approximately 20 hours in each case, was done in only two different ESL classes. Interviews were conducted with students from all three programs: two from the first ESL class observed; one from the second; and three from the lifeskills class. Observation procedures are described in the next section.

3.1.2. Observation Procedures

The investigation procedures involved observing the informants in ESL classes, interviewing students both formally and informally, and also interviewing the teachers about the particular groups they were teaching and about teaching ESL literacy students in general. Data collection took place over a period of seven months. The bulk of this time was used for class observations; interviews with different individuals took place periodically over the time.. The first step of the data collection process consisted of making initial contacts with supervisory personnel and visiting a variety of ESL classes to determine if suitable informants were currently attending. Once appropriate classes were located the researcher entered the lessons in the role of observer/teacher's aide. Acting as a teacher's aide proved to be a

useful way of getting to know students quickly, without taking on the same authority and responsibility as a teacher would have. Although I still functioned as a language model and source of information, my role was more that of helper, and knowledgeable co-participant rather than instigator and evaluator of activities. The researcher's activities consisted of getting to know the Vietnamese students in the class through helping them in learning tasks, and taking field notes both during and after these class periods. As the students became acquainted with the researcher and began to ask personal information questions, the researcher was able to explain gradually the various themes of the study, and clarify the nature of their participation in it. In this way natural opportunities occurred to discuss the study with the Vietnamese students in each class, usually through an interpreter so that they would have a clear idea of their own potential role. Then selected students were asked to participate in an interview about their language learning and use.

In each of the two classes extensively visited, the observations continued over five weeks, until the end of that particular class session. Class visits were made on either a daily, bi-weekly, or weekly basis as the classes' or the researcher's schedule permitted. While this amount of observation time did not allow the comprehensive data collection needed for a full ethnography of the classrooms, the amount of time was sufficient to get to know students, allow them to know the researcher, and to note some aspects of the students' behaviors in language classrooms. In the case of three of the informants in this study however, this situation did not obtain. These three were located through a Vietnamese language lifeskills class for women,

which was offered through a local immigrant assistance agency. The researcher visited the class on four occasions, which allowed her to meet the women, get to know a little bit about them, and to become somewhat familiar to them. The roles of observer and teacher's aide, which had been appropriate for the language classes, were restricted in this class by the language barrier. This meant that naturalistic opportunities to introduce the research purpose while working with the students were unlikely to occur. So the researcher chose not to observe at length, but to choose informants who had been involved in ESL classes at some point in their past. Thus, while the goal of observing language classroom behavior was not met in the cases of three of the study participants, extensive questions on their language learning could be asked of all the respondents. Also, the participants were selected from three different institutions and had had varied experiences of formal language instruction, so that whatever results were obtained could not be construed merely as products of one particular institution. As the interview process continued, it became irrelevant to compare specifically the effects of different institutions, since the stories of the informants took on a personal character which did not clearly reflect any institutional variations. Therefore I made the choice to focus on individuals and incorporate their and my own perceptions of their schools as one domain of language use rather than attempt to objectively compare institutions and programs. Further information on the participants is presented in subsequent sections. The next section notes the features of the interviewing process.

3.1.3. The Interview Process

After each of the three classes had had an opportunity to get to know the researcher and hear about the study, permission to conduct interviews was sought from selected individuals in each class. Locations and lengths of interviews varied somewhat. In two cases, both of them students from the same class, individual interviews were held bi-weekly, in the classroom after the class was finished for the day. The third ESL student was interviewed once or twice a week in the afternoons after her class was over, and these interview sessions took place in a nearby church to which she had access. Each of the three students from the lifeskills class was interviewed in her home, once a week in the evening. The total length of time spent with each informant ranged from forty minutes to five hours, broken up into sessions varying from forty to ninety minutes.

All the interviews were conducted through interpreters so that respondents would have a more complete understanding of the questions and would be able to answer in their own language. Three different interpreters were used; all were Vietnamese and from similar backgrounds to the respondents. The interpreter used for two of the ESL class interviews was a student at the same institution who had received some training in counselling and interpreting through the institution's student advocacy program. Although this interpreter was not known to the two informants, her similar personal background, her training, and her age (she was sufficiently younger than the two interviewees to be regarded as a daughter figure) promoted easy rapport during the interviews. The interpreter used for

the participants from the lifeskills class was the class instructor, who also functioned as a social service worker for these women. She also had had significant prior experience as a translator and refugee counsellor. As a result of these factors, she was familiar to the informants and therefore would likely be an acceptable recipient of their stories. The third translator used was the husband of the ESL student interviewed. Interviewing husband and wife had both advantages and drawbacks. At many points the husband provided details about family habits and activities to supplement his wife's responses, which greatly assisted the development of a complete picture of their daily lives. It was however, often difficult to separate the wife's point of view from her husband's, since he was able to answer many of the questions without asking his wife for information. So, although the wife was selected for the study because of her language, literacy, and education level and the investigation was focussed on her experiences in these areas, husband and wife actually acted jointly as informants.

A few points need to be made about the structuring of the interviews. Initially, the research plan proposed that three Vietnamese students from each class would be selected and interviewed as a group. The group arrangement was supposed to establish some informality in the interview process so that the researcher's questions could initiate conversation among participants. The conversational interview was introduced for two reasons. First, it was thought that the interplay of conversation would produce fuller, more complex responses from participants than a conventional question-answer format would. Second, it was hoped that the presence of peers in the interview would reduce the likelihood of "courtesy bias" in the responses.

Courtesy bias is a phenomenon noted by several researchers working with Southeast Asian informants, among whom courtesy is highly valued (Silberman, 1986). It refers to a tendency of informants to express "only views which they think the investigator wants to hear" (Jones, 1983, cited in Silberman, 1986:7). It was expected that courtesy bias would emerge in this study, because Vietnamese refugees would not wish to be critical of their Canadian hosts.

In the first ESL class visited one group interview was held, including three students from the class, the researcher, and the student advocate translator. After this interview the interpreter and one of the participants expressed a preference for an individual interview format, since they found the conversation had been dominated by one of the other participants. Given that informants did not feel comfortable talking with one another, it was decided to drop the group arrangement. In any event, settings and times of the rest of the interviews precluded any further attempts at grouping. One benefit of this initial experiment was the underscoring of the advantages of individual interviewing: interview sessions could be arranged more easily, and informants felt more comfortable talking with a smaller audience. The expected drawbacks of the individual format, loss of conversational complexity and intrusion of courtesy bias, will be more fully discussed in Chapter Four.

Two other aspects of the interviews, setting and language, need brief mention. Some of the interviews took place in classrooms or other institutional settings, while some were in informants' homes. Conceivably, if all interviews had taken place in the more evocative contexts of informants'

homes, conversation about language use in daily domains would have been richer. A more significant factor in the interview process was language. Because the study's interest was in Vietnamese immigrants and the researcher did not speak Vietnamese, the decision was made to interview through translators. The use of interpreters qualifies the ethnographic orientation of the study to a certain extent. Spradley (1979) points out that for the researcher not to conduct interviews in the native language of informants creates two potential weaknesses in the data. First, Spradley says that without native language understanding the investigator is unlikely to take in the full meaning of the informant's description. Furthermore, he suggests that using an informant who speaks the researcher's language, for example as a translator, will skew the data since the informant, having knowledge of both his/her own and the researcher's culture, will tend to interpret events from his/her culture in a way which the researcher will understand but which will not reflect accurately the insider's meanings for those events. In this study the translator's activity during the interview was an ongoing concern. Since he/she did not necessarily understand the purposes behind the investigator's questions, probing for further information and deeper meanings was often problematic. A further technical problem was that none of the interpreters were fluent speakers of English; therefore their answers were sometimes difficult for the researcher to understand. Also, it is likely that their translation not only did not provide an accurate recreation of the informant's language, but also fell short of conveying nuances of meaning because of the translators' incomplete grasp of English. It is recommended that a study of this nature be conducted in the native language if at all possible.

An additional constraint on the interviews was time. As mentioned above, the interviews took place in segments of various length. Usually we would meet once a week, so the interviews disrupted the participants' regular schedules for several weeks. Since informants had multiple other responsibilities, primarily in the home but also work-related in one case, it was considered necessary to limit the length of the interview process. As a result exhaustive probing about informants' language practices was not always possible. Hence, this study is exploratory in nature.

3.1.4. The Interview Schedule

The interview schedule, based on the ethnographic principles outlined in Chapter Two, and following the models of Spradley (1979) and Klassen (1987), is open-ended in nature. It was designed to elicit both general and specific information about the informants' lives and language use. The data required was both objective and subjective. I was interested in the functions of written and spoken language in the participants' daily lives. Here the notion of function includes both the oral and written language people encounter in everyday situations and the reading, writing, speaking, listening practices they engage in as they operate in different milieux. In addition I wanted to collect general life history information in order that practices reported could be placed in a sociohistorical context. The subjective dimension of the data included informants' perceptions of their refugee experience, their feelings about living in an environment where their language and culture was a minority, and their attitudes to learning English

and the formal ESL schooling they had undergone. The data collection therefore, following Klassen's (1987) model, was structured around these four topics:

- Domains: a description of the various literacy/language environments or domains people encounter regularly
- Practices: the practices people engage in related to the written/oral language in these everyday domains
- Uses: the uses they have for speaking, listening, reading and writing in English and in Vietnamese
- Perceptions: perceptions, ways of understanding, feelings, and opinions about the role (actual and potential) of oral and literate abilities in both Vietnamese and English in their everyday lives. Also important were perceptions about their personal histories and their experiences with formal English learning.

The final draft of the schedule (see Appendix A) represents a rough guide to the structure of each interview. In no case was the order or the wording of the questions followed exactly. The format, loosely following Spradley's (1979) interview structure, started with "grand tour" questions, which sought general information about where informants went and what language they used in their daily lives. These were followed up with "mini-tour" questions, which asked for more details about the situations and practices people mentioned. As the data requirements discussed above indicated, the questions asked about everyday domains in which people operate and the language they encounter there, about the language practices they engage in and the uses they have for language, and finally about their perceptions of their lives, language use and language learning.

Structured around the concept of domains, the interview questions were divided into four main sections, each having to do with a different location in which the respondent lived and operated. Before these sections was an introduction which asked the participant for general information about the length of time he/she had lived in different places and the amount of education he/she had had. The first section asked for more detailed information about the respondent's life before coming to Canada. These questions sought an overall picture of the informant's early environment, including family, community, education, and work experience. Questioning in this section usually elicited an extensive life history, including the respondent's experience in the chaotic conditions of late-twentieth century Vietnam and as a refugee. The second section asked about the informant's life in Canada before coming to Vancouver; for the two respondents who had not lived anywhere other than Vancouver, this section was omitted. Questions here focussed on places people usually went, spoken and written language they encountered there, and speaking, reading and writing activities they usually did in those places. To assist their recollection participants were asked to help the interviewer draw a map of their house and where they went from it. This task, suggested by Klassen (1987), was often difficult for the respondents, but as it was undertaken it did serve as a memory aid. Thus in the end a fairly comprehensive list of where people went was compiled. The third section of questions followed the same pattern as the second, this time concentrating on life in Vancouver. Specific attention was given to language/literacy use in the home. The final section asked about formal language study, including classes attended in the camp, programs previously

attended in Canada, and classes currently being taken. These questions focussed on class population and activities (as far as they were recollected), and also asked about what people had found helpful or not helpful about the language programs. A last question was asked about people's future plans with regard to study. This question often sparked a discussion of informants' feelings about English and their goals for future learning.

In essence then, the interview schedule was sociolinguistic in orientation and ethnographic in design. It asked for information about the respondents' language/literacy domains, practices, and uses, and incorporated this information into the social context of their personal histories and their perceptions of language use and learning. The interviews and the classroom observations were conducted to develop as comprehensive a picture as possible within the time constraints of the language use patterns of low-education Vietnamese immigrants and their relationship to English language/literacy learning. The next section discusses the measures taken to corroborate the information collected.

3.1.5. Verification of Data

Writings on the practice of ethnography assert the importance of verifying information gained in the course of an ethnographic investigation. The technique of triangulation through investigating alternate sources of information was described in Chapter Two. In his ethnographic study of the literacy uses of immigrants, Klassen (1987) qualifies the need for triangulation, suggesting that it is less significant where perception is prior to

accurate description. Klassen says that since his investigation was concerned with how his informants perceived the functions of written language in their lives, checking the validity of those perceptions through triangulation procedures was of lesser importance.

In this study, as in Klassen's (1987), the goal of investigation was not so much to achieve a complete description of the language use habits of a group of immigrants as to discover their perceptions of their language use and the meanings their practices have for them. The study's aim is not to describe what their reality is, but how they interpret it and what it means to them. Therefore the concern of data verification was not with gathering external evidence of participants' language use (though some evidence of this activity was gained in classroom observations) but with attaining progressively deeper clarification of what participants said about themselves. However, to incorporate an etic dimension to the study, external information sources were consulted. The classroom observations and teacher interviews conducted provide different viewpoints, and also the background research on literacy, refugee resettlement, and immigrant language learning reported in Chapter Two provide independent confirmation of my informants' reports. The next section introduces the participants of the study and gives general background information about them.

3.2. The Participants of the Study

The six participants of the study, while all officially Vietnamese citizens, did not all have the same ethnic origin or background history. Two

of the participants were ethnic Chinese, while the rest were ethnic Vietnamese. While all had fled difficult conditions in Vietnam and so could be considered refugees, two actually were government-sponsored refugees, while two had come to Canada under the family reunification clause. Five of the six were women, three of the group were over fifty. In the following sections each informant is introduced and general personal background is given. This background will serve as a basis for a discussion of language use in the participants' daily lives, which will be taken up in Chapter Four.

3.2.1. Mai

Mai is an ethnic Chinese, born in Macao. She grew up in a large family, where all the children attended school, the elders receiving approximately eight years of education, while the three youngest finished high school. Mai herself had eight years of schooling. Not long after her marriage and just after the birth of her first child, Mai and her husband left Macao and migrated to Haiphong, a port city in the north of Vietnam. This move was enforced by fear of the Japanese army and by unstable conditions which made food difficult to get. In Vietnam they joined the growing community of expatriate Chinese fleeing similar hardship. Mai's husband worked for the Chinese bank, while Mai ran the house and acted as a property agent for houses owned by another family member. In the meantime they had another child, eventually began educating the two children in French schools, and teaching them Chinese (Cantonese) at home.

After several years the family moved to Hanoi. Mai's husband continued to work for the bank while Mai, no longer having the responsibility of family property to manage, remained in charge of the home. In Hanoi, as in Haiphong, the family lived in the Chinese section of the city and most of the daily business took place in Chinese. Through his work, Mai's husband learned both oral and written Vietnamese, which he used in addition to Chinese. Mai's children continued to learn French at school, Chinese at home, and oral and written Vietnamese through contact with Vietnamese peers. Mai herself continued to use primarily Chinese (Cantonese), acquiring some oral Vietnamese which she used mainly while shopping.

In 1954, the partition of Vietnam occurred and the new governments of North and South Vietnam permitted a 300-day period of free movement between the two countries (Doyle et al, 1981:95). Mai and her husband decided to move to Saigon. The family moved into the French quarter of the city, into a house owned by the bank for which Mai's husband continued to work. The immediate neighbours were not all Chinese but also Vietnamese so in their social contacts Mai and her husband encountered Vietnamese more frequently than before. On these occasions Mai's husband reported he or his children acted as translators for Mai.

In 1958 the government required all Chinese immigrants to take Vietnamese citizenship, an act which, according to Mai's husband, curtailed their family's freedom to travel out of the country and to send or receive money. Nonetheless, in 1962 the two children were sent out of the country,

the daughter to Hong Kong and the son to France, to continue their education. The traumatic events up to and in 1975 caused much difficulty and worry for Mai and her husband. The crisis came in 1975 with the collapse of the old system and the establishment of a new government with dramatically different policies. The currency devaluation and the closing of foreign banks which followed meant that Mai's husband had no job and the family had no savings. Furthermore they were forbidden to sell their house, so they had no means to live. Through a provision of the French government however, their son, now working in France, was allowed to sponsor them as immigrants, so they left Vietnam in 1978.

Mai and her husband lived with their son in a town in eastern France for about a year. During this time, being the only ethnic Chinese in the town, they were surrounded by the French language. Mai's husband, having acquired some oral and written French in the course of his work, was able to work while there. Mai, on the other hand, was dependent on her husband, son, and the neighbours, in carrying out her role as household manager. She learned some oral but no written French in this period. After a year, Mai and her husband emigrated to Canada, sponsored by their daughter, who herself had come from Hong Kong to Toronto several years earlier. They lived in the Toronto area for four years, during which time both Mai and her husband studied English and worked. In 1983 they moved to Vancouver to help a relative run his business. In Toronto they had lived in a predominantly non-Chinese area; Mai's husband had worked in an English environment while Mai had worked in a Chinese-speaking setting. In Vancouver they lived in the Chinese community and in the business had used mostly Chinese. Now

they are retired and have moved to an even more central part of the Chinese community where they can take care of most everyday business in Chinese. Both Mai and her husband continue to study English and Mai is beginning to learn to write English.

This description of Mai's life has been presented to provide an overview of her experience with language learning and use, and the relationship of her language practices with other personal and historical events in her life. Mai has spent much of her adult life as a refugee and a member of a minority social group. Furthermore, in each situation she has, because of her family role, not been in a position to interact with other language groups as widely as other family members.

3.2.2. Dien

Like Mai, Dien has an ethnic Chinese background; however, he was born in the south part of Vietnam, and spent most of his life in small villages and in Saigon. He was the youngest child of a large family. His father had two wives: the first was an ethnic Chinese and the second, Dien's mother, was Vietnamese. Altogether there were eighteen children in the household. Dien reported that his family was poor since they did not have servants in the house. The family earned income through a business in which everyone helped, though the children also attended school. Chinese was spoken at home while Vietnamese was the school language. All the children except Dien finished high school and became fluent in French and Chinese as well as Vietnamese. Dien only had eight years schooling. He was forced to quit

school early, in 1945, when the Japanese army came to his village. He reported that his family ran away because people of Chinese extraction were afraid of the Japanese. (Doyle et al (1981) note that in the fall of 1945 Japanese prisoners of war, who had previously surrendered to the Vietminh provisional government, were rearmed by the returning British. Since the British and French forced the Vietminh out of the government they had retreated to the countryside where they joined forces with other Vietnamese political groups and began guerilla operations. The Japanese troops were given the task of visiting villages in the south of Vietnam in order to "pacify" resistance.)

In the following years Dien moved around the south of Vietnam, doing temporary labouring jobs and studying on his own until he completed the mathematics, physics and chemistry requirements for high school. He can read and write both Chinese and Vietnamese, although Vietnamese is easier, and he can speak a little French.

After 1975 Dien, with his wife and two daughters, escaped from Vietnam and the family became refugees in China. Dien reported that a number of his relatives had been sent to concentration camps, so there was reason for the family to fear. The family lived for ten years in a farming commune where Dien did manual labour during the day and spent the evenings tutoring his own and other neighbourhood children in mathematics. The older daughter had been sent to Hong Kong, where she stayed for two years before coming to Canada. Eventually she and her husband were able to sponsor Dien, his wife and remaining daughter. Dien and his family arrived in Vancouver in the spring of 1988 and all the family--

parents, daughters, son-in-law and grandson--now live together. Dien began a government-sponsored ESL program in the fall of 1988, and was in his third month of study when he was interviewed.

3.2.3. Toan

Toan is different from Mai and Dien in several respects. Unlike them, Toan was a government-sponsored refugee. She spent over a year in a Malaysian refugee camp before she came to Vancouver. Also, she is an ethnic Vietnamese and does not speak Chinese. Finally, war disrupted her schooling to a greater extent than Mai's and Dien's. She reported having completed only one year of school.

Toan was born in the south of Vietnam, the youngest of twelve children. Her family lived in and around Saigon. Toan's schooling was interrupted not only because the family had several times to move away from areas of war conflict or damage, but also because her mother died when she was eight years old. She reported that she was needed to help take care of the house and also, since French soldiers periodically came to the village, young girls were kept at home or sent away to protect them from the soldiers. So most of Toan's learning was done at home, where she stayed with two of her sisters. She would return to school when the war was calm, but when the war was bad she would stay home. Thus she estimated that her schooling totalled not more than one year, even though she went over a period of several years. She said that the rest of her family was able to complete seven or eight years of school.

When Toan was 18, she got married and started her own family. Her husband worked in a bank, and to supplement the family income, throughout the years Toan operated a variety of businesses out of the home. In addition to running these enterprises, usually with the assistance of a family member, Toan raised 7 children. Toan did not talk much about the difficulties her family experienced during and after the war years. She did mention experiencing progressively worse business difficulties, until finally she was forced to stop altogether, and also said that several of her children left Vietnam years before she and her husband did.

In 1986 Toan, her husband, two youngest children, and eldest daughter and her husband, made plans to leave the country. At the last minute her daughter, in the final stages of pregnancy and quite unwell, could not go with them. So the rest of the family left on a boat and travelled to Pulau Bidong, the island refugee camp off the coast of Malaysia. Toan spent sixteen months at the camp. She describes it as an extremely difficult time, since she was unable to get news of her eldest daughter, or to contact any of her other children, who had resettled in Canada by this time. She attended English classes for a short while, but reports being unable to learn anything because of her anxious state.

Toan and her family in the camp were sponsored by the Canadian government, and arrived in Canada in the spring of 1988. Through aid agencies in Vancouver she was able to locate the rest of her family, and they now live together. At the time of her interviews Toan had been in Canada about eight months.

3.2.4. Lien

Like Toan, Lien is an ethnic Vietnamese and was born in Vietnam. She grew up in a coastal town near Saigon. Her father owned a fishing boat, and all the family worked in various aspects of the fishing business. There was a school in the town, and most children attended it as long as their parents could afford. Lien and her two brothers went for about five years each, then stopped around the age of twelve to assist with the fishing work. Initially, Lien helped her mother with selling the fish in the market. When she was 15, she started her own business transporting the fish to Saigon and selling them wholesale. Lien continued in this business until she left Vietnam. At age 18, she got married; her husband moved into the family home and also took part in the fishing business, helping Lien's father and brothers on the boat.

In 1980 Lien's family decided to leave Vietnam. They used her father's boat, and all the family--including Lien's father, mother, elder brother and his wife, and younger brother--left together, taking about 90 other people with them. Lien's husband did not go with them. Their journey took approximately a month, during which they experienced engine trouble and were robbed twice by Thai pirates. Finally they arrived at Pulau Bidong island. Lien and her family stayed here for a few days and then were transferred to a camp in Indonesia. They were in Indonesia for about five months before they came to Canada. While in camp the family started a small business selling vegetables they grew in the plot allotted to them. The

women of the family mainly took care of this business while the men worked in the camp labour gangs. For about two months, in the evenings twice a week, Lien and her brother attended English classes given by a Vietnamese instructor. She said she went to the classes because she had been told she would not be accepted into Canada if she didn't know English. Lien does not remember very much about the classes. She says they learned numbers, letters, and some basic sentences. The teacher would write things on the blackboard, ask the students to repeat, and if they didn't understand something, he would explain in Vietnamese. Lien said the classes were fun and not very difficult, but she stopped going after two months because she didn't feel she was learning anything.

Lien and her family came to Canada late in 1980. They lived in Winnipeg for four years. Lien was the only one in her family to study English. She attended a government-sponsored program for two months, then left it to work as a thread-cutter in a garment factory. She became dissatisfied with this job in 1984 and left it. Also at that time the family decided to move to Vancouver. They have lived in Vancouver since then and now occupy a house on the east side of the city. Currently Lien is a single parent with two young daughters, and they live in the basement suite of the house while her mother, father, younger brother and an adopted sister live upstairs.

Although Lien has lived in Canada a long time, Vietnamese is still her primary means of communication. In Vancouver she relies on Vietnamese language support services, and on relatives to act as interpreters. She has not studied English since she left Winnipeg, and although she says she would like

to speak more English, she does not look forward to the idea of attending classes. It seems that although Lien has managed to operate almost entirely in Vietnamese since she came to Canada, she feels at a disadvantage because of her lack of English. When I told Lien how interesting her life story was for me, she said it was not so for her, but would be if she was more successful at English.

3.2.5. Hoa

Hoa did not complete the interview process so I will only present general information about her language use in my data analysis. Unlike the other informants in the study, Hoa had not attended any English courses in Canada (at the time of the interviews she was on a waiting list for a government-sponsored ESL program). For this reason it was unproductive to ask her about her experience and perceptions of language learning in Canada. However, many aspects of Hoa's situation are similar to those of the other participants, so a description of her history is included here.

Like Lien, Hoa is also ethnic Vietnamese. She grew up in North Vietnam, in Haiphong, where her family operated a clothing and fabric business. Similar to some of the other participants, Hoa had family difficulties early in her life which shaped the course of her own experience. In 1955, when Hoa was eleven, her mother and father died, leaving her in the care of her sister, who was eleven years older than she. Hoa attended school for six years, beginning when she was seven and stopping when she was thirteen. She stopped because the death of her parents meant that her sister

took over running the business, so someone was needed to stay at home to run the house and care for the sister's children. The family had no servants so Hoa managed the household from this time until her marriage when she was twenty-one. She reports that she did not help in the family business; that instead it was in the care of her sister, while her brother-in-law ran a business of his own.

When Hoa got married she moved in with her husband's family and began a cloth-selling business of her own. In the setting up of the store she was helped by friends; her husband, a civil servant, took no part in the operation. Hoa reports that the business was successful, bringing in enough income to support the family. In 1979, the family decided to leave Vietnam. Two of Hoa's husband's brothers had been officers in the South Vietnamese army, and the family was afraid of reprisals. Unfortunately, in the first attempt to leave Hoa's husband was caught by the police and spent the next five years in prison. Hoa moved back in with her sister's family and continued running her business to support herself and her two children.

In 1985 Hoa and her family tried again to escape from Vietnam. This time they bought a small boat, capable of holding about six people. They sailed north from Haiphong and travelled, hugging the Chinese coast, toward Hong Kong. This journey took about four months, because the boat stopped frequently to take shelter from storms. In the villages where they stopped people would give them food and other things they required. Eventually, they arrived in Hong Kong, where they were put into one of the small closed camps.

Hoa's family stayed in the camp only four months before being accepted for resettlement in Canada. In spite of the fact that the camp was closed so that no one was supposed to enter or leave, Hoa was able to get a sewing job in a garment factory. Every morning a bus from the factory would pick up her and the other workers from the camp's front gate, and every evening they would return. Meanwhile, Hoa's husband and children went to English class every day for two hours. Hoa reports that life in the camp did not seem so bad, chiefly because the income she earned permitted them to buy extra things.

In 1986 Hoa and her family arrived in Canada as government-sponsored refugees. They first lived in Calgary, where her husband's brother, who had successfully escaped in 1979, was living with his family. The two families did not live together; instead Hoa and her family moved into the basement suite of a house, the main floor of which was occupied by Hoa's sister-in-law who had also arrived in Calgary. During this time Hoa's children entered school and her husband studied English in a government-sponsored program. Hoa reports that she also wanted to study English, but the program did not permit both spouses to study at the same time. She says that she spent much of her time at home doing housework and watching T.V., mainly because she had no friends and also the weather was too cold.

In 1987, Hoa's family moved to Vancouver, mostly for the warmer climate. Her children continue in school, and now often act as interpreters for their mother. Hoa herself has applied to enter a government-sponsored ESL program. She also hopes to get seasonal work as a fruit-picker. In the

meantime she continues to manage housework and cooking. Because she has always supported the family or managed the home while the others have studied, she is now quite dependent on the rest of the family, or other Vietnamese-language support services, to help her manage many aspects of life in Canada. in ths respect her situation is similar to that of Mai. She, like many of the other informants, expresses both a desire to learn English and a fear that the task of learning would be too difficult for her. For the time being, she, as well as the other participants, chooses to operate almost exclusively in a first language environment.

3.2.6. Nguyet

I will discuss Nguyet only briefly because I only held one interview session of about 40 minutes with her. She did not meet the criterion of low education--she had attended school for 10 years, which was substantially longer than any of the other informants. Also, she found the interview difficult to fit into her work schedule and so opted not to continue. As a result there was insufficient time to elicit from her any detailed information about her language use and learning in Canada. The information she did give however, supports and augments that which was provided by the other people interviewed, so I decided to include her in the study.

Nguyet is an ethnic Vietnamese in her middle forties, who grew up in a small city in the southern part of the country. She was the elder of two children, and had a large extended family in the same city. Nguyet reported that she and her brother went to school for ten years, beginning at age six and

stopping at 16 to go to work. She said that among her cousins most people finished Grade 12, but she preferred work to school. On leaving school Nguyet began working in her mother's restaurant. She did a variety of jobs including cooking, buying the food, receiving customer payments, and managing the restaurant in her mother's absence.

Nguyet worked in the restaurant for almost 10 years, but stopped when she got married at age 25. She said that she had wanted to continue working but her husband had asked her to stay home. For the next nine years she raised the children and managed the household. After 1975 her life began to change; her husband, who had been a civil official in the Taxation office of the former South Vietnamese government, was sent by the new government to a re-education camp. At this time Nguyet began running a garment-making business out of her home in order to support herself and her two children. After her husband was released from the camp they were forced to live in different cities, and in 1978 they got divorced.

For the next several years Nguyet continued her business, and then in 1986 she and her children escaped from Vietnam. They came to Pulau Bidong camp in Malaysia and stayed there one year. In 1987 she was sponsored to come to Canada by her cousin. Soon after she arrived in Vancouver she enrolled in a 5-month government sponsored ESL program. Since her completion of the course Nguyet has worked as a cook in a Vietnamese restaurant on the east side of the city. Her elder son is now working and her younger son is attending the local high school in an ESL program.

These are the six participants of the study. Their histories contain similar examples of disruption, loss, flight, and the struggle to adapt. Of the six, I spoke at greatest length, approximately five hours each, with Dien, Lien, Mai and Toan. My conversations with Hoa and Nguyet were considerably shorter, approximately two and one hours respectively. In addition to the conversations, I observed Toan, Dien and Mai in their ESL classes and talked with their taechers (Toan and Dien were in the same class, so I spoke to the same teacher about both of them). So far I have tried to present my informants in a socio-historical context which gives some indication of what they have done in their lives and how their lives have been shaped by larger events. Chapter Four focuses more specifically on the participants as language users in the various conditions and activities which comprise their lives.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings--Language Domains and Practices

4.1. Introduction

In Chapter Three the methodology of the study was described and the interview participants were introduced. This chapter presents in more detail my informants' descriptions of the language domains they entered and the strategies they developed for managing language demands in those places. Following the interview procedure developed by Klassen (1987), I began the conversations by listing the places people normally went in the different communities they had lived in over their lives. For each domain I then asked about the reading, writing, and speaking activities that went on. To present a consistent description of language use for each domain I mention the language activities people took part in, and which languages they used. People more readily identified some domains than others as places where language use was a concern for them. Because of this I have written at greater length about some domains than others. This description is not intended to be a comprehensive account of the language practices my informants engaged in; what it aims to do is identify generally the language encounters people had. The second section, on language strategies, provides more detail about how people used language. Generally the discussion centres around places people went in Vancouver; however, in some instances I include

information about their activities in Vietnam and other places they have lived, in order that shifts and continuities in their lives can be identified.

The way people's experiences are presented in this chapter needs some explanation. In reporting people's accounts, I have chosen for the most part to use indirect rather than direct speech. Because the interviews were conducted in my informants' first languages, through interpreters, I have few examples of people's voices in a language I could understand. Interpreters were instructed to reproduce statements as close to informants' original meanings as possible; they were asked not to paraphrase, summarize or reinterpret statements according to their own understandings. Nonetheless, it is possible that the interpreter's influence coloured some of the responses. A second difficulty was that the interpreters themselves had an imperfect command of English, so the way they expressed ideas tended to be in simplified language which may not have conveyed the nuances of the original statements. As a result, rather than adhering to the actual utterances of the interpreters, I have chosen indirect reporting to relate people's experiences as I understood them. While this method also has limitations, given the circumstances of the study I regarded it as the best way to capture the meaning of my informants' statements and present the complexities of their lives.

4.2. Language Domains

The people interviewed have moved through a variety of domains in their lives. The domains are organized in the following categories: home;

community activities (getting around, shopping, and visiting offices); work; school; and refugee camp. In the various domains people used a combination of speaking and writing and a mix of English and Chinese/Vietnamese to accomplish their purposes. The discussion therefore centres around both spoken and written language use. Each domain is presented separately below.

4.2.1. The Workplace in Vietnam

The workplace is an important part of my informants' lives. Everyone I interviewed had some work experience in their home country. Of the six people, three had previously had jobs in Canada while only one was working at the time of the interviews. During our conversations it became clear that there were vast differences in the nature of workplaces in Vietnam and Canada, in the roles people played in workplaces, and in the expectations they had about work.

Generally the work people described was in one way or another family-oriented. Some began as children helping out in family businesses. All the women except Mai set up businesses after they were married to supplement the family income: the husbands worked, and the women's work was in addition to their other household responsibilities. Only after her divorce did Nguyet become a central source of income for her family; Hoa also took on this role when her husband went to prison. For all these women then, work was very much a matter of participating in maintaining family well-being rather than pursuing self-sufficiency in individual vocations. At the same

time, running businesses mostly independent of family help suggests that in their own society these women were not dependent but were able to contribute help at least equal to that of other members of the family unit.

The role of literate skills and knowledge was another important feature of the workplace. Each of the women mentioned keeping accounts of prices and customers; Toan in addition wrote letters to the Esso gas company during the time she sold gas. The fact that each woman stayed in business over several years suggests that what literacy and numeracy abilities the women had were sufficient to enable them to take care of all the necessary aspects of their work. The women's descriptions of their business histories suggest that external influences ultimately shaped the course of their working lives more than their literacy or education levels did.

Each person reported that her business ran successfully for a significant period of time, until for one or more of a variety of reasons it stopped operating. Nguyet and Lien closed down their businesses when they left Vietnam. Hoa first stopped her business when the family planned to leave in 1979, began it again when her husband was imprisoned, and continued until the family finally did leave in 1985. Toan described in detail the difficulties she experienced trying to stay in business after 1975. The difficulties were related to factors like the withdrawal of the Esso company after the government changed, the inadequacy of local supplies as a result of the war, and the pressure the new government exerted to shut down private businesses.

Toan's work history shows in greater detail what the history of the other women suggests; that their working lives were closely bound to their participation in family structures and to the social, political, and economic upheavals taking place in Vietnam during those years. Obviously, it is impossible on the basis of data relating an entirely emic view of the informants' personal histories to make meaningful statements about how effective the ways of reading and writing the women developed were in their businesses. The data so far indicate that these women did not see their level of literacy or language ability as impeding their work in their native country. The problems they perceived were related to the social and political conflicts taking place in their country. The goals for working were communal rather than individual, and the rewards of working were independence as well as contributing to the family. The difficulties involved in working had to do with external factors, not with personal disabilities If literacy is understood as knowledge and skills that bring social empowerment, then these women appear to have been literate workers in their own society.

4.2.2. The Workplace in Canada

For the people interviewed, moving to another country clearly meant loss of power in terms of ability to work in the same way that they had worked in Vietnam. Inability to work under prevailing social conditions was certainly a factor in people's decisions to leave Vietnam; however, their decision reflected their view of their society, not of their own competence. When people talked about their workplace experiences in Canada, they were

far more ready to perceive their situations as influenced by personal lack of language ability than by sociopolitical conditions. Everyone (except Mai, who was retired) stated the desire for some work, or better work, but often at some distant uncertain date after they had learned enough English. Everyone had had some experience of employment-oriented language training (in CEIC-sponsored programs for refugees), either directly or through a family member who had gone through a program. The influence of such programs makes it difficult to distinguish between what goals students may have and what goals the program has for them. Since the goal of such programs is to assist job-getting and since refugees are supported financially to take them, the programs send clear messages, first that English is necessary for working in Canada, and second that getting a job is the prime reason for learning English. The experiences and perceptions my informants related about working suggests a more complex relationship between working, learning English, and using English on the job. Their information indicates that their language use at work is affected by the structure of the work environment, which in turn affects their attitude to working. I summarize below two accounts of Canadian work experience, in order to illustrate two types of workplaces my informants encountered, and how they operated there.

Mai had not worked, except to help out family members, before she came to Canada. Her jobs in Canada continued to be in helping situations rather than more formal workplaces. She was a part-time housekeeper/babysitter for family friends, and later on she helped her husband part-time in a cousin's small grocery store. Both jobs were within her own ethnic community, so Mai used her first language almost

exclusively. When recording information was necessary, as when the family she worked for needed household supplies, she could rely on first language literacy to do the task. When oral English was needed, for example to deal with customers, she used a few well-learned words and phrases. Because her workplaces were informal she did not have to cope with regulations or other state-instigated bureaucracy of employment. Her work in Canada resembles the work she did in Vietnam in that her role continued to be one of helping within her family/friend network. The next account documents a more formal workplace which presented a large shift from the informant's previous work experience.

From Lien's account, it appears that the structure of her workplace greatly influenced her language use and her perceptions of work. In Vietnam Lien had run her own fish-selling business, marketing the catch from her family's or other people's fishing operations. This work involved travelling, transporting goods, negotiating with sellers and buyers, keeping accounts; in short, a fair degree of mobility, independence and responsibility. In Canada the workplace Lien entered, a garment factory in Winnipeg, was far more regimented. To get the job she was taken to the factory by a Vietnamese social service worker who filled out the application forms for her. She was assigned to a unit of 24 workers: among them was a smaller group of 6 Vietnamese with whom she actually worked.

In the factory workers were divided into units by the management. These units further divided themselves into ethnic groups, and tended to work as separate teams, the members helping each other but competing against other groups. (The competition involved which group could get the

most garment pieces to work on, and which group collected the most garment tags--which indicated how much work had been finished by any one worker.) Each group spoke its own language among its members but functioned in English when dealing with supervisors or bureaucratic aspects of the factory. Lien said that for everyday interactions with the manager, such as answering questions about how much work she had done, she would speak a few phrases of English. Written material was in the form of English notices and regulations; she usually asked one of the other Vietnamese to translate it for her. The assistance network thus provided by the group structure allowed Lien to do her job with very little recourse to spoken or written English. What English she used was limited to formulaic oral responses to supervisor questions.

However, Lien mentioned two language-related problems in the workplace. One problem was that Vietnamese workers were usually limited to the lower-paying jobs like cutting because they didn't have the language to qualify for training (which was offered in English) to operate the sewing machines. Those who spoke less English had less access to management, and were limited in what they could do by management's limitations in its ability to explain job functions to them. Lien said that the Vietnamese spoke less English than the other workers and so did not interact with the management and did not get the higher-paying jobs that required training. The other problem was that workers from other ethnic groups would steal garment tags from Vietnamese. The Vietnamese were afraid to steal back, or complain to supervisors, because they would not be able to speak as well as the other workers and so would lose face. Lien mentioned these two problems to

explain why she eventually stopped working, and why she feels she needs to improve her English before she can work again.

Lien assigned her work problems to her own lack of English rather than to the organizational structure of the workplace. However, her story suggests that the work environment contained other barriers than just linguistic. For one thing, the structure of the workplace was a great deal more formal than it had been for Lien in Vietnam. For the job itself, she could work mainly in her first language, but for dealing with written material--forms and notices--she needed help. Interacting with supervisors on other than a circumscribed basis required language skills Lien did not have; since in Vietnam she did not work under supervisors it is likely that she was unfamiliar with the language appropriate for complaining to employers in Vietnamese, let alone in English. Furthermore, Lien's activities in her former work were very different than those in the factory, so the working skills she had acquired were not relevant to the new setting.

Mai's and Lien's stories of their Canadian work experiences suggest that for limited English speaking immigrants, formal work environments present both linguistic and bureaucratic barriers that informal settings do not. In considering difficulties my informants mentioned in entering the Canadian workforce some account must be taken of the differences between the Canadian and the Vietnamese socioeconomic systems. From my informants' accounts their work as business people did not involve them in bureaucracy to any great degree. They didn't use banks, they paid taxes according to a fee schedule set by the government but did not have to fill in tax forms; generally it appears that the state intervened in their businesses far

less than is usual in Canada The information my informants gave suggests that they feel marginalized in the Canadian work environment partly because language inhibits their participation and also partly because they cannot operate a business in the way they are accustomed to. In Canada it is likely that starting a small business is a much more complex process requiring higher levels of "bureaucratic literacy" than it is in Vietnam. Therefore for immigrants the problems of the workplace cannot be resolved by upgrading of language skills alone. The other necessary element is knowledge of bureaucratic procedures, and development of ways that allow people who want to work to transfer the abilities they developed in their previous work experience to a new setting.

4.2.3. School

The education levels and work experience in Vietnam and Canada of the people I interviewed appears in the following table.

Table 1

Name	Education	Work (Vietnam)	Work (Canada)
Toan	one year	retail gas, cloth sales	none
Nguyet	ten years	garment-making	cook
Dien	eight years	physical labour	none
Mai	eight years	property agent	childcare, grocery
Lien	six years	wholesale fish	garment factory
Hoa	six years	retail cloth	none

The information in this table suggests that there is no necessary relationship between the amount of schooling people had and the type of work they did. Whatever level of education was reached, it seems that the abilities each person had acquired from schooling or other sources were sufficient to allow her to do the work involved in her business. This point suggests that the literate abilities each person developed in her or his life were related to the uses she or he had for literacy. It was not until people moved into a new setting with a different socioeconomic system that their literacy and language abilities were called into question.

In Canada the schooling people have so far experienced is limited to the adult education institutions where they have attended ESL programs. Of the six interviewed, three were attending classes in which they were observed during the time of interview sessions. During interviews they made comments on their classes which I was able to check with the teacher and with my own observations. The two classes are discussed below.

The first class observed was part of a federally-sponsored program in a large, centralised institution and contained several different ethnic groups. The assigned goal of the class was to promote functional ability in oral and written English. It became clear during observation that one of the teacher's main goals was the development of social interaction between the different ethnic groups. For the two students (Toan and Dien) I interviewed however, their goal of "learning English" meant remembering vocabulary, writing sentences from the board, and learning new grammatical structures.

Speaking and listening activities were not regarded as learning tasks unless they were accompanied by written material.

The teacher and the students expressed different views of the value of reading and writing in class. The teacher felt that oral/aural ability was far more important for the students than literate ability:

> My own personal bias is that they need to understand what's being said to them and they need to be able to speak in situations. And although they're called "literacy students", if they can't speak the language or understand it I don't see a whole lot of point in just working on the mechanics of reading and writing. I really doubt, with perhaps one or two exceptions, that they're ever going to read and write English anyway--in the workplace, or for social reasons, or whatever.

Another reason the teacher gave for focussing on oral rather than literate activities was that she felt students were usually more successful in speaking than in writing.

> They usually only have one written exercise. . . to each three-hour period because they're so weak on that. . . I know that some students. . . were very reluctant to speak. . . (but) I would say that most of them are actually quite willing to try to speak first.

As an exception to this observation, she did note that Dien did not like speaking and preferred to have things written down so that he could recite them.

Unlike the teacher, the students said that they valued writing. Toan said that when the teacher wrote the sentence on the blackboard instead of just speaking it, it was easier for her to understand. She found the teacher's

oral explanations too difficult to follow and said she would have preferred doing more written work. Dien also said that he found it confusing when the teacher just spoke and did not write. Toward the end of the interview sessions, Dien reported that the teacher had changed her method and he was now much happier with the class and felt that he was learning more. He explained that the teacher was now writing more sentences on the blackboard and asking students to read them aloud and copy them. He said that if the teacher had taught in this way from the beginning of the program, he would have made more progress than he did. Notwithstanding this, he was satisfied with what he perceived as a new, more successful teaching strategy. However, when I asked the teacher about the change in method Dien had noticed, she said that she viewed the change as a negative one. She reported that she had used some activities which she herself did not think were useful, but she had run out of new things to do with the students. So, the activities which she regarded as uncreative and methodologically unsound were those that Dien found easy to understand and helpful.

From their comments it appears that the two students and teacher I interviewed about this class had conflicting perceptions regarding the role of literacy in the second language classroom. In stressing oral skills and conversational exchanges, the teacher tried to acquaint students with the sociocultural context of the language they were learning before she introduced the elements of orthography and phonetics to the learning task. Dien and Toan on the other hand, saw writing and reading as a way to control words and ideas they could not manage aurally/orally. Although the students did not state this view, it is also possible that they saw reading and copying

written material as more appropriate activities for the classroom--what previous exposure they had had to formal schooling may have left them with this impression.

The second class observed, unlike the first, was set within the community it served and consisted entirely of ethnic Chinese. While this class was not constituted as bilingual, much native language interaction took place during the lessons, and native language help with class or other concerns was readily available from the teacher and other program staff. Thus, unlike the first class where students needed literacy to comprehend the oral English, these students could check their understanding by asking in their own language. Also, because the students shared a mother tongue, it was easier for them to socialize with one another than it had been for the first class I observed. So, while the language being studied was English, much of the language used for questioning, explaining, and socializing was Chinese.

The students practised language to be used in different situations, such as phoning into work sick, or planning a camping trip. Since most of the students were of retirement age it seemed unlikely that they would ever be in such situations. It appeared that the teacher's purpose was not just to provide students with language they would immediately use, but to expose them to an array of functions and situations a typical young, middle-class Canadian might encounter. In later discussion the teacher said that she did not think the students used English very often outside class, and that the main purpose of the class was to be a social and recreational outlet for Chinese seniors which provided them with some exposure to English. It is likely that for at least some students the language studied served them as a bridge to the younger

generations of their family. Thus topics like work and camping might have been relevant for communicating with grandchildren. This possibility apparently influenced the teacher's choice of language goals more than the possibility that students might have to function as independent language users.

In both classes I observed language learning was constrained by a number of factors. In the first class the ethnic mix meant that English was the common language. However, limited English was spoken, and it was usually instigated by the teacher. Students communicated among their own ethnic groups in their native languages; little intergroup communication took place. In the second class a lot of communication took place among all the students, most of it in the native language. In both classes students got help from other native language speakers to deal with oral and written English--their first languages were the means of communication they relied on. The teacher was the main initiator of English interaction. She set the learning goals, framed and monitored language practice activities, and evaluated the oral and written outcomes. In the first class, when the students and the teacher had different views about what learning techniques were useful, the teacher's views prevailed. No criticism is intended of specific teachers or techniques--the point of this description is that the language classrooms I observed were places in which students filled certain roles and performed activities that they did not do in other areas of their lives. Part of their difficulties with language learning may have been due to the fact that the classroom was a domain in which the language management strategies they had developed for other arenas could only be used to a limited extent, and the tasks they had to

accomplish were entirely determined by the teacher rather than by themselves.

4.2.4. English Classes in Camp

Four of the six people I interviewed spoke of being in refugee camps before they were resettled in Canada. In Chapter Three I outlined where each person went, how long she stayed, and something about her experiences there. I return to camp life in this chapter because two people, Toan and Lien, talked about the English classes they took there. Another person, Hoa, mentioned that there were classes in her camp but she did not attend them.

For the two people who talked about it, the experience of studying English in the refugee camp seems to have been discouraging. Toan and Lien mentioned a number of problems which related to both their own psychological states and the classes themselves. Both women arrived in camps after difficult boat journeys; both had left family behind in Vietnam about whom they were anxious. They started going to English classes because they were told that English was necessary for resettlement, although Toan said there wasn't as much emphasis on old people like herself going to school. The women's anxiety, along with their sense of obligation to study, suggests that they were probably not in optimal psychological states for learning. Their learning was further discouraged by the difficulty of the language, their unfamiliarity with classroom learning, and their perceptions of the teacher. Toan's teacher, "not really a teacher but he knew better than other people so they called him a teacher", was a fellow refugee whom Toan

said was often distracted in class by his own problems. Lien stopped attending her class after two months because she didn't understand anything. She said "(we) have less education in Vietnam, so when (we) turn to English and study it's a difficult language". Both women gave up study after a short time and took on other roles within the family units they lived in at the camps. Toan took over cooking for her family, and Lien grew vegetables the family could sell. Their roles became similar to that of Hoa, who had never attended classes, but took a job instead to bring in extra income while her husband and children studied. From these women's accounts it is evident that English classes were a source of frustration and they saw their work as a more valued contribution to the family's well-being than their study.

4.2.5. The Community: Shopping and Using Services

The people I talked to visited a variety of places in the community in the course of doing various kinds of family business. Places regularly visited included stores--markets in Chinatown, small neighbourhood stores, and large supermarkets; banks and other businesses where bills were paid; and offices where more extended interaction took place like doctors, dentists, and government agencies. In visiting all these places people went by bus or on foot. Although people used the bus regularly, they were unsure of the names of the routes or the streets buses went along. They spoke of locating places by remembering the number of the bus, being shown how to get to a place by having a family member or friend go with them the first time, and writing down the name and address of a place to show the bus driver. In this way

they navigated the city to reach their destinations. Once people developed a travel routine, they did not try getting to different places. For example no one reported going downtown to shop, even though everyone lived in neighbourhoods within easy transit reach of downtown. The furthest regular expedition everybody reported was going to Chinatown. Occasional trips were made further abroad, for example to visit relatives in outlying suburbs, but these trips were usually instigated by the relatives, who would send someone with a car to pick people up. Usually people's movement took place within local boundaries, as people learned how to get to places and established regular movement patterns.

Shopping was a frequent activity for everyone, and apparently posed few language or literacy difficulties. Chinatown was where people went shopping most of the time because they could go to Chinese or Vietnamese stores. The reading they did in connection with shopping was limited to finding the prices of items; spoken interaction was in Chinese or Vietnamese. Toan mentioned going also to small groceries near her house. These were English-speaking stores so she generally just looked for items; however, sometimes she would ask questions, and if the clerks spoke slowly she could understand them. Several people said they went to "Canadian" stores like Safeway. Toan and Mai generally manage these expeditions by going with children or other English-speaking literate helpers, who speak English, along to help her. Lien, possibly more accustomed than the others to shopping in English because she learned how to do it in Winnipeg--where she said no Vietnamese stores existed--often went to English stores on her own. She reported little reading except for prices, and no oral interaction other than

simple requests, like asking for the washroom. Generally then, people managed shopping tasks by frequenting places they could speak their native language. When they did go to English stores, they took helpers with them, used a limited set of English phrases, or did not speak. The literate forms they encountered were restricted to numbers, which did not pose a problem for them--people were familiar with writing English forms of numbers as a result of the account-keeping practices they had during their work lives in Vietnam.

Visits to banks and other offices to pay bills posed greater potential tests of oral and literate abilities, since they involved reading bills and interacting with service personnel. Not everyone made these visits: Toan said she never went to the bank, but her husband and daughter took care of all bill-paying. Mai also said her husband did the banking, and she would only go if he needed her to sign something and came with her. Dien and Lien, on the other hand, visited the bank and other offices like the telephone and the television cable company, usually without help from others. What visits people did make they described in similar terms. The amount of money to be paid would be figured out at home, the payer would give the bill and the money to the clerk without speaking, and the clerk would handle the transaction. In the case of bank transactions which required filling out forms on the spot or answering the clerk's questions, people said they would bring someone with them to help.

The most extended community encounters took place during visits to doctors, dentists, and social service agencies. In general visits to these places were managed in such a way that my informants did not have to speak English. For example, Lien went to doctors and dentists who either spoke

Vietnamese themselves or had Vietnamese assistants who could translate. When Hoa or Lien went to social service agencies, they took a translator along with them. Unlike the others, Dien used written English as a way to manage his difficulty with oral English. He took his grandson to an English-speaking doctor, but wrote out a short explanation of his grandson's sickness before he went. He said that he did not speak to the doctor, but just showed him the paper.

My informants' community activities were managed to limit, or to get assistance with, the spoken and written English they encountered. They learned to get around the community through friends; they did not use street names or maps to help themselves, but relied on bus numbers and their own familiarity with the places. In visiting stores, business, and service offices they used their first languages when they could, prepared any necessary written English material before they went, or took helpers with them The major literacy requirement they had was reading numbers. Generally people reported not using first language literacy in any of these encounters. Dien and Toan said they would sometimes read advertisements in their native language which they saw in the halls at school; Dien occasionally would try reading English posters, writing down the words so he could ask his children at home. Otherwise people rarely had a need for Vietnamese/Chinese reading and writing in the community. Most frequently they encountered written English, which could be managed or ignored, and oral English, which was dealt with by silence, limited oral responses, prepared written responses, or translators.

4.2.6. Home

The informants' homes contained a rich variety of oral and written language, mostly in the native language but also some in English. These uses were closely related to the roles people took on within the family. Everyone performed grocery shopping, cooking, and some housework tasks. Those who had children or grandchildren needing care took some responsibility for them. In addition, one or two had duties outside the house: Nguyet worked full-time to support the family, and Hoa was in the process of getting seasonal work. In fulfilling these and other roles informants encountered different language tasks. Frequent tasks included deciding what household items to buy and finding out where they were cheapest; sorting household mail; getting news and other kinds of information; maintaining contact with family and friends in other places; answering the telephone. Apart from these, some time was given to leisure activities. A brief description of these activities is given below.

For some people preparing for shopping involved reading and writing. While people usually went to Chinatown to shop, some said that they also checked the weekly advertising brochures delivered to their houses for information on food prices. They would look at the pictures, read the prices, and remember what they wanted to buy and where to go. Most people relied on their memory for what to buy rather than making shopping lists. They said that they bought the same things every week, so it was not difficult. Mai was the only one who mentioned making shopping lists, but this activity was in the context of her housekeeping job rather than her personal life. Other

than Mai, who wrote her lists in Chinese, people's literacy requirements were restricted to identifying the prices of items advertised.

First language literacy was required for dealing with some mail and publications which people brought home. Everyone wrote to and received letters from family and friends in other places; no one reported needing help with them. Hoa and Lien mentioned that sometimes they would pick up free Vietnamese language publications at the grocery store, and they would look through these for entertainment. English literacy was needed for dealing with other mail like bills and letters from the government. In most cases my informants either shared responsibility for this kind of mail, opening the letters and then passing them to another person to read, or left it entirely to another family member.

The language spoken at home was the native language of the informants, but oral English entered through various means. Everyone had a television at home, and watched a combination of Vietnamese/Chinese and English language programming. Programs they did not understand were interpreted for them by children or other family members who spoke English. It was through these interpreters that people were kept informed about current news. Every house also had a telephone, on which calls in English were occasionally received. While only Dien reported avoiding telephone use altogether, everyone said that if the voice spoke English when they answered, they would usually either hang up or pass the telephone to someone else. Some people said that they knew what to say in order to take a phone message, but they did not often do this, because the caller was usually just trying to sell something. Although answering the phone was a source of

anxiety for everybody, most people used the phone freely to call friends and family locally. Toan also reported making long-distance calls to her children in France. Apparently no one, other than Dien, was reluctant to use the phone when they could speak their own language.

Oral and written language entered people's homes through a variety of media, but was usually communicated to my informants through family members. With the exception of the limited number of native language publications and T.V.and video programs available, my informants' resources were others who could interpret English communication to them. People did refer to written materials in both English and their native language; for the native language materials--letters, newspapers, and magazines--none of my informants required assistance. The more complex forms of English material, like bills and official letters, were managed in consultation with others, while simpler materials like grocery store flyers posed no problems. For the most part then, people could deal with difficult language in the home through family members who mediated for them. Other studies of low-literate communities report the presence of "scribes". In this case certain people in the family were interpreters of both oral and written language. The "translator" roles they played assisted my informants to manage their own responsibilities in the family, such as bill-paying, and to keep up with public information.

4.2.7. Summary of Domains

This section has presented language domains my informants reported entering, and made some reference to the oral and written, native language and second language activities they met in those places. Most domains required oral/aural skills in both languages, literate skills to a lesser extent, and English more often than Chinese/Vietnamese. Where people had choices in the domains they could enter, they usually chose places where they could use their native language. Where oral or written English was necessary, people found various ways to manage language tasks, which did not always involve themselves performing tasks in standard ways; instead they would substitute forms, like using written English rather than speaking. The next section examines these management strategies in more detail. While much of the material will be the same, I will focus on activities used to deal with language rather than specific places where language was encountered.

4.3. Managing Language Demands

In this section I will discuss in greater detail the activities involving language in which my informants participated in the various domains I have mentioned. To describe these activities I borrow the term "managing" from Klassen (1987). In his analysis of the literacy practices of his informants, Klassen notes both a positive and a negative aspect of their activity. He uses the word "managing" first to capture the positive meaning, that the people in

his study effectively organized their resources to achieve the ends they desired (1987; 121). He also applies the negative side of the word, in that his informants saw themselves as inadequate and limited in their ability to to deal with their environment--that their lives were a matter of "barely managing with imperfect means" (1987; 122). Thus for Klassen "managing" incorporates the positive strategies people use to deal with the language and literacy they encounter, and also the negative perceptions they have of their operations and abilities. The informants in my study share this position with Klassen's informants. Their explanations of their language activities often contained an implicit contradiction--between what they were able to accomplish and the deficient state they felt themselves to be in because they did not speak English. Therefore as I discuss my informants' activities in the various domains I will mention the strategies they used to operate and also their perceptions of these strategies.

4.3.1. Strategies

People used a variety of strategies to manage the language they encountered in the different domains. The language demands of each domain were distinct, so different strategies and combinations of strategies were used in different places. Language tasks were managed by both speaking, English or first language, and writing, first or second. Where written English was too difficult to cope with, various forms of first language oral and literate assistance were given; where spoken English was too complex, limited forms of first and second language were used, and translation help was usually

sought. considering the domains my informants enter I also include the oral/aural language demands they were presented with.developed a variety of ways to manage literate tasks. I outline the strategies below.

Among the methods used were various ways of getting help, choosing settings where the first language could be used instead of English, relying on memory, and the adoption of limited written and oral aids. my informants did not report experimenting as a technique. Because my informants did not report it does not mean that they did not experiment. However, it is also possible that my informants experimented less because they relied to a greater degree on getting help and using native language sources. Getting help was the most common strategy my informants reported, so I will begin by describing it.

4.3.1.1. Getting Help

The people I interviewed got various kinds of assistance from different sources. The most common helper was a family member who spoke better English and in some cases had been in the country longer. One kind of assistance these helpers provided was accompaniment to different places. For example, when Mai and her husband lived in the Toronto area they usually relied on their adult daughter, who was a long-time Canadian resident, for various services. Mai's husband explained that their daughter would take Mai shopping and show her what she needed to do if she went by herself. Mai's daughter identified food for her and told her the English vocabulary. Mai said, "Sometimes we don't know the different kinds--my daughter

explain how to use." Mai's daughter also prevented her from making mistakes. Mai's husband told a story about when Mai wanted to buy a can of food with a picture of a dog on it, because she had never seen this kind of food before. Mai's daughter stopped her and explained that it was dog food.

In addition to getting help with written materials Mai used her helpers to manage oral language she encountered. Mai spoke of going to fast-food restaurants, shopping, and visiting parks and tourist sites with her daughter as interpreter. Mai's husband said that he and their daughter would teach Mai how to say things; she said however, that she would always speak Chinese because they could say everything in English. Mai relied heavily on this kind of help; she did not go shopping or do other things by herself but was always with someone who could manage spoken and written English for her.

Other people also reported regular accompaniment by family members. Unlike Mai they were not necessarily accompanied everywhere, but for certain places helpers were required. Whenever Hoa went to the bank to withdraw money one of her children would go with her. Likewise, Toan would go to "Canadian" shops with one of her children, Dien's daughter would accompany him to government offices, and Lien's adopted younger sister would interpret for her when she went such places. Generally, it seems that if the place was not a frequently-visited one, like government offices, or if the procedures demanded both oral and written English, like withdrawing money from banks, then an assistant would be required.

At home, children and other relatives provided regular assistance with the written and oral language that entered the house. Toan would watch English T.V. with her children and check her comprehension with them. When Hoa's children brought home written information from their school such as letters and report cards, they would read them and explain the meaning to their mother. Lien's daughter would also do this for her. However, for other kinds of writing like letters from the government, Lien would not rely on her daughter but would ask one of her adult family members upstairs, or seek professional help.

Professional helpers were part of the network established by some of the people I interviewed. In Winnipeg Lien got her job at the garment factory through a social service worker who took her to the place and filled out the application form for her. In Vancouver Lien regularly went to her social service worker's to get help with documents, and kept informed about her daughter's schooling through the Vietnamese home-school worker. In both Calgary and Vancouver Hoa maintained contact with social service workers. Other people did not report using professionals; possibly they either had not been in Canada long enough or had a more extensive and better-informed network of family helpers, so they did not develop outside contacts.

Another kind of help involved getting shown how to do something the first time so that it could be done independently later. For this kind of help my informants used family members, friends and also social service workers. Hoa said the first time she used a laundromat, in Calgary, her brother-in-law took her to the place and showed her how to use the

machines. Around the same time she learned how to take the bus from her home to Chinatown from a church agency worker. Lien mentioned learning the way to different stores in Winnipeg by having friends take her the first time. As I suggested above, it seemed that more unusual or complex language situations required regular helpers and acting independently was restricted to settings like stores and laundromats where oral and literate demands were highly circumscribed and regularised.

4.3.1.2. Using Native Language Resources

Another very common feature of managing daily life was using services and referring to sources in the native language. Shopping regularly in Chinatown, which everybody reported doing, is an obvious example of this strategy. Other examples include using doctors and dentists who either spoke the native language or had receptionists who did. People also spoke of getting information from Chinese/Vietnamese sources--newspapers, T.V. relatives and friends who spoke English and could interpret. This strategy was often apparent in the classroom. Most often other students were sources of information and so acted as helpers, but some students referred to native language dictionaries. Dien was the only one of my informants whom I observed using a dictionary; his reliance on this source was an ongoing point of contention between him and his teacher--she wanted him to stop using it and just practice the language, while he wanted to know the meaning for every word he didn't recognize.

It appears that for the most part people chose native language alternatives whenever they were available. This strategy demonstrates that people moved within a community that they developed for themselves out of existing services and the helping networks that they developed among their acquaintances.

4.3.1.3. Limited Language Use

For some situations people had a limited repertoire of English vocabulary and functional expressions. Everyone spoke of learning to answer the phone and take messages in English, although some admitted that they didn't do this but hung up instead. When she helped her husband with his job at the grocery store Mai learned and used English names for some products. Most people said that when they went shopping, they were able to make simple requests, like asking how much something cost, or where the washroom was. People reported this strategy less often than other methods they employed. My impression was that they had been taught these phrases in English classes or by helpers, but they were not confident of using them and being understood. Therefore they more often chose strategies that were more likely to be effective, and only resorted to using the English they knew when they had no other options.

The domain where English expressions were required most frequently was the ESL classroom. Here, the students practised chorally, individually, or in groups the expressions the teacher presented to them. The teachers I

observed presented language appropriate to a wide variety of settings--department stores, workplaces, meetings with casual acquaintances--and uses--naming body parts, reading clothes washing instructions, explaining how to prepare food, describing daily activities. My conversations with my informants indicated that a number of the situations teachers presented English patterns for were situations which they managed in other ways and so did not use the English they had been given. Furthermore, although they did practise a great deal of oral and written English in the classroom, when they had communicative needs, or wanted to socialize, they generally resorted to their native language.

4.3.1.4. Memory and Literate Aids

People reported two other techniques: using literate aids in English as a substitute for English speech, and relying on memory rather than writing down items. The first technique was helpful in a variety of situations. For getting to places on the bus Lien said she would show the address written on a piece of paper to the bus driver and he would tell her where to get off. For business like paying bills, Dien and Lien said they would go to the bank or other office, give the bill and the correct amount of money, which they had figured out beforehand with help, to the clerk. Before Dien took his grandson to the doctor, he wrote a sentence to show to the doctor, saying the child was sick. In encounters like these, my informants said they did not speak but relied on the written material they carried to convey to their interlocutors what they wanted. The second technique, relying on memory, was quite

common among my informants. For example, when they shopped people said they remembered what to buy and that it wasn't that difficult because they bought the same things every week. Only Mai mentioned using literate aids like shopping lists and recipes, and these were always in Chinese. Generally, people's reports indicated that they did not use native language literacy for functional purposes other than writing letters or reading newspapers, as reported above. However, limited forms of English literacy, like addresses or filled out bills, were used instead of spoken English.

4.4. Summary

People entered a variety of language domains, often in conjunction with their family responsibilities for shopping, bill-paying, and child care. In managing these domains they most often took along family, friends, or others whose role was to provide translation and whatever other help was needed with.the task. Whenever possible, people chose to operate in native language environments; otherwise they used a network of helpers, limited forms of English writing and speaking. While operating orally in the native language was common, use of native language literacy, particularly for functional purposes, was infrequently reported. One literate functional skill people reported acquiring in Vietnam, the ability to keep business accounts, had some use in Canada because people were familiar with Western number symbols, and so could recognize prices and bus route numbers. In general there appeared to be a substantial variance between the language students practised in ESL class and the language people used in other environments,

although people did report knowing how to use English expressions in some settings. People's accounts suggested that they did not use either the English they were learning, or native language functional literacy. At the same time however, people expressed negative feelings about their lack of English, and their lack of education, which they perceived as making them less knowledgeable than others and less able to learn language. People frequently said that they should, or would like to, know more English, but they felt disadvantaged in learning by age, education, and other life circumstances. Thus it appears that my informants lived in a contradictory situation: while they felt obliged to learn English, and inadequate because of their educational and language deficiencies, many activities in their lives were arranged to use oral English, or literacy in either language, only in limited forms.

CHAPTER FIVE--CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This study has considered the use of oral and written language by a group of adult Vietnamese in the various domains they enter in their lives in Canada. A central theme of the study has been the language needs of immigrants; these were investigated in order to suggest new approaches to incorporating immigrant learner needs into the design and curricula of language training programs. Therefore the findings will be assessed according to how the informants used language and where their needs lie. This chapter is divided into four sections: the findings are summarized; they are related to current research; some pedagogical implications are discussed; and finally, suggestions for further research are given.

5.2. Summary of Findings

In Chapter Four the findings were arranged according to two categories: the language domains people entered, and the strategies they developed for managing the language they encountered in those domains. It should be noted that the information I have reported represents only a selection from

the extensive conversations and observations that took place. My informants' lives are rich and complex; their histories do not fit entirely into the categories I have adopted. Peoples' descriptions of their experiences, activities, and attitudes raised many questions which are beyond the scope of this study. The study's goal was the exploration of selected aspects of the lives of an immigrant group; therefore I have focussed only on information related to people's language use. Recommendations for further research are made later in this chapter. The findings are summarized below: domains are presented, and then strategies are reviewed.

5.2.1. Domains

People entered a variety of domains in day-to-day operations. While in every domain a combination of oral and written, first and second languages was encountered, certain domains were more demanding than others. In these discussions some reference is made to the past experience of individuals, as it serves to shed light on their perceptions of their present situations.

5.2.1.1. Workplace

People's experiences of workplaces in both Vietnam and Canada were considered. It is suggested that the differences between the two countries in terms of work may have as much to do with the informants' negative perceptions about their performance in a Canadian work environment as

does their lack of English. In Vietnam most of the informants ran their own small businesses, and presumably had more control over their working lives than an average employee would. Their enterprises were operated with limited regulation by the state until the political system changed and the government began to prohibit private business. These two factors--greater individual freedom and less government control--are likely to have contributed to the development of certain forms of workplace literacy. It is possible that the sociopolitical conditions of operating small businesses in Vietnam encouraged the development of literacy skills and knowledge sufficient to allow people to operate in a bureaucratic structure less formal than that of Canada. When people came to Canada then, less formal workplaces, like the ones Mai experienced, were more possible to adjust to than more formal environments like Lien experienced; and this adjustment difficulty is not only a language problem, but also a problem of encountering an unfamiliar workplace structure. The other point about the work role in Vietnam is that people saw themselves as contributing to their family--that the goal for work was family well-being rather individual fulfillment. By their work they could help others, for example children, pursue educational and other goals.

When they came to Canada, they perceived and/or had been told that English was necessary for work. In the two work settings discussed, however, much interaction took place in the first language because in each workplace a form of ethnic community existed. In the less formal work setting described there were few requirements for English, and few tasks requiring literacy in either language. In the more formal workplace, the garment factory, limited

English was required for everyday interaction, and tasks requiring English literacy were handled by helpers. However some aspects of the workplace required more complex oral English tasks, like complaining to a supervisor, or demonstrating enough language competence to be given job training. Even in these tasks, lack of English was only part of the problem for the Vietnamese workers. The accompanying handicap was the possibility of losing face because they could be outmanoeuvred orally by more fluent English speakers.

In Vietnam, factors which people perceived creating difficulties for them were not related to their native language literacy but were linked to socio-political and economic conditions. In Canada, on the other hand, ability in English was seen as a limiting factor. Without evidence to the contrary it is difficult to say, for example, how Lien's experience of her work setting actually would have changed if she had known more English. It is possible that competition would still have occurred between ethnic groups, and it is arguable that the worker theft Lien reported, and her inability to complain about it, signified problems with the organization of the workplace as well as language barriers--so English fluency alone might not have been sufficient to improve working conditions. What is clear from the data is that each person perceived language as a barrier which would limit their work experience; they blamed their lack of ability, not the structure of the Canadian workplace for their negative expectations of work.

5.2.1.2. School

Most of the informants had experienced language learning programs in Canada, and everyone had been told the importance of learning English. One finding about the school experience is that students and teachers have different perceptions about what it means to learn a language and because of this they have different expectations about what kinds of activities are valuable in the classroom. One teacher perceived that her students were unlikely to use English reading and writing in their lives, so she emphasized oral/aural skills instead. Her students felt however, that reading and writing in class were helpful because they could understand the written English she gave them more easily than the spoken English. The learning/teaching problems created by this difference were exacerbated when students and teachers were not fully aware of or in agreement with one anothers' perceptions and expectations, as was the case with Dien and his teacher.

The other finding about the classroom, related to the above, has to do with the setting of learning goals in the classroom. In both classes observed, while the teachers tried to discover and meet their students' needs, it was they, not the students, who controlled the learning goals for the class. The first teacher perceived that her students needed oral social interaction skills. The other teacher introduced topics which were less likely to relate to her students directly, but were possibly things they could talk about with children and grandchildren. The merit of such goals aside, they were selected and instigated by the teacher; no formal mechanism existed in the classes for eliciting students' goals from them. So, although teachers tried to consider

student needs, it is likely that the students were not always aware of which of their particular needs any given activity was supposed to be meeting. Therefore it is difficult to say whether the language classes were meeting students' needs. In the classes observed there appeared to be a gap between the language students practiced and the language they used for real communication both inside and outside the classroom.

5.2.1.3. Other Domains

In other domains people operated with a combination of modes and languages. In these domains speaking and writing were of less concern than they were in school or the workplace, because there was less pressure to use English. These environments--the community (which included shops and offices), and the home--were usually chosen so that use of English was not necessary, or was limited. For example, people generally chose to go shopping in native language stores, visited doctors who spoke Vietnamese, or got assistance from Vietnamese social workers when they had to deal with the government. By choosing where they would go and by going to the same place regularly people managed with their native language and on occasion with limited forms of English. Sometimes people entered situations requiring oral English beyond what they already knew; one way of dealing with these interactions was through using written English. Generally, these domains were arranged so that language difficulties were minimized or that ways could be found to manage them. The language management strategies people reported are summarized below.

5.2.2. Strategies

People reported a number of strategies for dealing with spoken and written language. They included various ways of getting help, choosing settings where the first language could be used instead of English, using limited forms of oral English, using prepared pieces of written English instead of spoken English, relying on memory, and on occasion using native language literacy. The first two strategies were the most commonly reported, although various combinations of strategies were used in the different environments people entered. These strategies allowed people to manage the language they encountered; however, in spite of their managing ability people had negative views of themselves as language learners and users.

Two features about the use of language management strategies are significant. First, they indicate that people had community networks both in terms of the people they asked to help them and the places they habitually went. People lived within a system of relations in which they fulfilled certain roles, such as homemaker or shopper, and in turn had their own needs met through the roles, such as scribe or interpreter, that others took on. In Vietnam, working was a major way in which people contributed to the welfare of their families. In Canada this role was inaccessible to them, partly because of linguistic barriers and partly because of systemic barriers due to differences in Canada's bureaucratic and employment structures which inhibit people from being able to do the kind of work here that they learned how to do in Vietnam. Therefore, other people in the family unit took on

work roles while these people assumed more domestic responsibilities. In pursuing these responsibilities people took advantage of the services offered by the broader native-language community when they could. The community orientation evidenced by the people in this study suggests that independent functioning is not so much a part of their lifestyle as is mutually interdependent functioning. The insistence on individual functional competence, which is a major theme of much adult basic education in North America, and was evident in the functional language the teachers in the study introduced into their classrooms, is at variance with the communal methods of operation people chose.

The second significant feature about the strategies is that they represent non-mainstream ways of responding to the language presented in different domains. People used scribes, interpreters and other means to avoid writing or speaking English. While these strategies allowed the task at hand to be accomplished, they left people with negative feelings about their inability to act as "people who could speak English". These feelings may reflect people's perception that their communally oriented way of operating was non-standard and therefore not acceptable.

5.3. Findings in Relation to the Literature

This section relates the findings of this study to the areas of literature discussed in Chapter Two. The findings are related to research on the social organization of literacy, the psychological effects of the refugee experience, the position of language in the workplace, and second language learning.

5.3.1. The Social Organization of Literacy

The community orientation to literate and oral language tasks demonstrated by the people in this study is noted in other research on low-literate adults. An example of a communal orientation to literacy is documented in research on illiterate adults done by Fingeret (1983). Fingeret found that illiterate adults created a social network of assistants around themselves to help with literacy tasks. These networks were generally maintained on the basis of reciprocity--the informants did not necessarily see themselves as entirely dependent on others, but offered other kinds of help in exchange for the help obtained with reading and writing. Fingeret concludes that "while illiterate adults may be viewed as dependent by the larger literate society, that judgement is not necessarily relevant within the subcultural contexts in which many illiterate adults live.(142)" In much the same way, non-English speakers in North American society may be considered dependent, or handicapped, by mainstream social institutions like governments, schools or employers. However, the evidence of this study suggests that, like Fingeret's illiterates, they are not necessarily so within their own cultural mileux.

The existence of alternative ways of managing literacy is also well-documented in the work of Shirley Brice Heath (1982; 1983). Her investigation of the language practices of three different communities demonstrated that different groups have different ways of using both oral and written language. She further notes that the language uses developed in each

community are linked to the social environment of the participants and the other social activities and roles in which they engage (1983; 234). The problem Heath points out is that the oral and written traditons developed in two of the communities, Roadville and Trackton, while rich and meaningful within their own context, do not match the ways language is used in mainstream institutions like schools. Therefore those from these communities who enter schools are at a disadvantage relative to members of mainstream communities. Heath's findings have implications for adult non-English speakers attending ESL programs in formal institutions. Those, like the people described in this study, who have ways of using oral and written language that are different from the ways of the school are disadvantaged--it is not just that they do not understand the language (English) they are being taught in, but also that they are presented with unfamiliar expectations about how they will learn and use the language the teacher introduces. Therefore learning difficulties may occur because the program/institution does not take sufficient account of the ways of using their own language immigrants may have developed.

Klassen's (1987) findings on uses and perceptions of oral and written language among low-literate Hispanic immigrants in Toronto also bear relation to this study. Klassen notes that both first and second languages continue to have roles in assisting people with language tasks, and that people develop a variety of oral and literate strategies, in either language, to deal with literacy events (p.217). For the people in Klassen's study these strategies had both positive and negative associations--the positive associations related to the ability to manage everyday life, and the negative

associations related, in large part, to the barriers encountered by both low-literates and non-English speakers in employment and school settings. Klassen's informants found language classes discouraging because they were less familiar with classroom practices than more highly educated peers (p.209), and they felt themselves to be inferior because of their low education (p.215). His people also reported feeling excluded in the workplace--they perceived themselves as able to do the work required by certain jobs, but blocked from those jobs by unecessarily high language, literacy and schooling requirements (p.214). Klassen's results suggest that the orientation to oral and written language use his informants had acquired did not fit the requirements of the institutions they encountered. The people in this study also reported using both languages and multiple strategies in dealing with language tasks they encountered. Like Klassen's informants, they too experienced difficulty in the workplace and the language classroom, which was a result of a mismatch in ways of using language as well as of their deficiency in language or literacy skills.

5.3.2. Language and Work

The findings of this study with regard to oral and written language in the workplace are tentative, since only two of the six informants described work experiences in Canada. Nonetheless, the information gathered is worth considering in light of what research exists about low-literate, non-English speaking adults in the workplace. Neuwirth's (1987) report of a survey of Southeast Asian immigrants in the Canadian workplace makes several claims

about the nature of the workplace and the language uses/adaptations necessary for immigrants. Neuwirth states that only a minority of Southeast Asians find work in which they can speak their native language. One of my informants, Mai, held part-time jobs in informal settings where she spoke Chinese most of the time. While Mai's workplaces may represent a minority of what is available to immigrants, her story suggests that even those who work in their native language may still deal with English, though in a limited way. On the other hand, Lien, who worked in a formal setting where English was the language of the management, also used her native language much of the time and only used English in prescribed, limited functions. Therefore, this study suggests that more information is needed about language practices in workplaces before strong claims can be made about what language abilities immigrants need to be able to perform successfully in work environments.

Neuwirth's (1987) findings also claim a positive correlation between immigrant economic success and language adaptation. However, Schein's (1986) and Tollefson's (1986) research suggest that this correlation is an artifact of the host society's view of success rather than the immigrant's. Both Schein and Tollefson point out that resettlement agencies encourage refugees to see getting a job as central to their adaptation to North America, while refugees may place higher value on other activities like reuniting the family or maintaining cultural traditions. In addition, Klassen's (1987) study of Hispanic immigrants suggests that the relationship between employment and oral or literate ability in English is far more complex than Neuwirth's investigation indicates. I have reported above that Klassen's informants felt more restricted by the language requirements for getting a job than by the

language needs for doing the job. My own findings reflect Schein, Tollefson and Klassen in two respects. First, the communal networks people operated within, and the communally-oriented strategies they described using to accomplish various tasks, suggests that interdependent rather than independent functioning was an important feature of their lives. Therefore individual achievement such as getting a job and being independent of government help may not be as important a value as maintaining the welfare and traditions of the family. Second, my informants' stated perceptions about their need for work-oriented English mask the more complicated reality of how they actually operated in the Canadian workplaces they entered. It was suggested above that both languages continue to play a role in work environments, and that language may function as an artificial barrier (Klassen, 1987) to control immigrant entry into the workplace. Related research on literacy practices in the workplace is summarised below.

5.3.3. Literacy in the Workplace

The phenomenon of literacy in the workplace has been investigated by Kenneth Levine (1986). He found that two types of literacy existed in the workplaces he studied. The first was the literacy actually needed to perform the tasks required in the job. The second was knowledge of the bureaucracy of employment institutions, what Levine terms "the employers' perceived need to document aspects of the relations that exist between themselves, employers, trade unions and the state" (p.139). Levine goes on to point out that while many jobs actually require very limited literacy skills, the job

application process often demands an unjustifiably high level of literacy. Among other reasons for this demand, Levine notes that the employer-employee relationship is increasingly surrounded by regulations, and where the employer is required to inform the employee of this information, a literacy barrier occurs (Klassen, 1987;177). Levine's distinction can be extended to oral and written language use of minority language speakers in a majority language environment; North American workplaces are likely to use job English and employment English in different aspects of their functioning. As both Klassen's and this study's findings suggest, non-English speaking immigrants may be hampered not only by their low command of oral and written English, but also by the bureaucratic structures of formal work settings.

5.4. Second Language Teaching

Recent writing in the field of second language learning has stated that established teaching programs need to be adapted for low education, low literate immigrants. Penfield (1986) suggests methodological upgrading--she says ESL teachers need training in teaching literacy skills and classroom materials suitable to adult ESL literacy students need to be developed. Other writers recommend programs with content and structure adapted to student needs. d'Anglejan (1984) suggests job-oriented training in a sheltered workshop format. Weinstein (1984) proposes programs based on ethnographic investigation of the language uses of a particular group, and cites a program where Hmong women learn how to market their traditional

crafts. The adaptations mentioned by these writers centre around the concept of students' needs in the fulfilling of various social roles. Penfield considers the students as adults, d'Anglejan addresses the needs of workers, and Weinstein deals with community needs. In my interviews with Dien, Toan, and their teacher, student need was also a central concern. The teacher sought to address a need she felt the students would have--to make casual conversation. She did not perceive that literacy would be useful to them in their lives. The two students, however, felt that reading and writing were helpful in controlling the flow of oral English and rendering the classroom comprehensible. In addition to the areas of student need listed above then, this finding suggests the value of students and teacher arriving at a common understanding of what student needs both in and outside the class room are. This idea is not new--it is widely discussed in ESL teaching literature--but the results of this study indicate that it is not always put into practice.

The subject of student needs is covered in a great deal of educational literature. (Baylis [1988] contains an overview of this literature as it applies to adult immigrant ESL students). This study has not reviewed student need research exhaustively; indeed, little mention has been made of the substantial difficulties involved in communication between institutions and communities who do not speak each other's language. However, both this study's findings and other language and literacy education literature indicate that student need is often determined by parties other than the students themselves. Wallace and Kelley (1985) assert that what are stated as student needs are actually the needs of prevailing institutions for certain types of performance. Tollefson's (1986) findings show that student needs are directed

to the fulfillment of North American expectations that new immigrants are to occupy the lowest levels of the socioeconomic order. This study's findings also suggest that immigrant ESL students' needs are determined for them by the teachers and curricula of the institutions they attend. The "adaptation process," as it is identified in Canadian resettlement and ESL literacy literature, can be defined as the process of immigrants coming to accept the view of controlling institutions as to what their lives and goals in Canada are to be.

5.5. Implications for Instructional Practice

The information presented in this study has both broad implications for program planning, institutional and social policy with regard to education and narrow implications for classroom practice. The literature on literacy and ESL training reviewed in this study notes that institutions are founded and training programs are designed to fit the student for the status quo: that is, to pass on values and skills that will equip the student for a pre-existing social place--usually near the bottom of the socioeconomic order. From their past experiences--as refugees, as camp inhabitants, as new immigrants, as low-level ESL students who don't have the appropriate academic skills to succeed in classrooms--people such as those described in this study learn to see their lives as beyond their control, and so they believe what they are told about the importance of learning English, and feel deficient when they fail. This study offers further confirmation of previous research findings that the reality of English use in people's lives does not match the English taught in the

classroom. If indeed educational institutions exist to serve the needs of the employment structure by enforcing certain work values among immigrants, then planning more truly student-centred learning becomes a project of social and institutional change.

Programs which aim to serve a particular population would then begin with an investigation into the needs, desires and goals of the community, and whatever language teaching takes place should be in the context of activities identified and valued by that group. The results of such investigation could then influence language training policy. For example, if evidence indicated that immigrants qualifying for government-sponsored programs have difficulty travelling to the centralised institutions where such programs are offered, then program centres could be developed in local communities. Or, refugees eligible for language training could have the option of studying part-time over a longer period rather than attending a full-time (5 or 6 hours a day) program, if it were found that work or child care responsibilities limited their time. Such options are already available in some communities; it is hoped that policies could be applied to make services available in other communities where investigation indicates they are warrented.

With regard to classroom practice, the challenge to the teacher is to mediate between institutional norms and the prior experiences, abilities, attitudes and self-perceived needs of the students. To do this, the teacher must become aware of the values promoted by the institution within which she works and by the teaching material she uses. Then, she must incorporate student values and ways of learning into classroom activity (Hvitfeldt; 1986, makes valuable suggestions in this regard). Sauvé (1989) asserts that teachers

must see their role as empowering students; that is, cooperating with students to aid them in achieving their own goals, rather than operating on students to achieve institutional goals. She notes that seeking to empower learners may well lead teachers to question their own power vis á vis the institutions in which they participate. Therefore, the task of allowing learners to participate in directing their own learning may require changes in established ways of operating for both teachers and schools.

5.6. Recommendations for Further Research

This study was a sociolinguistic exploration of the written and oral language uses and needs of a small group of Vietnamese immigrants in Vancouver. Because the number of participants was small (n=6) and the information sought was qualitative rather than quantitative in nature, the results reported are not necessarily widely generalizable to other groups. The value of this exploratory research lies, at least initially, not in the broad statements it might make about large populations, but in the detail it can capture about social interactions within community contexts. However, the goal of anthropological research is to articulate general principles of sociocultural behavior. To this end, investigation of a social unit, such as the one in this study, must undertake to describe as fully as possible the events that occur and the meanings attached to them, and then relate this information to other information available about the culture, and similar events in other cultures. Therefore, one obvious area for further research is the Vietnamese community in Vancouver, in order that more detailed

information be gained about their ways of interacting within their own cultural group, and with the larger community.

A general theme of this study has been the language use and adaptations of a minority immigrant group within a host community. The purpose of exploring this area was to take a sociolinguistic approach to the assessment of the language needs of immigrant learners. By seeking to locate immigrant language use within their sociocultural context, this study attempts to provide an alternative to the current way many institutions determine immigrant needs--through the expectations of mainstream North American society rather than through the expectations of immigrants themselves. As this study deals with only one group within a limited context, it does not form a comprehensive picture of immigrant language reality. Ethnographic research needs to be done on other ethnic groups in different locales, and at different points over time, in order that a more complete description of the language operations of minority groups can be achieved.

5.5. Conclusion

This study has conducted an exploratory investigation into the lives of Vietnamese immigrants in the city of Vancouver. It has focussed on the interrelated use of languages--oral and written, native and first--by which people who are non-mainstream in terms of their ethnic background, English fluency, literacy level, and educational attainment. The findings indicate that the people interviewed developed lifestyles in which both first and second languages played roles, and non-mainstream strategies were developed for

various language tasks. These strategies demonstrated a communal orientation to everyday activities that is not always accepted as a way of operation in certain language domains. Findings suggest that while some domains--the workplace and school--emphasize individual ability, immigrants actually live as members of community networks, where different members take on different roles. Their language use is tailored to what role they have. In this study, the participants had the role of family caretakers, so other people functioned as breadwinners and translators. In spite of the fact that this system allowed the accomplishment of a range of activities, people interviewed felt negative about their lack of education and language ability, particularly in terms of their performance in North American workplaces and schools. The abilities and ways of using language they had developed in their lives did not match the requirements of the institutions they encountered, and the only solution they perceived was that they should adapt to prevailing norms. This study suggests that in addition to to assisting immigrants to adapt, institutions should evolve to incorporate immigrant orientations.

Findings suggest the philosophical premises of institutions/programs need to be examined so that the precise nature of the assistance they render to immigrants can be determined; does the program direct learners to fit into to entry-level jobs, to assimilate middle-class values and thereby see their own ways of operating as deficient, or to understand their own social position and learn tools for self-determination? If the community to whom the learning is offered is not involved in choosing what is to be learned, then the value of

that learning for the target group must be questioned, and their own lack of social power must be addressed.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
(adapted from Klassen; 1987)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name:

Home country:

Length of time in Vancouver:

Length of time away from home country:

Years of schooling:

Have you taken any classes since you came to Canada? What did the classes teach?

BEFORE COMING TO CANADA

Where did you live before you came to Canada? If you lived in different places, how long in each place?

When you were young did you and your brothers and sisters go to school? Who went and who didn't? Why? How many years?

Who among your friends, acquaintances, neighbours and relatives went to school and who didn't? Those who didn't go, why didn't they go?

Are there some of your friends and family who didn't go to school who now know how to read and write? Who? How did they learn?

Later, when you were an adult, who of your family and friends didn't know how to read and write? Why?

LANGUAGE IN CANADA

Where have you lived in Canada since you came here?

We need to draw a map of where you have lived and where you would usually go. Let's start with a typical day and draw a map of what you would do on that day.

Are there other places that you would sometimes go to? Let's include them in the map.

For each of the places you have on the map, I'd like to know about the language you used there. In each place, what language did you speak?

In each place, was there anything to read? What kind of reading was it? (signs, notices, brochures, magazines) Who read it?

In each place, was it necessary to do any writing? What kind of writing? (filling out a form, answering questions, writing sentences) Who did the writing?

What activities did you do that you needed reading/writing for?

Did you have friends/relatives to help you with reading/writing activities? In which language did they help you?

LIFE IN VANCOUVER

Now I'm going to ask you about your life in Vancouver. Where have you lived since you came to Vancouver? Where do you live now?

Again, let's make a map of your house and your neighbourhood, including places that you usually go.

Do you have any friends or family that live near you? How often do you see them?

I'm interested in how you use language in your daily activities. The places where you go, is there anything to read? What kind of reading? Who reads it?

In the places where you go, is it necessary to do any writing? What kind of writing? Who does it?

Are there any other activities that you do that require reading/writing? What are they? When/where do you do them?

Do you have a telephone in your house? Who usually answers the it? How often do you usually use the telephone?

Who usually takes care of household business in your home? What language is the business usually in? Does the person who takes care of business have someone to help him/her?

Is there anyone among your family/friends that helps you when you do reading/writing? What language do they help you with?

LANGUAGE STUDY

I'd like to know more about language classes you and/or people in your family have taken. Did you (or anyone in your family) take English classes before you came to Canada? Where did you take them/ How long?

In the classes you took before you came to Canada, how many people were there? Did everyone speak the same native language as you? In class, did you ever practice speaking English with the other students?

In these classes, did you have any books? What language were the books in? Did you do any reading or writing? What kinds of things did you read/write?

What did you think about the classes you took? What did you like? What did you not like? Do you think the classes helped you? How?

Now I'd like to know about the classes you've taken since coming to Canada. I'm going to ask you the same kinds of questions about them. Where did you take the classes? How long? (Don't include the class you're taking now. I'll ask you about that later.)

How many people were there in the classes? How many people spoke the same language as you? Did you have to do any speaking/listening activities in the class?

In these classes, did you have any books? Did you do any reading/writing? What kinds of things did you read/write?

What did you think about these language classes? Did you find them helpful? How did they help? What would you have found helpful that the classes didn't give you?

Now I'm going to ask you the same questions about the course you're taking now. How long have you been taking it?

What activities do you like in this class? What don't you like? Do you think it has helped you? What would you have liked to do that you didn't do?

Do you plan to continue studying English? How long will you study for? If you or someone in your family gets a full-time job, will you continue to study?

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